

Student Complaints Procedures

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Description	These procedures support the <i>Student Complaints Policy</i> .

Related documents

[Student Complaints Policy](#)

[Student Complaints Form](#)

[Student Review and Appeals Policy](#)

[Student Review and Appeals Procedures](#)

[Staff Guidelines on Decision-Making in Student Cases](#)

[Student Charter](#)

[Student Administration Policy](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Staff Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

[Staff Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy](#)

[Public Interest Disclosure Policy](#)

[Griffith University Privacy Plan](#)

[Reporting and Resolution of Staff Sexual Assault, Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Procedures](#)

[Records Management Policy](#)

[Queensland Ombudsman](#)

[\[Scope\]](#) [\[Process for Making a Complaint\]](#) [\[Consideration of a Complaint\]](#) [\[Student Support\]](#) [\[Definitions\]](#)

1. SCOPE

These procedures support the *Student Complaints Policy*. The processes for making a complaint described in this document apply to all students (non-award, undergraduate, postgraduate and research) of the University who wish to raise a problem or concern regarding their treatment as a student, the quality of a service provided by the University or the conduct of staff as being not in accordance with the expectations set out in the [Student Charter](#), regardless of the location of those studies and whether they are conducted on-campus or off-campus.

These procedures do not apply to complaints involving allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination by staff. These matters are to be dealt with under the University's *Reporting and Resolution of Staff Sexual Assault, Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Procedures*. Similarly, these procedures do not apply to student requests for reviews or appeals of University decisions. The *Student Review and Appeals Policy* and *Student Review and Appeals Procedures* apply to such cases.

2. PROCESS FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT

In making a complaint a student raises a problem or concern regarding their treatment by the University, the quality or delivery of a service provided by the University or the conduct of University staff or students for the purpose of:

- receiving an apology;
- correcting an error in relation to the student or the student's record;
- having a decision made; and/or
- improving existing services and processes.

2.1 Understand the Complaints Process

Before making a complaint students are encouraged to access the Student Complaints website to check their understanding of the complaints process and to see if their complaint can be investigated. A complaint made more than 12 months after the event that is the subject of the complaint is unable to be investigated.

2.2 Process

In making a complaint, students are encouraged to follow the process set out below. This process is illustrated in Diagram 1 in the *Student Complaints Policy*.

2.2.1 Step 1 Resolve the concern informally

A student should try to resolve the issue informally by contacting the person or service area concerned directly. Informal resolution strategies may include:

- writing a letter to the individual detailing concerns and requesting the alleged behaviour to stop;
- requesting a relevant staff member or an appropriate student representative organisation to raise the matter with the individual on their behalf; or
- using existing student feedback systems on the University's website or Student Experience of Teaching (SET) and Student Experience of a Course (SEC) surveys to provide qualitative feedback on improving service delivery.

The outcomes of Step 1 may include:

- resolution of the complaint.
- referral of the complaint to the relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*.

2.2.2 Step 2 Make a complaint

The student submits a *Student Complaints Form* to the relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*.

In making a complaint students are expected to provide to the University staff member information about the:

- actions they have taken to resolve the complaint;
- contact the student has had with the staff member, student or service which is the subject of the complaint;
- personnel to whom the student requested the complaint be addressed, when the request was made and any outcomes; and
- outcome/s sought as a result of the complaint

using the *Student Complaints Form* to which is attached all relevant information and documents related to the complaint in order to assist the relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy* to resolve the matter.

Where the student is unsure of to whom the complaint is to be directed the student may lodge the *Student Complaints Form* with the Student Ombudsman's Office who will forward the complaint to the relevant person or area.

On receipt of the *Student Complaints Form*, the student will receive written acknowledgement within 10 working days of formal lodgement of the form. In acknowledging receipt of the *Student Complaints Form*, if the complaint is more than 12 months old, advice will be provided to the student that the University is unable to investigate. Written advice concerning the outcome of the complaint will normally be provided within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. Students will be notified of any unforeseen delays in finalising consideration of a complaint.

The outcomes of Step 2 may include the relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*, undertaking one or more of the following actions:

- correcting an error in relation to the student or the student's record;
- making a decision that may or may not be in the student's favour;
- rejecting the complaint as unsubstantiated, trivial or vexatious;
- making a commitment to review and improve existing services and processes or
- issuing an apology to the student.

2.2.3 Step 3 Refer to the Student Ombudsman

If the student is dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint they may refer the complaint to the Student Ombudsman within 10 working days of the date of notification of the outcome of the complaint. Referral of the complaint to the Student Ombudsman's Office shall be acknowledged in writing within 10 working days of its receipt. Advice from the Student Ombudsman's Office concerning the outcome of its review of the handling of complaint will normally be provided within 20 working days of its receipt. Students will be notified of any unforeseen delays in the Student Ombudsman's consideration of the handling of the complaint.

