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Student Complaints, Hearings and Appeals

To protect the interests of both the College and students, Santa Monica College has an established “due process” through which disciplinary and removal powers are exercised. As a further safeguard of student rights, an appeal procedure exists for these policies, as well as for appeals of grades, matriculation, and academic or progress disqualification. Please visit the [College Catalog](#) and [Administrative Regulations \(Series 4000\)](#) for more details.

College Ombudsperson

Students with complaints, grievances, and personal concerns about Santa Monica College or any of its policies are encouraged to discuss them with the College Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson provides support and encouragement to students, and attempts to present options and solutions. Complaints are handled with complete confidentiality on a case-by-case basis. *Students with complaints about a grade should be aware that they must file a formal appeal (Petition for Review of Grade) by October 30 for Spring semester grades, November 30 for Summer session grades, April 30 for Fall semester grades, and May 30 for Winter session grades.*

For further information, visit the [Ombudsperson](#) website, send e-mail to ombuds@smc.edu, or call 310-434-3986. The office of the Ombudsperson is located in Room 124 of the Letters and Science building. Office hours are posted on the door and available on the Ombudsperson’s webpage. If the times are inconvenient, a special appointment can be arranged by leaving a voicemail message or sending e-mail to the Ombudsperson.

Student Judicial Affairs

Santa Monica College students and faculty can turn to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for due process in having problems solved, working out agreements, refuting false allegations, and resolving disputes fairly. The College Disciplinarian, counselors, and administrative support take a positive, comprehensive, and proactive approach to resolving problems, and provide a place for students and faculty to go for information and training in the areas of student conduct, academic honesty, behavior/anger management, and conflict resolution.

It is crucial for students to feel that their concerns are being addressed in a timely manner, before those concerns become disciplinary problems. It is just as crucial for members of the faculty to feel that they have support in dealing with extremely challenging and often disruptive students. The Office of Student Judicial Affairs works to strike a balance between the College’s community standards and individual behavior. When appropriate, the Office of Student Judicial Affairs provides referrals to other programs on the SMC campus.

The Office of Student Judicial Affairs interviews all parties named in police and referral reports. The College Disciplinarian—who has initial authority to suspend students for violations of the Student Conduct Code—conducts interviews, reviews all

interview notes and information available, and makes final decisions regarding the outcome of disciplinary cases. To find out more about the services and resources the [Office of Student Judicial Affairs](#) provides, see our website at www.smc.edu/disciplinarian or call 310-434-4220.

Matriculation Complaints

Students may file formal written complaints about the matriculation process with the Vice President, Enrollment Development. The complaints will remain on file for at least three years after they have been resolved and are subject to review by the Chancellor’s Office as part of the statewide evaluation required under California Code of Regulations Title 5 §55512.

Grade Appeals

The grade appeal process may be informal or formal. The student meets with the professor to determine that the grade is actually the grade that was earned. If there is a dispute, then the student meets with the ombudsperson, in an attempt to resolve the dispute informally. You must see the ombudsperson before filing the formal grade appeal. Call (310-434-3986 to make an appointment. The formal process involves filing a Petition for Review of Grade. The petition is obtained from the Dean of Enrollment Services, after the student has contacted the professor and the ombudsperson. The student should write a clear, concise, and accurate statement explaining the reasons and evidence that the grade is inaccurate. The grade appeal must be consistent with the Education Code 76224(a): When grades are given for any course of instruction taught in the public schools, the grade given to each pupil shall be the grade determined by the teacher of the course and the determination of the pupil’s grade by the teacher, in the absence of a mistake, fraud, bad faith, or incompetence, shall be final. The student’s statement and the Petition for the Review of Grade are returned to the Dean, Enrollment Services, for filing.

The student has 90 days following the date of the initial grade report within which to file the petition.

For Fall classes, the deadline is April 30--meet with the Ombudsperson before April 15.

For Winter session classes, the deadline is May 30--meet with the Ombudsperson before May 15.

For Spring classes, the deadline is October 30--meet with the Ombudsperson before October 15.

For Summer classes, the deadline is November 30--meet with the Ombudsperson before November 15. The statement and petition are sent to the Instructor, Department Chair, Dean of Instruction, and back to the Dean, Enrollment Services. Finally, an administrator convenes and chairs the Grade Appeals Committee. The committee consists of three students, three faculty members, and the administrator. The committee meets only in the spring and fall semesters. At the appointed time, the student and professor each present the case before the committee at a hearing that takes about an hour. The committee then deliberates, and makes a decision, which is forwarded to the Superintendent/President. The Superintendent/President notifies all parties of the result. You can visit [Grade](#)

[Appeals-Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

Appeal of Academic Progress Disqualification

Students who wish to be reinstated at Santa Monica College after being disqualified from attending the College because of substandard academic performance or unsatisfactory progress may make an appointment in the Transfer/Counseling Center to discuss their situation with a counselor, review the mitigating circumstances that may have led to their disqualification, determine whether reinstatement at SMC is possible, and find out about the steps they must take to be reinstated. To make an appointment to meet with a counselor, visit the Transfer/Counseling Center or call 310-434-4210.

Academic Conduct Appeals

A Santa Monica College student who has been accused of violating the SMC Honor Code has the right to appeal the action taken by the faculty member through the appeal procedures established by the College. Once notified of the alleged violation, the accused student has ten (10) business days to appeal the action to the Honor Council.

The student will be provided the opportunity for a conference with the campus Ombudsperson (or designee) in an effort to resolve the issue informally. The Ombudsperson (or designee) may confer with the faculty member, and if necessary, the department chair (or designee). If no resolution is reached after an informal conference, the student may proceed with a formal appeal to the Honor Council. The petition (and any supportive documentation) must be filed with the Office of Student Judicial Affairs (or designee). All instances of alleged SMC Honor Code violations are subject to review by the SMC Honor Council (SMC AR 4412). For details on the procedure for disputing a grade—for alleged instructor mistake, bad faith, fraud, or incompetence—see "Grade Appeals Committee" (SMC AR 4313). Please note: The Grade Appeals Committee does not handle appeals pertaining to accusations of academic dishonesty. These cases can go through the Santa Monica Honor Board hearings process.

Disciplinary Hearings & Appeals

Before any disciplinary probation, removal from extracurricular activities or programs, or suspension is imposed on a student, the student has the right to pursue the Hearing and Appeal Process, unless an immediate suspension is required to protect lives or property, or to insure the maintenance of order pending a hearing. The Hearing and Appeal process is described in detail in the "Rules for Student Conduct" (SMC AR 4410).

Program Removal Appeals

Due process procedures exist to assist faculty and departments in removing a student from a program in which the student is unable to profit and/or a program in which the student's behavior is determined to be unsafe. In general, the overall process for determining whether a student meets the specific standards of a particular program may include up to three levels of intervention: the instructor level, the program or department level, and the College level (joint administration-faculty committee). Any student who wishes to appeal dismissal from a program may file the appeal with the Chair of the Program Standards Appeals Committee. The student will be able to present his or her case within ten (10) school days of filing. The committee hearings will be closed to the public.

Honor Council Hearing Board

In order to uphold the academic integrity of Santa Monica College and to ensure students' rights to due process, instructors and students may petition a hearing to adjudicate a case of alleged academic dishonesty (Code of Academic Conduct) or Honor Code violation. The request must be made through the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The hearing procedures can be found on the [Honor Council](#) website - [Honor Council Hearing Board Procedures](#)

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