

Student Complaints Procedures

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1. Governing Policy

[Student Complaints Policy](#)

2. Purpose

- a. The University has a multi-step complaint, review and appeal resolution framework to provide students with appropriate opportunities to resolve their matter within the University. Refer to [Schedule A](#) of the Student Complaints Policy for a description of this framework.
- b. These procedures describe the processes that will be applied by Flinders University in receiving and resolving complaints from its students.

3. Procedures

3.1. Informal resolution of issues

- a. Students are expected to attempt to resolve matters in good faith at the local level, where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so, before lodging a formal complaint.
- b. Not all matters are suitable for informal resolution. Matters involving allegations of serious misconduct should not be addressed informally and should be referred to the formal complaints process.
- c. Students are encouraged to specifically name their issues and, if possible, propose solutions.
- d. Students can access support and assistance from [Flinders support services](#) at any time in an informal resolution process.
- e. Once a student has identified the issues and thought about solutions, either by themselves or with the help of a support service or person, they are encouraged to speak directly with the staff member or student responsible for the particular issue if they feel safe and comfortable to do so.
- f. Students may seek assistance from [Flinders support services](#) or [Student Advocacy and Welfare Services](#) in conducting conversations with other students or staff members, which may include mediation if appropriate and acceptable to all parties.
- g. The staff member who becomes aware of a student issue:
 - i. should endeavour to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all parties if possible

- ii. may refer the issue to a manager or supervisor from within the College/Portfolio area if appropriate
 - iii. may request Student Policy and Integrity Services arrange mediation, if appropriate and acceptable to all parties, or
 - iv. where the matter is not suitable for informal resolution, or where any of the parties believe that a matter may be serious and/or complex, contact Student Policy and Integrity Services as soon as practicable for advice.
- h. In attempting to resolve a student issue at the local level, the relevant staff member may employ a range of strategies, including but not limited to:
- i. preliminary enquiries and seeking advice if required
 - ii. problem-solving and remedial intervention
 - iii. referral to other staff or support services, such as Health, Counselling and Disability Services
 - iv. facilitated discussions between parties
 - v. referring the student, or the complaint, to Student Policy and Integrity Services.
- i. Informal resolutions are achieved with the agreement of both the student who raised the issue and the person with whom they had the issue. They do not involve a ruling by a higher authority.
- j. Accurate and complete records of informal resolutions must be created and maintained by the staff member involved in the resolution.
- k. An informal resolution which involves a decision that is communicated in writing is considered to be a determination or decision by the University which may be reviewed in accordance with the [Student Review and Appeal Procedures](#) without proceeding to a formal complaint. Informal resolutions that do not involve a decision communicated in writing can be lodged as a formal complaint if the informal resolution proves unsuccessful.

3.2. Lodging a formal complaint

- a. If an issue cannot be, or is not suitable to be, resolved informally, students may make a complaint using the University's [lodgement process](#).
- b. Students lodging complaints involving allegations of sexual harassment or sexual assault are encouraged to seek support and assistance from [Health, Counselling and Disability Services](#) and to make a [Safety on Campus report](#) in the first instance.
- c. Complaints will be acknowledged in writing as soon as possible following receipt.
- d. Students may obtain assistance in formulating their complaint from Student Advocacy and Welfare Services or from any other third party of their choosing (e.g. advocacy groups, legal representatives, friends or family members). However, complaints must be written in a student's own words and lodged under their own name.
- e. Students may lodge a complaint as a group, but the person lodging the complaint must provide evidence of all named students' consent to the lodgement of the complaint.
- f. When making a complaint, students should:
 - i. clearly state the nature and details of the complaint and provide any facts or documentation regarding it
 - ii. provide details of informal attempts to resolve the matter, or the reasons for bypassing the informal resolution process
 - iii. propose the outcome sought. Students should be aware that not all complaints will result in the outcome they seek.

- g. Complaints must be raised in a timely fashion. Generally, the University will not consider complaints lodged more than 6 months after the issue occurs, unless the University considers that the circumstances warrant it.