The outcomes of Step 3 may include the Student Ombudsman undertaking one or more of the following actions:

- upholding in its original form the Step 2 outcome;
- recommending such other action which will assist with the resolution of the complaint.
- recommending such actions and improvements to the responsible officer of the University Executive to address systemic issues arising from the review of a complaint or complaints.

Within the University the Student Ombudsman is the final step in the University's complaints process and students seeking further consideration of their complaint are to be directed to the Queensland Ombudsman.

2.3 Timeframes

Timelines are monitored and managed via a business system through the Student Ombudsman's Office.

Step 2

- The student is to submit a *Student Complaints Form* to the relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*.

Within 10 working days of lodgement of the *Student Complaints Form*:

- The relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*, acknowledges receipt of the Form, advising of the actions to be taken to investigate the complaint and the timeframe for resolving the complaint.
- The relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*, commences a review of all relevant material and any investigations that may be required.

Within 20 working days of lodgement of the *Student Complaints Form*:

- The relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*, provides written advice to the student on the outcome of the complaint.
- The relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy*, advises the student, if they are dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint, of their right to and the timeframe for referral to the Student Ombudsman.

Step 3

Within 10 working days of the student receiving the outcome of their complaint:

- The student is to refer the handling of the complaint to the Student Ombudsman

Within 10 working days of referral of the handling of the complaint

- The Student Ombudsman acknowledges receipt of the complaint, advising of the actions to be taken and the timeframe for the process to review the outcome of the student's complaint.
- The Student Ombudsman commences a review of all relevant material and any investigations that may be required.

Within 20 working days of referral of the complaint:

- The Student Ombudsman provides written advice to the student on the outcome of their review of the complaint.
- The Student Ombudsman advises the student of their rights to make a complaint about the University's handling of the complaint and/or the complaint outcome to the Queensland Ombudsman.

2.4 Role of the Decision-Maker

Academic and professional staff handle student complaints:

- about those matters for which their role (e.g. Program Director) or their position (e.g. Director, Student Administration) is designated within University's *Student Complaints Policy*;
- in accordance with conditions, criteria and timeframes specified within the University's *Students Complaints Policy* and *Students Complaints Procedures*;
- on the basis of documentation specified in the University's policies, processes, websites and business systems, including Programs and Courses website, Course Profiles, Learning@Griffith;
- through identification of the key issues and relevant considerations;
- in a manner that is reasonable, fair and impartial including evaluating all relevant facts, disclosing any conflicts of interest and maintaining the student's privacy and the confidentiality of the matter.

2.5 Role of the Student Ombudsman

The Student Ombudsman is responsible for the student complaints handling regime within the University. This includes:

- acting as a neutral arbiter through the provision of impartial and confidential information to students about the complaints submission process and assist with clarifying the outcome sought by students.
- considering complaints from students about their treatment as a student, the quality or delivery of a service provided by the University or the actions of the University's staff or students.
- recommending an appropriate resolution for the complaint that achieves fair, equitable and balanced outcomes for all parties.
- providing policy and procedural advice to staff members involved in handling complaints; ensuring compliance with the University's *Student Complaints Policy* and *Student Complaints Procedures*, and establishing response timeframes with a focus on resolving complaints locally and expeditiously as appropriate.
- overseeing the University's response to queries concerning complaints from external agencies e.g. the Queensland Ombudsman.
- synthesising data and monitoring trends to identify systemic issues in order to champion a culture of continuous improvement to strengthen and build the reputation of Griffith University.

2.6 Role of the Student Ombudsman's Office

The Student Ombudsman's Office performs the following functions:

- Attending to student enquiries in relation to the University's complaints process, providing information to students on the University's complaint handling process via the Student Complaints website and referring students to appropriate forms, policy and procedure.
- Receiving complaints under the *Student Complaints Policy* and *Student Complaints Procedures* for referral to the Student Ombudsman.
- Recording particulars of complaints and enquiries from students.
- Coordinating administrative actions leading to or arising out of the complaints handling process, including recording and monitoring timeframes for resolution of complaints, and sending acknowledgement of receipt letters/emails.
- Generating reports to support the Student Ombudsman in conducting data analysis and performance improvement activities.
- Liaising with University staff, students and Student Advocates to arrange meetings and interviews with the Student Ombudsman.
- Handling any queries concerning complaints from external agencies such as the Queensland Ombudsman for referral to the Student Ombudsman;
- Providing Complaints Handling training to the University community;
- Providing an Annual Report on the activities of the Office to the Academic Committee including recommendations for systemic improvements in relation to the student experience at the University;
- Reporting to service areas of the University potential business, process and system improvements identified through the complaints process, requesting plans for implementing improvements and monitoring the impact of implemented business, process and system improvements.

