

POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Policy Title:	QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT POLICY	Area of Responsibility: VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC
Policy Section:	CLASSROOM / FACULTY	
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1.3.14 QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Introduction

This policy is intended to help the College and its employees address issues or concerns that arise in the learning environment experienced by students.

The learning environment is composed of:

1. the people who directly assist the students in their learning such as teachers, technologists and other support staff;
2. the physical facilities in which the learning occurs, such as classrooms, laboratories and work placement sites;
3. all learning resources such as computer software, equipment, and materials provided for learning and;
4. services provided by the college for the benefit of the student such as the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, student success and other learning supports

By providing a system for being informed of these concerns and a process to address these issues, the learning experience of our students will continuously improve and better serve the needs of our learners. Similar to expectations in the professional work environment, students are expected to engage in a professional, courteous and genuine process of attempting to discuss areas of concerns with those people who are a part of the learning environment.

1.1. All aspects of the learning environment which directly or indirectly impact the students and their learning may be the subject of an application under this policy.

1.1.1. All applications under this policy must be brought forward within 30 calendar days of the end of the semester. Extensions may be warranted in extenuating circumstances and only granted by a Senior Administrator. A failure to bring forward concerns in a timely

manner may jeopardize the College's ability to investigate and address the concerns. Such failure may also constitute grounds for dismissing an application.

1.1.2. Applications under this policy must be based on genuine and reasonable grounds. Where a student brings forward an application that lacks substance or which is determined to be frivolous, vexatious or brought forward for purposes prejudicial to another person, the student bringing forward the application may be the subject of a determination and discipline under the policy relating to Student Rights and Responsibilities or the remedies provided under the policy relating to the Respectful Work and Education Place.

1.2. This policy does not cover situations covered by the college grade appeal policy, academic integrity issues, non-academic appeals relating to student behaviour or situations covered by the Respectful Work and Educational Place Policy.

1.3. Where a student or students have a concern relating to the quality of the learning environment, advice on how to proceed may be obtained from a faculty member, coordinator, counsellor, Chair or the Student Representative Council Executive any of whom may provide guidance with the process for the resolution of concerns under this policy. Specifically, guidance may be sought in completing the forms required for the presentation of any concern under this policy.

2. First level Informal Process

2.1. It is the intention of this policy that every effort is made to resolve concerns under this policy through informal negotiation and frank discussion of the issues. All parties are expected to voluntarily and mutually develop a solution that is fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

2.2. Students are advised to document their concerns in writing and should be as clear and concise as possible in setting out all the circumstances in order that all parties may clearly understand the nature of the issues and any factors relating to the issues. Clarity in identifying the issues will generally assist in achieving a resolution.

2.3. A concern under this policy is initiated by completing and filing the Quality Learning Environment Concern Form. Part A of the form identifies the student and provides contact information. Part B of the form sets out the nature of the concern and what resolution is being sought. Part C initiates the referral of the concern to the Office of the Vice President, Academic.

2.4. Where the concern of the student relates to a factor that is connected directly to the faculty member's teaching methodology or practices, students are encouraged to initially approach the

faculty member to discuss the situation. After hearing the concerns of the student, the faculty member may, if appropriate, develop a response that addresses the concern of the student.

- 2.5. Where the concern of the student relates to a factor that is connected directly to another person's role in the learning environment, students are encouraged to initially approach that other person to discuss the situation. After hearing the concerns of the student, that person may, if appropriate, develop a response that addresses the concern of the student.
- 2.6. For whatever reason, if a student feels unable to approach the faculty member or another person, or if the concern relates to equipment, software or other physical resources in the learning environment, the student may immediately take his or her concern to the Chair of the Academic program.
- 2.7. Where a student approaches a faculty member or another person, as outlined in this policy, with concerns relating to the learning environment and the faculty member or other person is unable or unwilling to offer a resolution that addresses the student's concern or if after 6 academic calendar days there is no resolution or plan leading to a resolution which is acceptable to the student, the student may directly approach the Chair of the Academic program with the concern by following the process outlined in this policy.

