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Policy:	Policy on Student Concerns, Complaints, Grievances and Appeals
Purpose:	In the interests of maintaining an environment in which students are safe, treated fairly and respected, the CONHS has a clear policy and process for defining and handling student concerns, complaints, grievances and appeals.
Definitions:	<p><u>Student Concerns</u>: are informal and relate to minor issues that can be solved between individuals such as student/instructor or student/program director and are usually communicated to the program director or faculty verbally or through informal written communication such as email. Examples include, but are not limited to, course scheduling, timeliness of faculty feedback, and clinical scheduling/location. Programs do not generally keep a formal record of student concerns. However, this policy serves as a procedure for responding to student concerns.</p> <p><u>Student Complaints</u>: are communicated to the program in writing regarding issues that have significant negative impact on students' learning experiences. Examples may include, but not be limited to, grade appeal or appeal of an admission/progression decision. Complaints require a formal process within the program to bring about resolution, and records regarding their resolution are generally kept on file for a period based on the program's and/or university's policy.</p> <p><u>Student Grievances</u>: refer to formal complaints filed with the program and/or the university through a formal grievance channel. They refer to issues that may violate student's rights. Examples include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment and discrimination. Records regarding the resolution of grievances are generally kept on file for a period based on the program's and/or university's policy.</p>
Procedures:	<p>I. Student Concerns</p> <p>An aspect of becoming a professional is learning to effectively seek resolution for disagreements, concerns, and complaints in an appropriate and professional manner. The CONHS faculty consider the ability to engage in a respectful interchange of ideas and concerns with peers, supervisors, faculty, and staff to be an important part of a student's professional development and an important skill for conflict resolution. Most student concerns can be effectively addressed and resolved between the student and the involved peer or faculty member(s). When a student has an informal concern or wishes to lodge a complaint, he/she must first speak with the student, faculty, or staff member involved. If the student does not feel comfortable meeting with the faculty/staff member involved to discuss a concern, he/she should request to meet with a trusted advisor, faculty member, or the appropriate Program Director. The student may</p>

prefer to contact the person's supervisor and request that his/her identity be kept confidential. This meeting will include discussion of what the student would consider to be a resolution to the problem and how he/she would like to proceed after this initial meeting. Notes will not be retained unless the meeting proceeds to a formal procedure.

Faculty response to a student concern is expected to be timely and made within a reasonable time frame (preferably within 1-2 business days). Faculty should operate on the assumption that a quick response is always better than a delayed response. A timely response conveys faculty desire to be helpful, while a delayed response may convey a negative message, however inadvertent.

II. Student Complaints

The evaluation of academic work is the prerogative of the instructor and the rules for determining final course grades are to be established by the instructor and given to the students in a course syllabus at the beginning of the semester. The grade appeal procedure is not to be used to review the judgement of an instructor in assessing the quality of a student's work. Possible grounds for an appeal may be circumstances such as:

- (a) an obvious error in the calculation of the grade.
- (b) the assignment of a grade to a particular student by application of more exacting requirements than were applied to other students in the course
- (c) the assignment of a grade to a particular student on some basis other than performance in the course
- (d) the assignment of a grade by a substantial departure from the instructor's previously announced/published standards

Student complaints of an academic nature follow the academic administrative hierarchy, from the student's instructor to the program director and Associate Dean. This process is explained in the VSU Academic Affairs webpage and can be accessed via the VSU website. Records of grade appeals are stored in the Associate Dean's office of the student's school. The process, according to VSU policy, is as follows:

"Grade Appeals

Students have the right to appeal their grades; however, they should do so within 30 days of the grade's posting on Banner. To appeal a grade, a student should complete the grade appeal form (available online at the Registrar's Office) with all pertinent information and then speak with the professor about the change. If the professor and the student do not resolve the situation, the student may then proceed to appeal to the department head and, finally, the Dean."

Additionally, the student appeal process is clearly defined in the undergraduate and graduate student handbooks. A chain of command for conflict resolution is clearly delineated and procedures for due process are in place. The program policies can be found within the corresponding handbooks. CONHS policies are congruent with the Valdosta State University practices regarding grievances and

complaints.

III. Student Grievances

Attempts to resolve a grievance should begin informally by speaking with the associated faculty or staff member. If the issue is not resolved, the grievance may then be directed, in writing, to the program director. The grievance does not use a specific form. Simply submit a written statement by email or in person that provides full details of the grievance and includes date(s), time and names of witnesses and/or parties involved as applicable.

If for any reason, a student does not feel comfortable contacting the faculty/staff member involved to discuss the grievance, they may contact the program director and request that their identity be kept confidential.

Additionally, grievances may be addressed according to the VSU established channels specific to the nature of the grievance.

Complaints related to possible violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) are addressed through the office of the registrar of VSU. On their webpage the Office of the Registrar advises students of their right to file a complaint with the US Department of Education concerning alleged FERPA violations. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is provided on the Registrar's website.

Any student who is dissatisfied with a decision made by the Access Office or the implementation of such a decision is entitled to prompt and equitable review of his/her complaint. Initial requests for review by the Access Office should be initiated as soon as possible, but no later than the start of the academic semester following the semester in which the incident(s) occurred. Requests for review should be communicated in person to the Director of the Access Office or submitted using the online form (which will be sent to the Director of the Access Office). Students will receive a response to their review request via email within ten business days. If the student is still dissatisfied after the review by the Director of the Access Office or if the nature of the complaint involves a decision or action made by the Director of the Access Office, students may seek further review through the Office of Academic Affairs. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal inquiry, she or he may seek equitable resolution with the ADA/504 Officer housed in the Office of Social Equity.

Complaints relative to affirmative action, harassment, sexual harassment, or discrimination are addressed through the Office of Social Equity. The process is outlined on the office's webpage. The University has approved and fully monitors a Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Policy, applicable to both students and employees. The policy outlines the processing of discrimination reports, including timeline for reporting, responsibility of students and employees, procedures for investigation and resolution, university action/right to appeal, and prohibition against retaliation. The policy is posted on the University's Policy Administration website.

	<p>Complaints related to other areas, such as parking and transportation and campus housing are directed to those departments respectively. Although VSU strives to handle all complaints at the institutional level, if complaints remain unresolved, a student may elevate it to the University System of Georgia. According to Section 4.7 of the USG Policy Manual: "Student appeals of final decisions of University System of Georgia institutions are governed by the Board of Regents' Policy on Application for Discretionary Review."</p> <p>IV. Conflict Resolution</p> <p>Students, as well as faculty, staff, and administrators, may pursue conflict resolution through the Conflict Management & Restorative Practices Program (CRC). This program is a USG system-wide conflict resolution program intended to "communicate differences without opposition, resolve conflict at the lowest level, improve the institutional environment, and lead development of Alternative Dispute Resolution in higher education." The CRC does not address salary issues, matters of university policy, or criminal matters. However, all other matters may be brought before the committee. Information on the CRC can be accessed within the VSU administration's webpage.</p>
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