3 CONSIDERATION OF A COMPLAINT

In considering a complaint (Step 2 of these procedures), the relevant University staff member, as set out in Table 1 of the *Student Complaints Policy* or Student Ombudsman shall:

- consider the complaint as made on its merits;
- request more information from the complainant or from members of the University to assess the validity of the complaint, if required;
- take action to resolve the complaint, which may involve conducting further investigation into the complaint; or
- reject the complaint as unsubstantiated, trivial or vexatious.

3.1 Response to Student

The University is committed to promptly addressing student complaints. Where a complaint is made using the *Student Complaints Form* or referred to the Student Ombudsman the student will be sent a letter of acknowledgement within 10 working days of formal lodgement of the form. Advice concerning the outcome of the complaint will normally be provided within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. Students will be notified of any unforeseen delays in finalising consideration of a complaint.

3.2 Response to the Step 2 Decision Maker

The Student Ombudsman's Office will provide advice concerning the outcome of the complaint to the Step 2 Decision Maker at the same time and in the same form as it is provided to the complainant for the purpose of preventing similar problems or concerns arising in the future.

3.3 Recommendations to Responsible Officer of University Executive

In considering a complaint or complaints the Student Ombudsman may discover systemic issues impacting on the University's treatment of its students, the quality of the services provided by the University or the conduct of staff which are in need of review and improvement. The Student Ombudsman may make such recommendations to address these issues to the responsible officer of the University Executive.

4 STUDENT SUPPORT

Students who wish to make a complaint are advised that assistance and advice can be sought from the student representative organisations (The Griffith University Student Representative Council, the Gold Coast Student Guild and the Griffith University Postgraduate Students Association), Student Administration Centres, Student Services and Griffith International.

Where students are requested to attend meetings with the relevant University staff member or the Student Ombudsman, they may be accompanied or represented by a support person. The support person must not be a currently practising solicitor or barrister. The role of the support person is to bear witness to the meeting and what is discussed. Where authorised in writing by the student, the support person may assist in representing the student in the presentation of their case.

5 DEFINITIONS

Business systems refers to databases that store information relating to student complaints and the outcomes of decisions made in respect of student complaints or case management systems that track information leading to a decision in relation to a complaint, the reasons for a decision and a record of the decision or decision support applications that store policy or other information to guide decision-makers. This also includes feedback systems that store information received from students including but not limited to Student Experience surveys.

Complainant means a person making a complaint. To make a complaint in accordance with this policy the person must be a student as defined below.

Complaint refers to an expression of concern or dissatisfaction in relation to the treatment of a student, the quality or delivery of a service or the conduct of staff and students.

Staff refers to:

- **Academic staff:** a person employed by Griffith University in a position classified at Academic Level A, B, C, D or E or a person employed under a casual arrangement to carry out academic duties. This includes external examiners appointed for the purpose of examining research dissertations and HDR candidates.
- **General staff:** a person employed by Griffith University in a position classified as General Staff HEW level 1 to HEW level 10 Grade 1 inclusive and includes a person employed under a casual arrangement.

Student refers to a person who has an active enrolment status in a program of the University. To have an active enrolment status, the student shall have:

- accepted an offer of admission to a program and shall have completed the enrolment procedures prescribed by the University;
- paid such fees and charges as the University may require to be paid as a condition of enrolment;
- fulfilled the conditions prescribed for Commonwealth supported students, in the case of a student admitted to a program as a Commonwealth supported student; and
- completed any other procedures which may be required as a condition of enrolment.

In some instances a student undertaking a program classified as a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) may be referred to as an HDR candidate.

Student Ombudsman refers to a person who provides leadership in the handling of student complaints at the University. The Student Ombudsman considers complaints which arise from students. The Student Ombudsman investigates as far as possible whether the University has acted fairly and reasonably and ensures matters are dealt with in a consistent and procedurally fair manner.

Office of the Student Ombudsman is the office that supports the Student Ombudsman in receiving and managing complaints made by students in relation to their treatment as a student, the quality or delivery of a service provided by the University or the actions of the University's staff or students.

Vexatious refers to a complaint which is:

- without merit;
- the substance of the complaint has already been considered by the University and satisfactory measures have been taken to resolve the matter;
- dishonest or contains intentionally misleading information;
- pursued with undue persistence; or
- pursued in a manner that harasses a member of University staff or fellow student.