3. Second Level Inquiry Process

- 3.1. When a student wishes to bring a concern under this policy before the academic Chair of his or her program, the student should complete Parts A and B of the Quality Learning Environment form and deliver the form to the office of the Chair. The departmental office shall in the presence of the student mark or stamp the form with the date and time of delivery and the original form shall be returned to the student with the mark or stamp clearly visible. The Chair's office should retain a copy of the concern form for the Chair's file.
- 3.2. The Chair should either meet with the student immediately or arrange to meet with the student within three working days to discuss the nature and details of the student's concern. This time may be extended by agreement between the Chair and the student.
 - 3.2.1. The date of the meeting between the Chair and the student shall be noted on the Quality Learning Environment Concern form and a copy provided to the student.
 - 3.2.2. During the meeting mentioned in Section 3.2 the Chair should ensure that the student has provided all necessary information and details relating to this concern and that the student has identified the nature of a preferred resolution of the concern. This information should be clearly documented in the Quality Learning Environment form Part A or in additional documentation attached to the form.

- 3.3. If, after review, the Chair is of the opinion that the Quality Learning Environment Concern Form does not disclose a valid academic concern or if the student is unable to identify a specific and clear area of concern, the Chair shall immediately inform the student in writing of that decision but in no case later than three days from the date of the meeting between the Chair and the student referred to in Section 3.2.
 - 3.3.1. The decision of the Chair may be immediately referred to the Vice-President, Academic, or designate, under section 4.0, if the student disagrees with the decision of the Chair and has reasonable and genuine grounds for such disagreement.
 - 3.3.11 Where a student brings forward a referral to the Vice President that lacks substance or which is determined to be frivolous, vexatious or brought forward for purposes prejudicial to another person, that student may be the subject of a determination and discipline under the policy relating to Student Rights and Responsibilities or to the remedies provided by the policy relating to the Respectful Work and Education Place.
- 3.4. A student's attendance, participation in the learning environment or completion of assignments and tests do not directly impact the validity or merit of a concern expressed under this policy but may impact the credibility and significance of that student's information.
- 3.5. Upon completion of the initial meeting with the student under Section 3.2, the Chair shall immediately investigate the concerns expressed in the Quality Learning Environment Concern form Part A and shall provide a resolution to the matter within ten working days from the date of the meeting between the student and the Chair outlined in Section 3.2.
 - 3.5.1. The Chair shall immediately inform any other person who is affected by or identified in the Quality Learning Environment form and shall immediately arrange to meet with any person so affected or identified for the purposes of a full identification and discussion of the issues raised in the Quality Learning Environment Concern form.
 - 3.5.2. If the concern relates to an area outside of the academic sector, the Chair shall immediately inform the supervisor of the area that is the subject of the concern and include that supervisor or designate in all further investigations and discussions.
 - 3.5.3. For the purposes of the investigation, the Chair may interview other students or other College employees who may have information relating to the concerns raised in the Quality Learning Environment form Part A, in particular, if the concerns relate to the provision of learning resources or equipment and its operation.

- 3.5.4. The Chair should use his or her best efforts to mediate a voluntary resolution of the concerns covered by the Quality Learning Environment Concern form.
 - 3.5.5. If the Chair deems it appropriate and the parties to the concern covered by the Quality Learning Environment policy agree, a meeting of the parties or other college employees who may assist in the development of a resolution may be arranged to fully discuss the issues and to attempt to develop a voluntary resolution of the concern.
- 3.6. The Chair shall within the time limits set out under Section 3.5 provide the student with a written decision that either outlines the resolution of the matter in question or identifies the reasons why the matter will not be addressed any further by the Chair.

