STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

I. POLICY
These policies and procedures are established to resolve grievances of students, which result from acts or omissions of faculty or administrators and to resolve student conflicts. Resolution should be achieved at the lowest level and in the most equitable way possible. The burden of proof rests with the complainant.

II. PROCEDURES
When a student believes he/she has a grievance, an effort should be made to resolve the grievance by discussion with the faculty member, staff member, or appropriate administrator involved. If these discussions do not lead to a satisfactory result, the complaint may then be taken to the next highest level listed in the following procedure. If the grievance relates to the challenge of a grade the student should follow the Grade-Appeal Policy. If the grievance arises from a classroom situation the student should take the following steps in seeking redress:

a. Consult with the instructor involved, in person or by written contract, no later than within the first twelve college working days from the date the grievance occurred.

b. If an agreement or a compromise is not achieved with the instructor, the student must take a written statement to the division chairperson within seven college working days from the instructor’s final decision. (A written grievance should include a description of the effort made to resolve the grievance at the previous level.)

c. If the student is still not satisfied that a fair and equitable solution has been found, the student should take a written grievance to the Dean of Instruction within seven college working days from the Division Chairperson’s final decision.

d. If the grievance does not arise from a classroom/instructional issue, a complaint should be made to the appropriate administrator within the first 12 college working days from the date of the grievance.

e. The student should read “The Judgment” section (Section IV) of this policy carefully before contacting the Dean of Students for a hearing before the Conduct and Discipline Committee.

f. As a last resort and only after steps a through c have been completed, the student should take the grievance in writing to the Dean of Students and the chairperson of the Conduct and Discipline Committee. The grievance must be filed by the last day of class of the semester following the semester in which the grievance occurred.

No instructor or administrator shall be allowed to delay the resolution of a grievance by failing to hold a consultation with a student within five instructional days of the initial request. Normally such consultation should occur immediately after receipt of the
student request unless bona fide reasons such as illness, personal emergency, classes not in session, or absences for professional reasons make this time limit unreasonable.

In instances when the personalities or problem involved would make starting at the level of the complaint too awkward or embarrassing, students may initiate a complaint at the next higher level listed.

III. ROLE OF THE CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE
The chairperson of the committee shall be the administrative officer of the committee. The chairperson’s duties shall include arranging for appropriate times and places for committee meetings and hearings; informing committee members of the times and places of committee meetings and hearings; securing and distributing to the committee written materials appropriate for its consideration; arranging for the recording of committee proceedings; maintaining committee records which are to be kept on permanent file in the Office of the Dean of Students and informing, in writing, the appropriate persons of the decision of the committee.

Members of the committee may at any time disqualify themselves from consideration of any given case or cases because of personal bias or a conflict of interest.

Either party to the hearing may request of the chairperson that any member or members of the committee be excluded from consideration of the case. Such a request must be for cause and be brought to the chairperson’s attention as the first step in the hearing. In the event a member is disqualified by a majority vote of the committee from consideration of a case, the President shall appoint a replacement. The replacement must meet the general requirements of regular committee members.

IV. JUDGMENTS

V.

Committee members shall arrive at a judgment in consultation among themselves after the parties have been dismissed. Only members of the committee who have been present during all of the meetings and who have heard all testimony related to the alleged grievance may vote on the case. A majority vote of such qualified members shall constitute a judgment.

A decision of the committee relating to redress of grievances is final insofar as the student is concerned.

The committee has the authority to change or direct changes in student grades, faculty conduct, or other disputed areas. A course of action deemed appropriate by the committee shall be carried out unless the student or faculty member chooses to appeal the committee’s decision to the President of the College. The appeal must be made in writing to the President no later than seven college working days after the date of the
committee’s decision and must be resolved within a maximum of 30 college working days after receipt by the President.

If a redress requires a policy change or administrative directive, the committee shall refer its recommendations to the President of the College or appropriate administrator.

