

**POLICY: 6Hx28: 8-10**



**Responsible Executive:** Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs and College Provost

**Policy Contacts:** Asst. Vice President, Academic Enrollment Management & Operations

**Specific Authority:** 1001.65, F.S.  
**Law Implemented:** 1001.65, F.S.

**Effective Date:** 05-07-2026

**Date of Last Policy Review:** 05-07-2026

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## **Student Final Course Grade and Academic Dispute Resolution**

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### **Policy Statement:**

- I. Valencia College (“College”) provides students an opportunity to address final course grade and other academic disputes through fair and transparent processes that foster a supportive academic learning environment and resolution to such disputes.
- II. Student Final Course Grade and Academic Dispute Resolution
  - A. Final Course Grade Dispute
    1. Students have access through the Student Academic Dispute Resolution process to seek a fair determination for the assignment of a final course grade. However, final grades of any variation of "W" and/or "I" based upon the failure of the student to complete assignments, take a final student assessment, excessive absences, or other administrative reasons, as outlined in the course syllabus, are not eligible to be reviewed through the Student Final Grade Dispute Resolution process.
    2. The policies and procedures for resolving disputes over final course grades are intended to reflect the College's responsibility to both students and professors in such academic matters. They do not invalidate any requirements mandated by a course curriculum, i.e., department-sponsored final exams, or requirements to enter or remain in a specific program. The academic prerogatives of a professor

at the College regarding specific course assignments or stated policies on a syllabus or other formal course-related materials cannot be challenged or appealed through this process.

3. The professor and/or Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs and College Provost (“EVP, AA/CP”), or designee, shall have the authority to authorize a change to a final course grade as may be deemed necessary and appropriate in accordance with the Final Course Grade Dispute process.
4. The College will establish procedures to implement the Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution process that:
  - a. offers a specific protocol to all students at the College for resolving disputes over assigned final course grades.
  - b. prohibits retaliation against a student for participating in the Student Academic Dispute Resolution process.

**B. Other Academic Disputes: Non-Final Course Grades and Matters Involving Academic Progress towards Graduation**

1. The College makes every effort to resolve non-final course grade/academic disputes by informal means. The College expects a student to raise any academic concerns early, provide clear and detailed information, follow applicable procedures, and be respectful to the people who are involved. Formal procedures for appealing non-final course grade/academic disputes may be found in Procedures Section III.
2. The College offers students the opportunity to express concerns privately with a student ombudsperson regarding non-final course grades and matters involving academic progress towards graduation. Students who use an ombudsperson are provided a place to explore options to make informed decisions; however, the ombudsperson does not replace or substitute for established College processes, including without limitation formal grievance, investigative, or appeal processes made available by the College.

III. The College President or designee(s) shall adopt procedures to implement this policy.

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**Policy**

**History:**

Adopted 12-11-74; Amended 9-15-76; Amended 1-19-83; Amended 11-18-92; Amended 12-11-07; Amended 9-23-15; Amended 5-7-26; Formerly 6Hx28:10-06; Formerly 6Hx28:10-14; Formerly 6Hx28:10-13

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**Related Documents/Policies:**

Ombudsman Guidelines

College Policy 6Hx28: 8-11 Academic Integrity

Accreditation: Valencia College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate and Bachelor's degrees.

Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 to file a complaint against the institution for alleged non-compliance with a standard or requirement.

National Council on State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements Website <https://nc-sara.org/>

Florida State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement Website <http://www.fldoe.org/sara/>

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**Procedures:**

I. Student Final Course Grades

A. A student may participate in the Student Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution process to seek a review of the assigned final course grade if a student believes that a final course grade was:

1. not calculated in accordance with the grading methodology as defined by their professor in the course syllabi; and/or
2. assigned in an arbitrary or capricious manner arising from a failure to observe established College policies or procedures; or which results from a misinterpretation or misapplication of said College policies or practices. (Typically, arbitrary and capricious decision making involves bad faith or the failure to exercise honest judgment).

II. Student Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution Process

Note: Student final course grades of any variation of “W” (Withdrawal) and/or “I” (Incomplete) are excluded from the Student Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution process.

A. Student Final Course Grade Informal Resolution: As a first step in the resolution process, a student is encouraged to discuss the assigned final course grade and concerns with their professor to reach resolution.

1. If the student’s dispute is resolved following the informal resolution with the professor, the matter is considered closed.

2. If the student's dispute is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student, the student may proceed with an appeal and the formal final course grade dispute resolution process.