Referral of Concern to Vice-President, Academic

- 4. A student who has lodged a Quality Learning Environment Concern with the Chair may refer that concern to the Vice-President, Academic if:
 - a. The Chair makes a decision that the Quality Learning Environment Concern form does not disclose a valid academic concern under Section 3.3, or
 - b. The Chair fails to provide a satisfactory resolution of the concern within the time limit specified by this policy, or
 - c. The Chair issues a decision that provides for a resolution which the student does not find satisfactorily resolves his or her issue.
- 4.1. The referral to the Vice-President, Academic is made by delivering the Quality Learning Environment Concern Form with Part C completed by the student and leaving a copy with the Office of the Vice President, Academic.
 - 4.1.1. The office of the Vice-President, Academic shall in the presence of the student mark or stamp the form with the date and time of delivery and a copy of the form should be returned to the student with the mark or stamp clearly visible.
- 4.2. The Vice President, Academic, or designate, should either meet with the student immediately or arrange to meet with the student within three working days to discuss the nature and details of the student's concern. This time may be extended by agreement between the Office of the Vice President, Academic, or designate, and the student.
- 4.3. If, after review, the Vice President, Academic, or designate, is of the opinion that the Quality Learning Environment Concern Form does not disclose a valid academic concern or if the student is unable to identify a specific and clear area of concern, the Vice President, or designate, shall immediately inform the student in writing of that decision but in no case later than three days from the date of the filing of the original concern with the Chair.

- 4.4. When a Quality Learning Environment Concern is referred to the Vice-President, Academic, the Vice-President, Academic or his or her designate may investigate the concern.
- 4.5. The Vice-President, Academic or designate may interview any of the parties or individuals interviewed by the Chair and may interview such other people as may be deemed appropriate including the Chair that made the original investigation.
- 4.6. The Vice-President, Academic or designate may attempt a mediated resolution of the concern or may, after investigation, determine an appropriate resolution.
 - 4.6.1. The decision of the Vice President, Academic, or designate, is final with respect to the concern filed under the Quality Learning Environment policy.
- 4.7. The Vice-President, Academic or designate shall provide all parties to this application with a copy of a written decision relating to the investigation within ten days of the meeting with the student who referred the concern.

5. Meetings with College Employees under this policy where the concern relates to the employees actions or practices in the learning environment

- 5.1. When a meeting or meetings with any College employee are required by the Chair, the Vice-President, Academic, or designate the College employee is entitled to be accompanied by a union representative at the meeting if the employee so chooses.
 - 5.1.1. If the employee reports to an administrative sector that is outside the Academic Sector, the employee's supervisor shall be included in any discussions or meetings under this policy.
- 5.2. Students are not permitted to attend these meetings without the written consent of the College employee and do not have a right to be informed of any aspect of the meeting or meetings. However, a College employee may agree to have student(s) present at a meeting.
- 5.3. All meetings are to be conducted with courtesy and professionalism in an attempt to find a voluntary resolution of the concern.
- 5.4. At least two work days prior to any meeting or discussion with the employee under this policy, the College employee shall be provided with a copy of the Quality Learning Environment Concern form and a copy of any other documentation related to the concern and shall be given an opportunity to address the specific concerns.
- 5.5. If appropriate, the College employee and the Chair, Vice-President, Academic or designate should attempt to develop a strategy to resolve the concerns under this policy including a

reasonable timeline for the resolution to be implemented and a time period at the end of which the employee may be required to report on how the resolution is progressing. This resolution should be in written form, set out clearly the obligations imposed, and the actions required to be completed under the resolution together with clearly stated timelines.

- 5.6. The Chair, Vice-President, Academic, or designate, may follow-up with the College employee if the written resolution and all of its terms are not carried out by the College employee as agreed.
- 5.7. Students may be advised that the meeting or meetings have occurred and that a resolution has been determined. However, if the matter relates to disciplinary action, students do not have the right to any information relating to that situation. They may also be advised to report back to the Chair, Vice-President, Academic, or designate, if they feel that there is no appropriate change in the behaviour, practices or actions that were the cause of an application under this policy.