Complaint Policy for VA Students

Any complaint against the school should be routed through the VA GI Bill Feedback System by going to the following link: http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/Feedback.asp. The VA will then follow up through the appropriate channels to investigate the complaint and resolve it satisfactorily.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Central Alabama Community College recognizes that students are both citizens and members of the academic community. They do not give up any rights nor do they receive any special privileges not accorded any other citizen. Upon enrolling in the College, they do assume an obligation and are expected to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the function and mission of the College as an educational institution. Students are expected to obey the statutes of local, state, and federal government and college policies. The Code of Student Conduct and established disciplinary procedures apply to individual students as well as formal groups of students.

The President of the College or Dean of Students or designated administrator in charge may at any time suspend a student pending formal procedures when these officials find and believe that the presence of a student on campus, because of allegations or facts coming to their attention, would seriously disrupt the College or constitute a danger to the health, safety, and/or welfare of students and personnel at the College. The Dean of Students will initiate appropriate formal disciplinary action immediately.

Any student involved in an incident such as, but not limited to, unsatisfactory clinical performance; a proven form of academic dishonesty, for example blatant plagiarism; etc. will receive the grade of “F” in the course where the incident occurred. The “F” will be assigned in the instructor’s grade book/grade sheet on the day the incident occurred, but will not be posted until the end of the semester to the student’s transcript. The student will not be allowed to withdraw any time after the incident even if the incident occurs prior to the published withdrawal date at the College. This policy supersedes the College withdrawal policy if such an incident occurs. A student assigned a failing grade by an instructor in the aforementioned circumstances may appeal the instructor’s decision by following the Student Grievance Policy.

Prescribed Conduct
Generally, the College jurisdiction and discipline shall be limited to conduct which occurs on the College premises or which occurs while participating in official college sanctioned off-campus activities as part of a recognized College group. Official college sanctioned activities are those activities that have been approved by the Dean of Students. The following acts are considered serious breaches of appropriate behavior and may subject the student to formal disciplinary action:

I. **Academic dishonesty** is any deliberate attempt to gain an academic advantage for one’s self or another through dishonest practices. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense because it undermines the bonds of trust and honesty between Central Alabama and members of the community and defrauds those who depend upon our knowledge and integrity. Forms and examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the ones listed below:

a. **Forms of Academic Dishonesty**
   
   i. **Cheating** – Use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information or study aids, or computer-related information in any academic exercise;

   ii. **Fabrication** – Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise or official document;

   iii. **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty** -- Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another carry out academically dishonest practices;

   iv. **Plagiarism** -- Intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, or works of another as one’s own in any academic exercise;

   v. **Misrepresentation** -- Misstating, altering or falsifying the contents of academic documents such as letters of recommendation, transcripts, and schedules;

b. **Examples**

   i. **Examinations and Tests**

      1. Taking an exam for another student.

      2. Copying from another student, or making information to another student during or after an exam.

      3. Submitting a take-home exam written in whole or in part by someone else.

      4. Failing to obey or comply with exam regulations or instruction of a proctor or an instructor.
5. Looking at a cheat sheet, a book, lecture/lab notes, a lab manual, or any other form of unauthorized information during an exam.

6. Asking another student questions on an exam before taking the exam.

7. Presenting a false excuse for missing an exam or assignment.

8. Witnessing a case of cheating in class and not reporting it.

9. Storing exam answers on a calculator, cell phone, or other electronic device.

10. Changing answers on a test and claiming it was incorrectly graded.

11. Having someone else or paying someone else to take an exam for you.

12. Working in groups on take-home exams or web-based quizzes.

13. Removing an exam from a classroom or office.

ii. **Laboratories, Field Work, Essays, Research Reports, Assignments and Presentations**

1. Copying another student’s work of any kind (e.g., old term papers or old lab reports) or allowing another student to copy your work.

2. Using unauthorized data of any kind.

3. Allowing someone else to perform your lab exercise, field exercise, or other exercises assigned to you.

4. Fabricating or falsifying lab or research data of any kind.

5. Adding false references to term papers, research reports, or other assigned works to expand a bibliography.

6. Submitting as your own an essay written in whole or in part by someone else.

7. Preparing an essay or assignment for submission by another student.

8. Copying an essay or assignment or knowingly allowing your work to be copied by someone else.

9. Using direct quotations or large sections of paraphrased material without acknowledgment.
10. Buying or selling works and submitting them for the purpose of plagiarism.

