

Policy Number: S-115

Policy Name: Student Dispute Resolution Policy

Related Policies, Forms and Procedures:

Date Written or Last Modified: August 19, 2021

Date Approved By Management Team:

Date Approved By Board of Directors:

PURPOSE

The **Student Dispute Resolution Policy** establishes a process for resolving student disputes that is fair, efficient, and consistent and respects the privacy of all parties involved.

The policy is guided by the following principles:

1. **Fairness:** Ensure that all disputes are addressed impartially, with equal consideration given to all parties involved.
2. **Efficiency:** Resolve disputes promptly, minimizing delays and maintaining clear timelines for each stage of the process.
3. **Consistency:** Apply the dispute resolution process uniformly across all cases to uphold institutional integrity and trust.
4. **Privacy:** Protect the confidentiality of all parties throughout the resolution process, ensuring that sensitive information is handled with discretion.
5. **Transparency:** Communicate the process, decisions, and outcomes clearly to all involved, fostering an environment of trust and accountability.
6. **Student-Centric Approach:** Encourage students to voice their concerns responsibly, fostering a supportive atmosphere for resolution.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students enrolled in TEC institutions and encompasses a broad range of disputes, including but not limited to:

1. **Academic Matters:** Courses, programs, grading, and evaluations.
2. **Staff and Faculty:** Interactions, communication, and professional conduct.
3. **Campus Environment:** Facilities, equipment, and resources.
4. **Peer Relations:** Conflicts and disputes involving other students.
5. **Disciplinary Actions:** Appeals or grievances related to behavioral or academic discipline.

The policy is designed to address disputes at all levels of the student experience, ensuring that every concern is handled with fairness, consistency, and respect.

POLICY STATEMENT (INFORMAL)

TEC holds the position that open honest feedback and discussion are necessary for positive growth and development, whether personal, social, cultural, corporate, or governmental. In fulfilling TEC's mission of creating a holistic educational environment that empowers people through education, TEC colleges have a responsibility to guide and mentor students in developing successful positive communication skills, including dealing with conflict and dispute, in and out of class. Every situation and every disagreement or conflict is an opportunity to example appropriate skills and mentor students in developing positive resolution skills. Therefore, TEC colleges should strive to create a culture of consistently safe, open (e.g., non judgmental, non threatening), honest, easy, caring, and respectful communication, where issues are resolved quickly and easily through informal (casual) discussion and debate rather than aggressive conflict or resorting to formal processes and injunctions. TEC believes positive communication skills will assist students and graduates in being successful in whatever ways they define success and will certainly contribute to their attractiveness to employers.

TEC institutions are committed to listening and acting on well-presented, constructive ideas and suggestions from the student body, and students are encouraged to communicate on an ongoing basis throughout their studies. TEC institutions provide multiple ways for students to communicate their thoughts/ideas, issues, and suggestions with the management and administration on campus and TEC institutions encourage students to utilize these methods of communication to make suggestions, solve issues, answer concerns, and improve the delivery of training. While unable to facilitate every suggestion or idea, TEC institutions are still committed to ongoing discussion and providing reasonable explanations and rationale.

It is the philosophy of TEC colleges to have an open-door policy and to rely heavily on student feedback to continually improve. TEC college staff make themselves available to hear comments, suggestions and ideas through informal meetings and appointments (personal interviews). Unless otherwise noted (e.g., through Student Services departments), students may set up a meeting through Reception. Reception will identify which personnel are best able to help and arrange contact or set up a meeting.

Here are some other common communication tools at TEC institutions

Course/Instructor Evaluations

Course/Instructor Evaluations are given at regular intervals (e.g., one third and two thirds of each term). Students are asked to evaluate their instructors, the course content and relevance, the tools provided, the style of delivery for each course, and the facilities, administrative services, and student services. These online forms can be completed any time during the semester at a student's request and as often as necessary. Completed forms are reviewed and averaged.

