

STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- all students;
- former students who make complaints within the specified timeframe;
- prospective students whose complaint relates to administrative process(es) during application, selection or admission;
- all courses and units; and
- all staff, including adjuncts with teaching or supervisory responsibilities.

POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of the Student Complaints Policy is to provide the University with a consistent organisational approach to managing and resolving student complaints. It also ensures that the University is accountable in its decision making and handling of student complaints.

This policy sets out the general principles that guide student complaints management, the stages of the escalation process and the responsibilities of students and staff.

This policy is supported by two procedures: the Student Complaints Procedure sets out the steps for students to take at each stage of the process and what they can expect from the University in return; the Student Complaints Management Procedure outlines the responsibilities of staff who receive, handle and investigate complaints. The Student Complaints Management Procedure also sets out the reporting mechanisms that enable the Academic Board to oversee and make recommendations to improve the complaints process.

This policy does not apply to matters where Monash University (the University) has separate processes for how it handles complaints or appeals in relation to those matters. Without limiting the generality of the preceding sentence, this policy may not be used to:

- notify, complain about, or report an incident or concern relating to academic, general or research misconduct under [Monash University \(Council\) Regulations](#) Part 7 – Student Discipline;
- complain about an outcome reached under the [Monash University \(Council\) Regulations](#) Part 7 – Student Discipline;
- notify, complain about, or report an incident or concern involving the interpersonal behaviour of students, such as sexual assault, assault, harassment or bullying, stalking. These matters should be [reported to the Safer Community Unit](#);
- initiate an action about discrimination or harassment, unprofessional or inappropriate conduct by a staff member or to complain about the outcome of a matter addressed under the [Integrity and Respect Policy](#);
- initiate a request for re-marking of an assessment task in a coursework unit. This process is governed by the [Marking and Feedback Procedure](#);
- initiate an action relating to intellectual property ownership or commercialisation revenue sharing or complain about a matter addressed under the [Intellectual Property: Dispute Resolution Procedure](#);
- complain about a student progress decision reached under the [Monash University \(Academic Board\) Regulations](#), Part 4 – Exclusion for Unsatisfactory Progress or Inability to Progress, or Part 6 – Student Progress Management;
- complain about a decision relating to employment at the University;
- complain about a financial assistance decision that is a reviewable decision under the Higher Education Support Act 2003;
- complain about an outcome reached under the [Monash University \(Council\) Regulations](#) Part 8 – Revocation of Degrees or Other Awards;
- complain about an outcome reached under the [Monash University \(Council\) Regulations](#) Part 13 – Exclusion for Safety Reasons;
- complain about a [Freedom of Information](#) decision; or
- complain about an election of members of Council or the Academic Board.

1. General principles

1.1 The University is committed to addressing complaints effectively and fairly, through a process that:

- is impartial and fair to all parties involved;

- is carried out with transparency and consistency;
 - is accessible and available to all students;
 - is handled within established timelines;
 - respects the privacy of all parties involved; and
 - is appropriate for dealing with complex and sensitive issues.
- 1.2 A student making a complaint has the right to a fair and thorough investigation, based on the principles of this policy.
- 1.3 A student who makes a complaint in good faith will not be prejudiced or experience reprisals in any way.
- 1.4 The University publishes information about the complaints process on the student complaints website.

2. Student complaints process

- 2.1 The University strives to resolve complaints as close as possible to where the complaint arose and with the people most directly involved. If a complaint cannot be resolved directly with the staff member or area responsible, the student has an option to escalate the complaint. The escalation process has five stages:
- 2.1.1 **Student complaint stage 1: Informal, direct complaint** raised directly with the staff member or area responsible for the decision or service related to the complaint.
- 2.1.2 **Student complaint stage 2: Informal, escalated complaint** raised with a staff member within the faculty, school, department or other area who has the ability to review a stage 1 decision.
- 2.1.3 **Student complaint stage 3: Formal investigation** by nominated case officers and complaints officers who have not had previous involvement with the complaint.
- 2.1.4 **Student complaint stage 4: Internal review** conducted by the University Student Ombudsman.
- 2.1.5 **Student complaint stage 5: External review** by the Victorian Ombudsman.
- 2.2 The University may set limits on the handling of a complaint or discontinue any process if the student making the complaint engages in behaviour that, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues, or if the complaint is frivolous, vexatious or lacking in substance.

3. Student responsibilities

- 3.1 Students making a complaint are expected to cooperate with the University's complaints handling process and treat staff with courtesy and respect. Failure to do so may result in the process being discontinued.
- 3.2 Only the individual student concerned can make a complaint under this policy. Complaints cannot be made on behalf of another person or persons.

4. Staff responsibilities

- 4.1 All University staff are responsible for:
- giving serious consideration to student complaints;
 - responding to student complaints in a timely manner and with courtesy and respect; and
 - respecting the privacy of students making a complaint.
- 4.2 The Senior Director of Student Education and Business Services (SEBS) will nominate case officers to manage stage 3 complaints. The Chair of the Graduate Research Committee and Directors, or equivalent, of administrative areas that provide services to students, will nominate at least one case officer to manage stage 3 complaints for the area.
- 4.3 Case officers are responsible for:
- receiving stage 3 complaints and maintaining records of all related documents;
 - referring stage 3 complaints to the appropriate complaints officer; and
 - maintaining a register of stage 3 complaints by recording and monitoring the number and nature of complaints received from students.
- Case officers may also conduct all or part of the investigation.
- 4.4 Complaints officers (or the Chair of the GRC or delegate for academic complaints related to the research component of a graduate research course) are responsible for:
- determining whether an investigation of a stage 3 complaint is necessary; and
 - ensuring that a fair investigation is carried out and where appropriate negotiating a resolution, as required in each case.


- 4.5 The University Student Ombudsman provides an avenue for an independent and impartial review of complaints outcomes to ensure the resolution of a student complaint has been carried out in accordance with the Student Complaints Procedures. The University Student Ombudsman is appointed by the University Council.
- 4.6 Where the University Student Ombudsman is considered to be affected by a reasonable apprehension of bias or is absent from the University, the Vice-Chancellor can appoint a person (in addition to and not in place of the University Student Ombudsman) to review and make recommendations in relation to a particular complaint or matter. This person, for the purposes of that particular review, has all the responsibilities and powers of the University Student Ombudsman.

DEFINITIONS

Case officer	Staff member responsible for receiving and managing a stage 3 complaint. A case officer may conduct all or part of the investigation and report findings to the complaints officer for the area, or to the Chair of the GRC or delegate for academic complaints related to the research component of a graduate research course.
Complaints officer	Staff member responsible for overseeing the investigation of a stage 3 complaint. For stage 3 complaints relating to the research component of a graduate research course, the complaints officer makes recommendations to the Chair of the Graduate Research Committee, or delegate, on the outcome of a stage 3 complaint. For all other stage 3 complaints, the complaints officer will determine the outcome of the complaint. A complaints officer can also undertake the role of a case officer.
Staff	For the purposes of this procedure, staff includes all Monash staff and adjuncts with teaching or supervisory responsibilities.
University Student Ombudsman	A person appointed by the University Council who provides an independent review of the University's handling of student complaints.

GOVERNANCE

Supporting procedures	Student Complaints Procedure Student Complaints Management Procedure	
Supporting schedules		
Associated policies	University Student Ombudsman Policy	
Policy owner	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)	
Legislation mandating compliance	Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011 (Cth) – Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth) National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (Cth)	
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