11. Submitting the same piece of work in more than one course without permission of the instructors.

12. Working in groups on reports, assignments, projects, presentations, etc.

iii. **Official Documents**

1. Altering transcripts or other documents relating to student records.

2. Misrepresenting one’s credentials.

3. Creating or altering letters of reference.

4. Individual instructors may point out other examples that apply to their courses.

II. Disruption or obstruction of teaching. Classroom and laboratory use of pagers, cellular telephones, and other electronic communication devices is prohibited;

III. Failure to comply with the directives of College officials acting in performance of their duties;

IV. Lewd, indecent or obscene conduct or speech to include but not limited to written or verbal;

V. Copyright/file-sharing violation;

VI. Disorderly conduct;

VII. Cyber harassment which includes but is not limited to the use of email, chat, discussion forum, and blogs with the intent to intimidate, humiliate, belittle, or threaten others;

VIII. Physical abuse, verbal abuse, threats, bullying, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, intimidation, harassment, coercion, and/or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any member of the College community;

IX. Unauthorized entry into College offices or buildings;

X. Coming on campus while intoxicated;

XI. Forgery, alteration, or misuse of college documents, records, or identification;
XII. Furnishing false information to the College;

XIII. Unauthorized entry into College administrative and faculty files, including computer files;

XIV. Malicious destruction of property or vandalism, including library materials;

XV. Bringing on the campus or to a College-sponsored event firearms, knives, or other dangerous weapons;

XVI. The possession, use, or distribution of alcoholic beverages on College property or at a student-sponsored function;

XVII. Theft of College property or the property of any member of the College community (student, faculty, College employee, etc.);

XVIII. Use, possession, or distribution of narcotic or other controlled substances;

    a. Unauthorized entry into a file to use, read, or change the contents or for any other purpose;
    
    b. Unauthorized transfer of a file;
    
    c. Unauthorized use of another’s identification and/or password;
    
    d. Use of computing facilities to interfere with the work of another student, faculty member, or College official;
    
    e. Use of computing facilities to send obscene or abusive messages;
    
    f. Use of computing facilities to view pornographic material;
    
    g. Use of computing facilities to interfere with normal operation of College operations
    

Definitions

I. The term “College” means Central Alabama Community College.

II. The term “student” generally includes all persons taking courses at the College, both full-time and part-time.
III. The term “faculty member” means any person hired by the College to conduct classroom activities.

IV. The term “staff” means any person hired by the College to perform support activities.

V. The term “College official” includes any person employed by the College, performing assigned administrative or professional responsibilities.

VI. The term “member of the College community” includes any person who is a student, faculty member, college official, employee of the College, or anyone having an office on campus.

VII. The term “college premises” includes all land, building, facilities, and other property in the possession of or owned by the College.

VIII. The term “organization” means any number of persons who have complied with the formal requirements of college recognition.

IX. The term “Conduct and Discipline Committee” means an appointed group of college representatives authorized by the Dean of Students to determine whether a student has violated the Student Code of Conduct and to impose sanctions upon students found to have violated the Student Code of Conduct.

X. The term “policy” is defined as the written regulations of the College as found in, but not limited to, the Student Code of Conduct, Student Handbook, and College Catalog.

**Disciplinary Procedures**

I. **Charges**
   
   a. Any member of the College community may file charges against any student for violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

   b. Charges shall be prepared in writing and directed to the Dean of Students. Any charge should be submitted as soon as possible after the event takes place, but no later than ten days after the event.

II. **Accused Student’s Rights**

   An accused student has certain rights. A written statement outlining these rights shall specify that the student shall:

   a. Have the right to remain silent.

   b. Have the right to an advisor.
c. Have the right to summon witnesses and present evidence.

d. Have the right to be informed that any statements the student may make, oral or written, may be presented to the Conduct and Discipline Committee.

e. Have the right to a hearing before the Conduct and Discipline Committee if the Dean of Students assumes jurisdiction and imposes a sanction the student wishes to appeal.

