

# **Written Student Complaint Policy**

Isothermal Community College students and members of the public have the right to file informal and written complaints regarding Isothermal Community College personnel or actions and to know Isothermal Community College's policy and procedures for responding to these complaints. As such, the president establishes and publishes procedures for filing and responding to informal and written complaints. Accordingly, the Written Complaint Policy is located in the *College Catalog and Student Handbook*, which is available in print and in electronic form on the website.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURES (As established and approved by the president)**

Given the variety of situations in which complaints might arise, the response to concerns will follow either the informal or the written process. In order to make the process as clear as possible the following definitions will be used:

### **Informal Complaint:**

Complaints are considered informal when they are expressed verbally. In these cases, the procedure for informal complaints is to be followed.

### **Written Complaint:**

The Written Complaint Policy should be followed for any complaint received in writing.

### **Other Student Complaint:**

The College complies with all federal and state regulations regarding complaints and establishes procedures for responding to the concerns of students. Procedures for filing other student complaints can be found in the *Student Grievance Procedure for In-State and Out-of-State Students* section of the Distance Learning page on the College website.

This policy does not apply to (a) student grade appeals, (b) human resource policies, (c) appeal and grievance policies and procedures explicitly described in the Isothermal Community College Learning Manual, (d) any formal appeal or grievance covered by another Isothermal Community policy e.g., Code of Conduct, etc. Information regarding student rights, responsibilities, and judicial procedures is available in the current *College Catalog and Student Handbook*.

### **Procedure for Informal Complaints**

Informal (verbal) complaints by students or members of the public are to be dealt with through a discussion between the complainant and the initial college contact. If the complaint involves an instructor, the complainant should first discuss the issue with the instructor prior to initiating a conversation with the instructor's supervisor. If the complainant has a compelling reason not to discuss the issue with the instructor, he/she may take the issue directly to the instructor's supervisor. If through this process a mutually satisfactory resolution of the complaint cannot be reached, the complainant may put the complaint in writing and move to the policy and procedure on written complaints. Otherwise, the complaint will be considered inactive.

It is the responsibility of the administrator involved in an informal complaint to write a memorandum for the record detailing the nature of the complaint and the resolution. The administrator is to retain such memoranda in a file accessible to his/her supervisor upon request. Files must be maintained as required by the North Carolina Community

College Records Retention and Disposition Schedule for complaints involved in litigation.

## **Procedure for Written Complaints**

1. Written complaints by students or members of the public are to be dealt with by the responsible college administrator supervising an area. Faculty and staff who receive a written complaint should forward it to the supervisor of the area(s) involved in the complaint.
2. The administrator handling the complaint is to gather information as necessary. Information must be gathered from the complainant.
3. A written response (hard copy or e-mail) must be sent to the complainant. The administrator must maintain a copy of the complaint, information regarding how the complaint was investigated, and the written response as required by the North Carolina Community College Records Retention and Disposition Schedule for complaints involved in litigation. A brief description of the nature of the complaint, the name and contact information of the student or member of the public filing the complaint, a description of the steps involved in researching the complaint, and the date of the response will be sent to the dean of students/dean of continuing education who will maintain a record of the complaint including the date of the College's response. The dean of students/dean of continuing education will examine the complaint record on an ongoing basis for patterns related to complaints. If a pattern of complaints is identified, this information will be communicated to the appropriate vice president immediately. If a pattern of written complaints directly involves an action(s) of a vice president, this information will be referred to the president.

## **Appeal Procedure for Written Student Complaints**

The complainant may appeal the decision reached as a result of the aforementioned investigation with the appropriate vice president. The vice president will render a decision or convene a review committee. Disagreement with the responsible college administrator's findings or determination, by itself, is not grounds for an appeal. If a review committee is convened, the following will apply:

1. The committee will be composed of the appropriate vice president or designee, who serves as chair, faculty, staff, and/or administrators.
2. The complainant will be invited to the review committee meeting, but the meeting will proceed as planned if the complainant fails to appear. The complainant may have an advisor present during the review committee meeting. However, the complainant must inform the vice president in writing at least two days prior to the meeting that an advisor will be present.
3. The responsibility of the committee will be limited to:

A written response (hard copy or email) from the review committee chair should be sent to the complainant. A copy of the complaint, minutes from the review committee meeting, information regarding the specific steps undertaken in the review process, and the written response must be maintained by the vice president. A brief description of the nature of the complaint, the name and contact information of the student filing the complaint, a brief description of the committee review process, and the date of the response will be sent to the dean of students who will maintain a record of the complaint including the date of the College's response.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, the complainant may appeal within five working days through a signed, written statement to the president of the College. The decision of the president will be final. A record of the date of this final response will be sent to the dean of students who will maintain a record of the response. Ordinarily, processes associated with the written student complaint policy and related appeals should be handled by the College within six weeks from the date of receipt.

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**Policy Number:** 601-02-02BP

**Legal Reference:**

College Catalog and Student Handbook

**Amended Procedure:** September 16, 2014; September 22, 2015; June 12, 2018

**Adopted:** August 24, 2010; September 30, 2014

**Reviewed:** June 12, 2018

**Amended:** September 16, 2014; September 30, 2014; September 22, 2015; June 12, 2018

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