3.3. Complaint preliminary assessment and triage

- a. When a complaint is lodged, a preliminary assessment and triage is performed by Student Policy and Integrity Services. This involves:
- i. prioritising complaints for action
 - ii. determining what type of complaint is involved – academic, administrative, behavioural, or other
 - iii. liaising with Health, Counselling and Disability Services if the complaint relates to an allegation of sexual harassment or sexual assault
 - iv. assessing the nature and substance of the complaint
 - v. ensuring that the complaint does not duplicate or substantially overlap with any legal action, complaint, review or appeal underway on the same matter and
 - vi. determining the correct referral point for complaint resolution.
- b. In assessing the complaint, Student Policy and Integrity Services may:
- i. contact the student and any other party/parties to a complaint in order to gather information
 - ii. if warranted, refer the matter immediately to the appropriate authority to impose without-prejudice interim measures to protect the safety and wellbeing of any parties in accordance with the [Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Policy](#) and/or the [Policy and Procedures for Handling a Matter Under Statute 6.4: Student Conduct](#)
 - iii. if appropriate, contact the student to propose that informal resolution be attempted (if it has not been)
 - iv. seek to clarify information relevant to the matter
 - v. provide further information on the complaint process and next steps to the student
 - vi. provide relevant information arising from the complaint as feedback to the College / Portfolio area
 - vii. refer the matter to a different University process or service if it is not actually a complaint (e.g. fee issues, admissions matters, academic progress, misconduct, safer community etc.)
 - viii. dismiss the complaint if it is out of time (as per 3.2.f. above), vexatious, without merit or otherwise represents an abuse of process.
- c. Preliminary assessment of complaints will be done in a timely fashion and will be completed no later than 10 University business days after the complaint is received.
- d. Students will receive notification of either the outcome or the proposed next steps with their complaint within 28 University business days after the complaint is received.

3.4. Complaint management

- a. Student complaints will be referred by Student Policy and Integrity Services and addressed as detailed in the table below.

Nature of Complaint	Decision maker
Any aspect of an academic program (excepting assessment and academic progress)	Dean (Education) or nominee in relevant College *Where the Dean (Education) is the subject of the complaint, the matter must be referred to the Vice-President & Executive Dean HDR Coordinator for higher degree by research students
Any administrative or fees related matter	Appropriate officer in the relevant branch of University administration
Behaviour of a student	Allegations of serious misconduct will be referred to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Enhancement) in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Handling a Matter Under Statute 6.4: Student Conduct Allegations of poor behaviour will be referred to Dean (Education) or HDR Coordinator in the relevant College
Behaviour of a staff member	Director, People & Culture or nominee and will be managed in accordance with the relevant staffing policies including where relevant the Staff Code of Conduct and the Enterprise Agreement
Behaviour of third party relating to foreign interference in University activities	General Counsel and University Secretary and will be handled in accordance with the Foreign Interactions Policy

- b. Where a complaint is referred to another process of the University for resolution (e.g. student conduct or staff misconduct matters), the matter will be managed in accordance with the relevant policy and procedures. Student Policy and Integrity Services will advise the student of this and will provide them with contact details for the person or area handling the matter.
- c. Where a complaint is, or becomes, the subject of a police investigation the University will suspend the complaint investigation if required to avoid interference with the police matter.
- d. All staff members involved in resolving a complaint must be free from bias and not have a real or perceived conflict of interest, including prior involvement in handling the complaint.
- e. Student Policy and Integrity Services will provide support and assistance to staff involved in resolving complaints.
- f. Complaints may be addressed using a range of approaches as appropriate. These include:
- i. fact-finding activities (e.g. requesting documentation, checking data systems, conducting conversations and interviews)
 - ii. facilitated conversations involving the student and other parties
 - iii. investigations (see procedure 3.5 below).
- g. The decision-maker will make a determination regarding the complaint and will:

- i. inform the student and any respondents of the outcome, reasons for the outcome, any proposed actions to follow, and their option to request a review of the decision
- ii. provide a summary statement of the outcome and actions to Student Policy and Integrity Services or the University's Student Complaint and Integrity Management System for record keeping purposes.

