

Procedure: Student complaint resolution

Purpose

To provide the process for the resolution of student concerns about their experience at the University.

Procedure

1. Any student with an immediate safety issue should contact ANU Security on x52249.
2. The following areas are able to provide advice on complaints and grievances to students at any stage of the process:
 - a. Dean of Students
 - b. ANU Students' Association (ANUSA)
 - c. Postgraduate and Research Students Association (PARSA)
 - d. Access, Inclusion and Wellbeing
 - e. Counselling Centre
 - f. Other staff as appropriate to the circumstances.
3. The Dean of Students may assist in the resolution of an informal complaint or grievance.
4. A student may refer a matter to an external body (such as the Australian Human Rights Commission) at any time. The University may suspend or cease an internal review of a complaint if an external review is conducted. This referral will be undertaken in accordance with any requirements stipulated in the Education Services for Overseas Students Act and The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007, though is not exclusive to international students.
5. Any complaints directed specifically against the Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor are referred to a nominee of the Chancellor, who determines who is to conduct an investigation. Any investigation follows the general procedure outlined in this Policy.
6. In all cases this procedure is commenced within 10 working days of an issue

being raised.

7. If at any stage of a process a complaint is considered frivolous, vexatious or is lacking in substance, the person considering the complaint may choose not to proceed with the complaint resolution process. The reasons for arriving at this decision must be documented and provided to the student.

8. A person responsible for investigating a formal complaint ensures that a confidential file is created.

Informal Resolution

9. A student with a complaint or grievance is strongly encouraged to:

- a. seek advice on whether they have a legitimate complaint or grievance and how to resolve their concerns; and
- b. initially seek an informal resolution of any complaint or grievance that they decide to pursue.

10. After gathering information and advice in relation to a complaint or grievance, a student may:

- a. Take no further action; or
- b. Make an informal approach to the person concerned (the respondent). The Dean of Students can assist with this process; or
- c. Proceed directly to the formal complaint resolution process.

11. Most complaints and grievances are resolved informally, through discussion between the involved parties.

Formal Resolution

12. A student may lodge a formal complaint or grievance where an attempt at informal resolution has been unsuccessful or is not appropriate.

13. The complaint or grievance is lodged with the responsible officer in writing.

14. The responsible officer is the person with responsibility for the area, staff member or student concerned, including:

- a. an issue with a course should normally be referred to the course or program convener;
- b. a problem involving a particular staff member or student should normally be referred to that person's supervisor or the appropriate Head of School or Department;
- c. a problem regarding the Head of a residential hall or college should be

referred to the Registrar, Student Life.

15. If the appropriate responsible officer is not clearly identifiable, students seek advice from the Dean of Students.

16. Once the responsible officer has received details of the complaint they aim to resolve it expeditiously, confidentially, and normally within ten working days of receipt.

17. The responsible officer:

- a. considers whether the complaint can be resolved at the local level or whether it should be referred elsewhere for advice and/or resolution
- b. considers whether the complaint is appropriately dealt with under these procedures or whether there are other policies or procedures that are more appropriate and if so refer the complainant to those procedures
- c. informs the member(s) of the University against whom the complaint has been made ('respondent') of the details;
- d. provides the complainant and respondent with a copy of the Policy and Procedures relating to the resolution of student complaints;
- e. in most situations organises a discussion with the complainant (including face to face, telephone, or other methods), to hear the full details of the complaint;
- f. allows each party to be accompanied and assisted by a support person in any relevant meetings if requested.
- g. explains the process and the range of options available to each party, and ensure that the parties are aware of and, where appropriate, have accessed relevant sources of advice and support;
- h. considers the complainant's concerns and their desired outcomes and any responses given by the respondent;
- i. considers whether the complaint constitutes a genuine grievance;
- j. seeks to obtain an agreed resolution;
- k. makes notes and diary entries as appropriate, which may include some form of confidential file note;
- l. keeps the complainant and the respondent informed of actions taken in considering the complaint;
- m. takes into account the impact of any proposed resolution of the complaint on any third parties;

- n. documents the actions taken to resolve the complaint including any findings made or agreements reached and provide a copy to the complainant and respondent;
 - o. ensures that a confidential file is created; and
 - p. monitors the situation during and after the resolution process.
18. Where a complainant or respondent considers that the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, they may escalate the process.

Escalation

19. If the formal resolution process has not resulted in satisfactory resolution of the complaint, it can be referred to the relevant Dean of an ANU College, the Director of a Division, or appropriate nominee of one of these individuals (the 'mediator').
20. If a mediator is not impartial, the matter should be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who will nominate an appropriate alternative delegate.
21. The complainant or respondent submit details of the complaint in writing to the mediator, including an account of attempts made thus far to resolve the complaint.
22. The mediator aims to resolve the complaint expeditiously, confidentially, and normally within ten working days of receipt.
23. A mediator may take investigative actions including but not limited to:
- a. Referral for investigation by a senior staff member from another area of the University;
 - b. Requesting further documentation;
 - c. Discussions with parties involved, with the parties permitted to be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings if requested.
24. On the basis of this written submission (supplemented by other relevant documentation, and by discussion with the complainant, respondent, and others, as appropriate), the mediator may:
- a. consider the complaint outside the ambit of this procedure, and choose to take no action in respect of the complaint, or refer it for action under other University complaint provisions;
 - b. consider the complaint to be frivolous or vexatious or without substance and choose to take no action in respect of the complaint, or refer the

complaint itself for consideration under the discipline rules;

- c. consider the complaint already satisfactorily resolved , and direct those involved to proceed accordingly;
- d. consider the complaint unresolved previously, make an alternative determination, and direct those involved to proceed accordingly;

25. The mediator reports in writing any actions or findings to both the complainant and the respondent, and initiates appropriate actions to resolve the complaint. This may include action under the relevant disciplinary provisions where appropriate.

Outcome Actions

26. Actions required will vary depending upon the nature and circumstances of each complaint. Some potential outcomes may be:

- a. a complainant gaining a better understanding of the situation and no longer considering that they have been aggrieved;
- b. an oral or written apology;
- c. an oral or written caution; or
- d. agreement to participate in some form of mediation or counselling.

27. Disciplinary action is not provided for as part of this process. However, at any stage in this process, a responsible officer or mediator may believe that a person's behaviour may constitute misconduct, terminate this process and refer the complaint for consideration under the University's disciplinary provisions.

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