III. Initial Investigation

a. Upon receipt of a written complaint, the Dean of Students will conduct an investigation to determine if the charge has merit. The Dean of Students may obtain documents and interview those who might have pertinent information related to the alleged misconduct. The Dean of Students may tape record any proceedings associated with the investigation of a charge. Any such recording is the sole property of the College and may not be duplicated.

b. The Dean of Students shall schedule a meeting with the accused student via student’s college e-mail, address of record, telephone number of record, or personal contact for an interview at the earliest possible time to discuss the alleged violation of the Student Code of Conduct. If the student fails to appear for the interview, the Dean of Students may, on the basis of available evidence, agree to assume jurisdiction and impose a sanction to be recommended to the President for approval or proceed to forward the case to the chairperson of the Conduct and Discipline Committee.

c. Sanctions, which may be recommended to the President by the Dean of Students, are exoneration, formal reprimand, probation, suspension, and restitution.

IV. Conduct and Discipline Committee Procedures

a. The Chairperson of the Conduct and Discipline Committee will call for a meeting to determine if a disciplinary hearing should be held to determine the innocence or guilt of the student(s) charged with an infraction.

b. The committee shall arrange for a swift and comprehensive investigation of the matter under consideration and decide if there is sufficient evidence to hear a case. The investigation shall include, but is not limited to, written statements by the complainant, review of evidence and discussion with the respondent and complainant if appropriate. If the committee finds insufficient grounds to hear a
case and closes the case, it shall notify the complainant and the accused in writing as to the reasons for its action.

c. The committee shall establish and publish its own procedures in accordance with provisions for academic due process and in accordance with the stipulation stated below:

d. The only persons present at meetings of the Conduct and Discipline Committee shall be committee members, parties to the action being considered by the committee and their representatives (not to exceed two), and witnesses actually testifying before the committee. The institution, complainant, and accused student(s) may have an attorney present during the hearing for advising purposes only. The attorney may not cross-examine witnesses, question, or address the committee in any way except with the consent of the committee.

V. Formal Hearing

a. The Chairperson of the Conduct and Discipline Committee will schedule a hearing and provide the accused student a written statement of the charges. This statement provides reasonable notice of the circumstances on which the alleged violation is based. Said notice shall include the date, time, and place of the hearing. The statement shall advise the accused student that he/she may appear alone or with an advisor. The statement shall also set out that the accused student will be provided the opportunity to present evidence in his/her own behalf. The statement will inform the student that he/she may choose to waive the right to appear before the Conduct and Discipline Committee.

b. At the hearing, the students involved in the incident under investigation may testify and be questioned by the opposite party and committee members. The committee shall not act in such a manner as to favor any party with respect to its questions, requests for evidence, rulings of evidence, or general conduct of the hearings.

c. Written statements by witnesses in lieu of personal appearances shall be allowed if both parties agree to their admission or the committee determines that to exclude such statements would result in an injustice to either party and where the personal appearance of a witness is impossible or would be unreasonable.

d. The complainant, the accused student, and the Conduct and Discipline Committee shall have the privilege of presenting witnesses, subject to the right of reasonable cross-examination by all parties.
e. The complainant and the accused student may be assisted by one advisor each, at their own expense. An advisor may be an attorney. The complainant and the accused student are responsible for presenting their own cases. Therefore, advisors are not permitted to speak or to participate directly in the hearing before the Conduct and Discipline Committee.

f. The Conduct and Discipline Committee shall not have the power to require sworn testimony of witnesses. A requested witness may decline to make an oral or written statement. An accused student has the right to remain silent, and such silence shall not be used against him/her.

g. Pertinent records, exhibits, and written statements may be accepted as evidence for consideration by the Conduct and Discipline Committee at the discretion of the chairperson. The Conduct and Discipline Committee shall not be bound by state or federal rules of evidence but may allow or exclude evidence, including testimony of witnesses, at the discretion of the chairperson.

h. All procedural questions are subject to the final decision of the chairperson of the Conduct and Discipline Committee.