3.5. Investigations

- a. A formal investigative process may be used:
 - i. where the person with responsibility for addressing the complaint believes it is warranted or would be useful, or
 - ii. where Student Policy and Integrity Services assesses the complaint as being of a seriousness or complexity that an investigative process is necessary.
- b. Where an investigative process is used, an investigator will be appointed by the Senior Manager, Student Policy and Integrity Services in consultation with the relevant senior officer. This may be an internal or external person, but will be a person with appropriate skills and training to conduct the investigation, and with no conflict of interest or prior involvement in the matter.
- c. Where the complaint involves allegations of sexual harassment or sexual assault, the University will engage appropriately trained investigators to ensure any investigation be undertaken in a trauma-informed model.
- d. The investigator will:
 - i. conduct the investigation with due regard to procedural fairness, timeliness, and the individuals' safety and well-being
 - ii. notify the parties of the investigation
 - iii. seek sufficient particulars of the alleged conduct to enable the complaint/concern to be factually investigated
 - iv. provide the respondent (if any) with a summary of allegations and/or a statement of the alleged conduct
 - v. provide the respondent (if any) with an opportunity to respond to the complaint and/or alleged conduct
 - vi. if possible and appropriate, interview the parties and any witnesses
 - vii. review any relevant documentation, and
 - viii. prepare a report setting out the complaint, how the investigation was conducted, relevant facts, and findings, and present this to the relevant decision-maker.
- e. On receipt of the investigation report the decision-maker will consider the report, make a decision on the complaint, and communicate the decision to the student and Student Policy and Integrity Services in accordance with section 3.4.g.

3.6. Decisions in complaint matters

- a. A complaint that is addressed as a formal complaint matter will be found to be either:
 - i. substantiated
 - ii. substantiated in part or
 - iii. not substantiated.

- b. A determination that the complaint is substantiated wholly or in part may lead to any combination of the following outcomes, or any other outcome appropriate in the circumstances:
 - i. rectification of administrative or academic error
 - ii. implementation of negotiated solution
 - iii. a direction of no contact by any means or for any reason
 - iv. intervention by an academic staff member
 - v. referral to another process within the University (e.g. student progress process)
 - vi. misconduct action.
- c. Decisions in complaint matters must be communicated to the student as soon as is practicable once the decision has been made.

3.7. Review of complaint decisions

- a. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint may request a review of the decision as specified in the [Student Review and Appeal Policy](#), except where a complaint is referred to another process of the University (e.g. student conduct or staff misconduct matters).
- b. The review process is detailed in the [Student Review and Appeal Procedures](#).

3.8. Appeals of complaint decisions

- a. A student who remains dissatisfied after the review may appeal the review decision if they have one or more relevant grounds as specified in the [Student Review and Appeal Policy](#).
- b. The appeals process is detailed in the [Student Review and Appeal Procedures](#).

3.9. Information management and recordkeeping

- a. Full and accurate records will be kept of all complaint, review and appeals matters, their investigation (if relevant) and their resolution.
- b. Student Policy and Integrity Services will ensure that key information is captured centrally for each complaint that is lodged via the complaints process.
- c. Staff involved in complaint matters at any level must also ensure that full and accurate information is recorded regarding the complaint and any resolution reached.
- d. Deidentified complaints data will be reported on in a regular and systematic manner.

4. Responsibilities and Authorities

Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provides a statement of the nature of the complaint, giving as many details as possible. b. Co-operates with the investigation process as required.
Student Policy and Integrity Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Receives, assesses and triages student complaints. d. Provides relevant information to both staff and students in resolution of complaint matters. e. Facilitates the handling of complaints and provides administrative oversight of the referral process. f. Ensures full and accurate records of complaints are made and maintained

HDR Coordinators	g. Receives, and manages resolution of, complaints regarding higher degrees by research matters.
Dean (Education) or nominee	h. Receives, and manages resolution of, complaints regarding academic matters (including topic and course quality) and poor student behaviour.
Vice-President & Executive Deans or nominees	i. Receives, and manages resolution of, complaints regarding the relevant Dean (Education).
Director, People and Culture or nominee	j. Receives complaints about the behaviour of staff
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Enhancement)	k. Receives complaints about serious student misconduct.
Senior Manager, Student Policy and Integrity Services	l. Appoints investigators where required.

5. Forms

Student complaints [lodgement process](#)

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* Unless otherwise indicated, this policy or procedures still apply beyond the review date.

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