## B. Formal Student Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution

1. Student Submission of Final Course Grade Dispute: If the student believes the assigned final course grade was not appropriately resolved informally with their professor, the student may participate in an appeal process as part of the formal final course grade dispute resolution procedure by completing and submitting a Final Course Grade Dispute ("Electronic Appeal") within sixty (60) calendar days from the "Final Grades Viewable in MyVC" date as noted on the College's Academic Calendar. Failure of the student to submit the Electronic Appeal within the sixty (60) calendar day timeframe will result in the final course grade remaining as assigned by the professor.
  - a. The Electronic Appeal will include a student agreement checklist where the student will acknowledge and sign that they have read, understood, and completed the necessary prerequisite steps to take before submitting the student final course grade dispute.
  - b. The Assistant Vice President ("AVP") of Academic Enrollment Management & Operations, or designee(s), is responsible for:
    - i. reviewing the student electronic appeal submission in accordance with policy and procedure, to move forward in the process; and
    - ii. routing (as applicable) the electronic appeal information to the appropriate dean or designee to engage the formal final grade dispute resolution process.
2. Information Gathering: Once the dean or designee receives the Student Final Course Grade Dispute information, the dean or designee will communicate with the student to acknowledge the initial receipt of the final course grade dispute and the estimated timeframe for the student to receive a follow up communication.
  - a. After the initial review of the student final course grade dispute submission, the dean or designee will make appropriate contact with the student and/or professor, as applicable, to resolve the student dispute at the lowest level; including confirmation as to whether the student tried to informally resolve the assigned final course grade concerns with their professor as a first step. If the student did not informally speak with their professor, despite having acknowledged otherwise in their Electronic Appeal submission, the dean or designee will redirect the student to participate in the informal resolution with the professor.

- b. The dean or designee has the discretion to determine the most appropriate method of communication with the student to include, but not limited to, telephone calls, in person or remote meetings, and/or official College emails. For telephone or meeting information gathering session(s) with the student, the dean or designee will follow up with an official College email summary sent to the student's College email address, outlining the conversation(s) with the student and include next steps.
- c. The types of materials the dean or designee may gather could include, but are not limited to: syllabus, grade sheet, student statement, professor statement, and/or communication threads (e.g., emails, Canvas messages).
- d. The dean or designee should normally resolve the information gathering process within ten (10) College business days unless extenuating circumstances warrant an extension to gather additional information.
  - i. Should extenuating circumstances exist that warrant granting an extension of time [longer than ten (10) College business days] for information gathering, the dean or designee will communicate as soon as possible with the student. The communication will include an estimated timeframe for the student to receive an update.
- e. Evaluation of Information Gathering and Decision: After the information gathering and research has concluded, the dean or designee will communicate the findings and the final course grade decision to the student, professor, and the EVP, AA/CP or designee.
  - i. If the student's final course grade dispute is resolved and a grade change is warranted, the student will be provided with information on the timeline and process for the grade change to be completed.
  - ii. If the student's final course grade dispute remains unresolved following the dean or designee's decision, the student will be provided with information on next steps in the appeal process, in the event the student dispute is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student.

### C. Student Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution Appeal Process:

#### 1. Student Submission of Appeal

- a. A student who feels their final course grade dispute remains unresolved (following the Formal Student Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution Process) may appeal the dean or designee's decision by notifying the dean or designee, as appropriate, of their desire to continue their appeal with the College Student Final Grade Dispute Resolution Committee ("Committee") within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving the dean or

designee's decision. Failure of the student to notify the dean/designee within the fourteen calendar (14) day timeframe will result in the dean or designee's decision being final for the student's final course grade.

- b. The dean must communicate with the AVP, Academic Enrollment & Operations, or designee, regarding the student's desire to continue their appeal with the College Committee.
- c. The AVP, Academic Enrollment & Operations, or designee, receiving the appeal will:
  - i. notify the student, professor, dean, and initiate organizational steps with the Committee within ten (10) College business days to collect materials to be included in a packet for Committee members;
  - ii. prepare packets for the student, professor, dean, and all Committee members. This includes documents relevant to the appeal, including, but not limited to:
    - a) Syllabi;
    - b) Additional course materials;
    - c) Communications;
    - d) Professor statement;
    - e) Student statement;
    - f) Student Agreement Checklist; and
  - iii. schedule the Committee meeting with the student, professor, dean and/or designee, and Committee members, as appropriate.