i. The Committee shall make a single verbatim record, such as a tape/digital recording, of all Conduct and Discipline Committee Hearings (not including deliberations). Deliberations shall not be recorded. The record shall be the sole property of the college. It will be preserved for reference and review until the case has finally been resolved and may not be duplicated. Outside recordings are not allowed.

j. The hearing before the Conduct and Discipline Committee shall be scheduled as soon as practical, but no later than fourteen college working days from the date of the written complaint. The office of the Dean of Students makes itself available to help in the location of all witnesses to the circumstances that prompted the hearing.

k. Hearings normally shall be closed to the public. At the request of the accused student and subject to the discretion of the chairperson, the public may be admitted, but shall not have the privilege of participating in the hearing.

l. After the hearing, the Conduct and Discipline Committee shall determine by majority vote of the members present, excluding the chairperson, whether the student has violated each section of the Student Code of Conduct that the student is charged with violating. The chairperson will vote only to break a tie.

m. In the event a complainant or the accused student fails to attend a formal hearing after notification of the designated date, hour, and location, he/she
waives the right to appear before the Conduct and Discipline Committee. In the absence of the complainant or the accused student, the Committee’s determination shall be based on the evidence and testimony presented. If the complainant or the accused student is unable to attend the hearing for good cause, he/she shall make a written request stating the reason for delay at least three college working days prior to the designated date. This request shall be directed to the Chairperson of the Conduct and Discipline committee. The chairperson of the Conduct and Discipline Committee shall review the request and determine if an extension will be granted. If approved by the chairperson, a new date shall be established and appropriate notification will be provided to all parties involved. If the chairperson does not approve the request, the student shall be notified of the chairperson’s decision to continue the hearing as scheduled. Only one extension shall be granted. If the complainant or the accused student fails to appear, the student forfeits the right to present his/her case and the Committee may proceed with the hearing.

n. The Conduct and Discipline Committee makes a recommendation to the President for an appropriate sanction based upon its findings in conjunction with precedent cases. The President will notify the accused student and the complainant of the final decision in writing.

o. Sanctions, which may be imposed, are exoneration, formal reprimand, probation, temporary suspension, suspension, expulsion, restitution, and punitive grade.

i. **Exoneration** – Complete dismissal of guilt on all charges against the accused student.

ii. **Formal Reprimand** – This may be an oral or written warning. It notifies a student that any further violation of college regulations may subject the student to more severe disciplinary actions.

iii. **Probation** – Probation is for a specified period of time and may include loss of privilege, restrictions, and the performance of additional public service assignment.

iv. **Suspension** – Suspension excludes a student from the college and extracurricular activities for a stated period of time. The student must apply to the Conduct and Discipline Committee for readmission.

v. **Expulsion** – Student is dismissed from the college for an indefinite period.

vi. **Restitution** – The student may be required to compensate the injured party for damaged, lost, or destroyed property.
vii. **Punitive Grade** – The Conduct and Discipline Committee may impose a grade sanction and/or other sanctions.

VI. **Recording Disciplinary Action of Student Records**
The College does not record the results of disciplinary action on a student’s permanent record. Files are maintained to indicate the student is not in good standing for a stated period of time. This status reverts to good standing on a specific date.

VII. **Provision for Appeal**
The purpose of appellate proceedings is to determine whether or not there is substantial evidence to affirm the decision of the Conduct and Discipline Committee, and second, to determine to his/her own satisfaction that appropriate safeguards were guaranteed to insure the disciplined student a fair and impartial hearing. The student has seven college working days from the date of the President’s letter of notification of his decision in which to appeal the recommendation of the Conduct and Discipline Committee. The appeal must be in writing and addressed to the President. The appellate body is composed of the Dean of Instruction, the division chairperson/director, and the president of the Student Government Association. By a majority vote, it may (a) affirm the decision of the Conduct and Discipline Committee (b) offer an amended verdict subject to the approval of the President of the College, or (c) recommend a new hearing before the Conduct and Discipline Committee. The meeting of the appellate body is not a hearing and neither the student nor his/her legal counsel may be present during the appellate proceedings.