6. Nature of the concern under this policy

- 6.1. If the nature of the concern under this policy relates to equipment, learning resources, software, physical learning spaces or any other matter that is not related to the actions of employees in the learning environment, the Chair, Vice-President, Academic or designate may schedule meetings for the student or students who brought forward the concern with departments or individuals in the College who are responsible for the delivery of those services if the concern relates to the manner in which the services are provided or delivered.
 - 6.1.1. The purpose of the meeting would be to determine if there is a method of delivery or operation that might better serve the needs of students.
 - 6.1.2. If appropriate, a modification of the delivery of these services, equipment or learning resources may be implemented to improve the quality of the learning environment.
 - 6.1.3. If the College department cannot respond to the students concern in a way suggested by the student or students, the College department will explain why it is not possible.
 - 6.1.4. The outcomes described in Sections 6.1.1; 6.1.2; or 6.1.3 shall be included in the written resolution or decision provided to the students who brought forward the concern.
- 6.2. If the nature of the concern relates to teaching methodology or practice, part of the resolution may consist of professional development or training to be provided by the College and to be taken by the College employee.
 - 6.2.1. Once the professional development or training or the reasonable opportunity to take the professional development or training is provided by the College, the Chair or Vice-President, Academic or designate may follow-up with the employee to determine any

outcome of the professional development or training and to determine if more may be required.

6.3. If the nature of the concern relates to specific job performance, actions, omissions or other disciplinary issues relating to a College employee, the Chair or Vice-President, Academic may engage in appropriate activities to address the issues including beginning a progressive discipline process.

6.3.1. The College employee has the right to specific identification of the nature of the breach of his or her obligations, clear direction as to what steps are required to address the issues and a reasonable timeline within which to comply.

6.3.2. If the College employee disagrees with the assessment of a concern under this policy by the Chair, Vice-President, Academic or designate, the employee is entitled to recourse under the terms of the appropriate collective agreement governing that employee.

6.4. Any action or decision taken under Sections 6.2 or 6.3 are confidential between the College and its employee and will not be disclosed to any other party.

7. The forms necessary to bring forward a concern under this Quality Learning Environment policy and a diagrammatic explanation of the process are appended to this policy.



Quality Learning Environment Concern Form

Part A

Name: _____ Student ID # _____

Program: _____ Semester _____

Campus: (Please check) Windsor South __ SCCCA __ Thames __ Wallaceburg __

Phone Number(s): _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Date of filing with Chair (stamp)

Date of first meeting with Chair: _____

Chair's signature: _____

Outline what steps you have taken to find a resolution of this concern and identify those individuals with whom you have attempted to find a resolution.

What is the resolution that you are requesting by presenting this concern?

I acknowledge that the statements that I have made above are accurate and true.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____



Quality Learning Environment Concern Form

Part C

Referral to the Office of the Vice President, Academic

I wish to refer this concern to the office of the Vice President, Academic.

The grounds or reasons for my referral are:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Date of filing with the office of the Vice President, Academic (stamp)

Date of meeting with the Vice President, Academic or designate: _____

Referral to Vice President, Academic or designate

Part C of Quality Learning Environment Form is completed and filed with Office of the VPA

VPA or designate meets with student (within 3 days) and may investigate
VPA or designate may mediate a resolution or, if mediation fails, VPA or designate issues a decision within 10 days of meeting with student.
Decision of VPA is final.



Filing of Concern Form with Program Chair

Part A and B of Quality Learning Environment Form filed with Chair
Chair meets with Student and investigates (within 3 days of filing)
Chair may mediate a resolution or, if mediation fails, Chair issues a Decision within 10 days of meeting with student



Informal Attempt to Resolve Concern

Discussions leading to voluntary resolution if possible
If no resolution, student launches official concern by completing and filing the required form