## 2. Student Final Grade Dispute Resolution Committee ("Committee") Appeal Review:

- a. The Committee shall act only upon a final course grade dispute, which was:
  - i. not calculated in accordance with the grading methodology as defined by their professor in the course syllabi; and/or
  - ii. assigned in an arbitrary or capricious manner arising from a failure to observe established College policies or procedures; or which

results from a misinterpretation or misapplication of said College policies or practices. (Typically, arbitrary and capricious decision making involves bad faith or the failure to exercise honest judgment).

- b. Committee members:
  - i. The Committee's role in the final course grade dispute appeal process is to provide an opportunity for the student, professor, and/or dean (as applicable) to present their views and information, evaluate all information presented, and render a recommendation in accordance with course requirements and applicable College policies and procedures.
  - ii. The Committee will consist of the following members:
    - a) Director of Academic Enrollment and Operations (Chair);
    - b) one (1) student;
    - c) one (1) Dean;
    - d) four (4) faculty [two (2) from General Education and two (2) from Workforce Education]; and
    - e) one (1) Dean alternate
  - iii. Each Committee member shall serve for at least one (1) academic year and may be reappointed for additional one-year terms.
- c. Committee Appeal Information Review: The Committee chair has the discretion to convene with the Committee to review materials and discuss the final course grade dispute appeal agenda, as needed.
- d. Committee Appeal Review Meeting
  - i. The Committee chair will facilitate the appeal meeting, which will include the following agenda items:
    - a) Introduction of committee members to the student, professor, and/or dean, as appropriate;
    - b) Student presents their appeal case to the Committee;
    - c) Professor explains to the Committee how they established their decision;

- d) Dean explains to the Committee how they established their decision;
  - e) Student, professor, and dean (as applicable) can provide additional information and final comments to the Committee for consideration;
  - f) Committee members may ask questions to any participant (student, professor, and/or dean, as applicable);
  - g) After all parties present their information and answer questions, all participants will be excused to allow for Committee deliberation. If there is insufficient time for Committee deliberation, or if the committee needs time to do further research or consider new information, the committee may consider a follow-up meeting to complete deliberations and finalize their recommendation to the EVP, AA/CP or designee, as appropriate.
  - h) After deliberations are completed, the Committee chair will communicate the Committee's recommendation to the EVP, AA/CP within a reasonable timeframe. This will include the recommendation and all supporting documentation.
- ii. Based upon the recommendation, the EVP, AA/CP or designee has the authority to accept or modify the recommendation(s) and will issue their final written decision to the student, professor, dean, Committee chair, and AVP, Academic Enrollment Management & Operations, as applicable.
    - a) If the final decision indicates a change of grade is appropriate, the specific grade change indicated by the decision will be forwarded to the registrar's office to update the student's record.
  - iii. The decision of this final appeal step is the final College action of closing the College's Student Final Course Grade Dispute Resolution Appeal process on the matters presented.
- D. The AVP, Academic Enrollment Management & Operations, or designee(s), will work collaboratively with deans, and the EVP, AA/CP or designee to maintain appropriate documentation of each matter addressed in this process in accordance with records retention requirements.

### III. Academic Disputes (Non-Final Course Grade Matters) Involving Academic Progress towards Graduation: Ombudsperson Resource and Informal Resolution

#### A. Student Ombudsperson Resource

1. A student may seek assistance from a College student Ombudsperson to resolve a complaint, concern, or problem regarding a non-final course grade or other academic matter involving academic progress towards graduation.
2. The student Ombudsperson's role is to:
  - a. listen to student complaints to objectively make recommendations on how best to resolve the issue;
  - b. be impartial, private, and informal;
  - c. consider the rights and interests of all parties concerned and advocate for a fair resolution; and
  - d. consider the rights and obligations of the student and the College.
3. The issues presented by the student to the student Ombudsperson remain in confidence, upon request, unless otherwise required by the College's policies and procedures. Speaking with a student Ombudsperson may help a student clarify their thoughts or feelings about a situation, increase awareness of their alternatives, explore options, and assist in establishing communication with appropriate College departments.
4. The student Ombudsperson:
  - a. answers questions, refers students to appropriate departments, and mediates conflict when requested by the student;
  - b. interprets College policies and procedures and offers guidance; and
  - c. recommends changes in policies and procedures when necessary.
5. The EVP, AA/CP or designee shall be responsible for designating a person(s) to serve in the role of student Ombudsperson(s), who in that role is accountable to the College President, and for administrative purposes reports to the EVP, AA/CP, to assist students who wish a review of decisions that are related to access to courses and credit granted toward the degree (excluding final course grades). Students shall be notified of opportunities for assistance or appeal.

