

Advocating for yourself

The principles of natural justice - A reaction to the divine right of kings:

The principles of natural justice is the wellspring from which we get our expectation of fair procedure. These principles are: the right to be heard, the right to adjudicators without bias, and the right to know the reasons for decisions. This means that there are clear and open processes in which grievances can be heard. These principles were set down as a reaction to the divine right of kings or, the idea that a decision maker is accountable to those they are impacting. If a decision maker denies you any of these 3 principles then you have a fairness complaint against them as they are accountable to you and the institution.

You are your best advocate:

There are various people at the College or even from your friends and family group that can support you in academic or conduct issues. When it comes to meeting with faculty or staff, you will find that you are the most important advocate in the room. Any representative you bring can ask questions or speak to clarify or enhance what you are saying, but may not speak for you or represent you without your presence: the advocate or support person is not a lawyer. It is very important that you prepare your thoughts and think about how to present those thoughts and arguments before you get into the meeting.

There are tools at Camosun to help you advocate for yourself:

You can ask the **Ombudsperson** to advocate for fairness for your situation. The Ombuds can tell you what about your situation might be unfair according to College policy and any other government legislation.

E-mail ombuds@camosun.ca

Call: Lans 250-370-3405 Inter 250-370-4444

You may also ask the **Student Society** to assign an advocate to your case; an advocate is different from the ombuds in that fairness is a concern, but they are focused generally on your best outcomes generally. This means an advocate is there to help you negotiate the best deal for you, because the advocate only represents your interests.

E-mail: advocacy@camosunstudent.org

Call: 250-370-3590

Another department that may assist you with an advocacy situation is the **Office of Student Support** particularly on issues of sexual and gender-based violence.

Email: oss@camosun.ca

Call: 250-370-3311

You may also have a friend, family member, an Elder, a case worker, a counsellor or any other member of the community not directly connected to the situation join you as a support person.

Understanding Camosun's appeal processes

Academic Appeals:

The academic appeal process at Camosun happens through the faculty administration structure. You must first meet with your professor to challenge your grade. In this meeting with your instructor you should outline why you think your grade is unfair or incorrect. If you wish to appeal your grade to a higher level, then it should reflect one or more of the four criteria that the College outlines in their policy (outlined below). If you are unsuccessful in convincing your instructor to change your grade then you can continue your appeal to the chair of the department. If you are unsuccessful at the chair level, you may then meet with the dean. These 3 steps are referred to as the informal process. If you are unsuccessful in the informal process, you may enter the formal process. The formal process involves writing a letter to the Vice President of Education outlining the argument you have been making and including any evidence you have.

Conduct appeals:

Parallel to this process are conduct appeals. It may be that in your time at Camosun you have an interpersonal conflict or other negative experience. In such cases you may be found to be in breach of the code of conduct at the College. A conduct situation will involve a different cast of administrator. Your instructor, chair or dean may be involved, but Campus security or the Office of Student Support may be involved in navigating this situation as well. It may be advisable to include a community, Student Society, or the Ombudsperson early on as a support person.

Thinking about your attitude:

If you walk into a room wanting a fight then a fight is what you will find. Be mindful of what you carry with you into a meeting. You may find that when you walk into a room that the decision maker expects a fight. Be mindful of this as well. Being intentional about how you think and what you say will help you avoid conflict and misunderstanding. If you can --be friendly; if not --be polite and respectful. Your goal is to create an environment where people are receptive to what you are trying to say. Do your very best to set a positive or neutral tone to your meeting. You may feel persecuted or like a decision maker is out to get you. Even if this is the case personal attacks are rarely helpful in these situations. Try to separate your feelings from the facts of your case.

Prepare your argument:

It is likely that you are emotional about whatever issue you are facing and you may find that you are holding on to every detail. It may feel that sharing these details makes it obvious, however, it is likely that the information is actually not organized in a way that someone

else can understand. The best way to do this is to find a thesis that you want to prove. For example: I have failed my practicum because I was not given any of the tools that other students were given. Organize examples that support your argument, like: Other students were able to book assessments and I was not allowed to, or my primary assessment was interrupted by a fire alarm and I was not given a proper replacement time.

Your thesis and examples should reflect the College's accepted reason for a grade appeal:

- a. An Education/Academic policy was contravened that negatively impacted the student's learning and final grade;
- b. Calculation error in summing up the marks for an evaluation and/or when a grade is recorded incorrectly;
- c. Error in the assigned course evaluation(s);
- d. Unfairness in applying grading criteria.

The College only recognizes your right to appeal over these four criteria. Your argument should fit into these criteria or your appeal can be rejected by the decision maker. It's your job to clearly provide a rationale for your circumstances fitting into one of these four categories.

Establish a timeline of events:

You may have many details of your situation that you want to outline for the decision maker. Putting events in a timeline can really help people understand the situation. Sometimes the order and the time when something happened can matter. A mid-term evaluation happening a week before the end of class might qualify as unfairness as you will have no time to make changes.

Make sure you have the order of events clear in your own head. Writing these things down can really help you to keep things straight and answer questions the decision maker might have.

Dress for success:

Dress clean not fancy. Dress normally. Don't dress like you're going out to a night club. Your clothes should be neat and tidy: this is not the time for ripped jeans or sheer tops. Dress like you are going to class comfortably.