Students can identify themselves or remain anonymous. There may be follow-up directly with students who identify themselves by way of written presentation of solutions, and/or an interview for the same.

Senior management may conduct an investigation into comments, interview staff and instructors, sit in on classes and review instructors, and seek more information from students prior to making a decision on the

comments. As this process may take time, there is no time restraint on the response. Many of these issues involve more than one person or subject and it is important to make this a thorough process.

POLICY STATEMENT (FORMAL)

- 1) a) It is the policy of all TEC institutions to resolve any disputes in the most efficient, fair manner possible. TEC staff are always ready to hear comments, suggestions and ideas. To set up a personal interviews students are asked to request a meeting at reception. Students will be contacted within 24 hours of submitting a request for meeting by the appropriate staff. The student may request an independent observer (designated by the school) to attend.
 - b) TEC colleges establish procedures for addressing student questions and concerns and students should be regularly informed of these communication avenues and encouraged to use them. The formal dispute procedure set forth below should be utilized only after the student has followed the informal dispute resolution process. TEC believes that most issues can be and are best resolved on an informal basis through the informal venues available providing students take initiative and responsibility in making reasonable efforts to address their questions and concerns. If a student pursues a formal dispute path without first following the informal dispute resolution process, college staff should explain and guide the student through the informal process first.
- 2) If an issue is not resolved through informal meetings with the appropriate staff then the following dispute resolution procedure should be followed:
 - a) Grievances, appeals, or complaints must be presented in writing, signed and delivered to the Director of Education ¹in the event that such matters have not been satisfactorily resolved on an informal basis.
 - b) Upon receipt of the complaint, the Director of Education shall investigate as necessary and advise the student of any delays in the investigation. The investigation may include interviews with the complainant as well as other relevant parties.
 - c) The Director of Education shall provide, within ten (10) school days of receiving the complaint or appeal, a written response, and if possible a verbal response to the complainant setting forth the decision concerning said complaints. The failure of the complainant to co- operate with the investigation shall be deemed as a withdrawal of the complaint and no further action will be taken.
 - d) If the grievance has resulted in a temporary suspension of the student, the school will attempt to resolve the issue within three (3) school days.
 - e) A student may appeal the decision/resolution presented by the Director of Education by written notice only. The written appeal must be delivered to the school within five (5) school days of receipt of the written decision/resolution.
 - f) Upon receiving a written appeal the Director of Education shall review the decision/resolution and conduct further investigations as deemed necessary. The Director of Education may arrange for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to hear and investigate the complaint.

¹ Effective February 2, 2015, the Director of Education is Matt Redmond. He can be reached at mredmond@digitalartschool.com and at (250) 860-2787.

- g) The investigation may include interviewing the complainant, or other necessary parties, individually or in a group consisting of appropriate directors and staff. The decision/resolution will require agreement from a minimum of two (2) directors and/or the President of the division alone. The Director of Education shall provide the written response to the student setting forth the decision/resolution within five (5) school days of receipt of the student appeal.
- 3) All written communications by the complainant must be addressed to the Director of Education and delivered to the reception desk. Written communication from the Director of Education must be presented directly to the complainant or mailed to the most recent address provided.
- 4) A complainant shall follow the dispute resolution procedure and not discuss the matter with any other parties once the complaint has been filed with the Director of Education. The failure of the complainant to adhere to the aforementioned guidelines may result in the dismissal of the complaint and may result in the expulsion of the student from the school. All investigations by the school will be conducted in the strictest confidence and involve only those deemed necessary to fulfill due diligence.
- 5) Retaliatory action of any kind is prohibited. This includes retaliatory action against a person who makes a disclosure or files a complaint, against a witness, or against any other persons involved in the process. Where a member of the college community is found to have engaged in retaliatory action, or to have breached the confidentiality requirements, the College may take appropriate action.
- 6) If the complainant is dissatisfied with the determination, and has been misled by the institution regarding any significant aspect of their program, they may file a complaint with the Private Training Institutes Branch (www.privatetraininginstitutions.gov.bc.ca).