#### B. Academic Dispute: Informal Resolution

1. The College expects a student to raise any concerns early to their professor but no later than the last day of the term in which the dispute arose, provide clear and detailed information, follow applicable procedures, and be respectful of the people who are involved.
2. As a first step in the informal resolution process, a student is encouraged to discuss their academic concerns with their professor to reach resolution.
  - a. If the student's dispute is resolved following the informal resolution with the professor, the matter is considered closed.
  - b. If the student's dispute remains unresolved following the informal resolution step with the professor, the student may proceed with an Electronic Appeal (MyVC) to the respective dean or designee.

#### C. Academic Dispute: Informal Resolution Appeal

1. Information Gathering: Once the dean or designee receives the Student Academic Dispute information, the dean or designee will communicate with the student to acknowledge the initial receipt of the concerns and provide an estimated timeframe for the student to receive a follow up communication.
2. Evaluation of Information and Decision: The dean or designee, in collaboration with the EVP, AA/CP or designee, has the discretion to determine the most appropriate method of resolution with the student. The dean or designee will communicate the final decision to the student and professor, as appropriate.

#### IV. Student Administrative Complaint Resolution for Non-Academic Matters

College staff leaders are a resource for students seeking assistance in resolving issues with non-academic matters in College service areas, including but not limited to, advising, bookstore, financial aid, residency for tuition purposes, library, parking, residency for tuition purposes, and security. For more information on student resources for non-academic matters see the College's [Student Handbook](#) and/or the Student Dispute Information on the College website: <https://valenciacollege.edu/students/disputes/learn-more.php#administrative>.

#### V. National Council on State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements Requirements

- A. The College is part of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) for an eligible interstate student that participates in a distance education course(s) and program(s) offered at the College. Such student that is seeking assistance with concerns of academic and non-academic matters at the College must first go through the College's procedure for resolution of student complaints/grievances. Allegations of criminal offenses or alleged violations of Florida's general purpose laws may be made directly to the relevant State agencies.

B. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the College's process for handling complaints, **excluding complaints regarding student grades or student conduct violations - which are governed entirely by the College's policies and procedures and the laws of Florida** - the complaint (except for complaints about grades or student conduct violations) may be appealed by notifying the Division of Florida Colleges.

1. [www.fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/](http://www.fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/)

2. 850-245-0505

3. Division of Florida Colleges  
325 W. Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

C. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome from the Division of Florida Colleges, the student must notify in writing, within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made, to the Florida Postsecondary Reciprocal Distance Education Coordinating Council ("Council") by sending an email to [FLSARAinfo@fldoe.org](mailto:FLSARAinfo@fldoe.org).

D. The Council shall notify the SARA Portal Entity for the State in which the student is located of receipt of that appealed complaint. While the final resolution of the complaint rests with the Council, the Portal Entity in the complainant's location State may assist as needed. The Council is responsible for conducting the investigation and resolution of eligible complaints that are not resolved at the College level. The Council may enlist the assistance of other responsible entities in the State in carrying out the work of complaint resolution. The resolution of the complaint by the Council, through its SARA complaint resolution process, will be final, except for complaints that involve the State of Florida using its laws of general application to pursue action against the College for alleged violations of those laws.

E. Postsecondary Reciprocal Distance Education Coordinating Council Complaint Requirements

1. The complaint must be filed within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made.

2. The student must complete the College's complaint process and the Division of Florida College's process prior to submission with the Council.

3. The complaint must be a formal assertion in writing that the terms of SARA, or of laws, standards or regulations incorporated by SARA, are being violated by a person, institution, state, agency or other organization or entity operating under the terms of SARA.

4. The individual is a student of a FL-SARA approved institution.

5. If the individual is not a student, but has a concern about any of the steps listed within this section (Procedures Section V.E.), the individual may submit a complaint using the same process outlined in these procedures.

6. For additional information, visit [FL-SARA Complaint Process](#).

VI. Retaliation by a professor or other College employee against a student for engaging in good faith with established College processes promoting dispute resolution is prohibited. Any report of such retaliation against a student should be made to the office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further evaluation and appropriate response.

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### **Procedure**

#### **History:**

Adopted 1-5-09; Amended 9-23-15; Amended 12-19-19; Amended 4-18-23; Amended 1-8-24; Amended 5-7-26; Formerly 6Hx28:10-13

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**Date of Last Procedure Review:** 05-07-2026