

Student Complaints Policy

Approving authority	University Council
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Document URL	http://policies.griffith.edu.au/pdf/Student Complaints Policy.pdf
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Description	This policy and the <i>Student Complaints Procedures</i> provide the mechanism for resolving complaints made by students about their treatment by the University, the quality of a service provided by the University or the conduct of University staff or students.

Related documents

[Student Complaints Procedures](#)

[Student Complaints Form](#)

[Student Review and Appeals Policy](#)

[Student Review and Appeals Procedures](#)

[Staff Guidelines for 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](#)

[\[Scope\]](#) [\[Principles\]](#) [\[Definitions\]](#)

1. SCOPE

This policy applies 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 or delivery 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.

The University is committed to promoting a 'complaints friendly culture', whereby complaints lead to useful information for the improvement of its services, by providing an easily accessible and responsive complaints handling process for students. Students have the right to make a complaint and to provide feedback about the University's services and processes. Complaints made to the University are considered with courtesy, with due regard to confidentiality, and without fear of prejudicial treatment. All students are afforded procedural fairness as set out in this policy and the *Student Complaints Procedures*, being a fair opportunity to present their complaint and the right to have it considered by an unbiased decision-maker. All complaints are to be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner throughout the complaints handling process. Complaints are to be resolved in a timely fashion.

There is no assurance that all complaints may be resolved to the satisfaction of the student, particularly if they are related to the availability of resources for example, the timing and location of clinical placements or access to specialised facilities outside of the University's standard operating hours.

This policy is accompanied by the *Student Complaints Procedures*. The *Student Complaints Policy* and the *Student Complaints Procedures* are complementary and should be considered in conjunction with each other.

2. PRINCIPLES

2.1 General Principles

As a general principle staff and students are mutually responsible for resolving problems quickly through discussion and/or in writing at the local level, limiting the number of people involved to a minimum, for the purpose of avoiding an escalation of the problem in scope and impact.

In resolving problems, interactions amongst students and staff, including those mediated through online application business systems, are to be based on mutual respect, fairness and fulfilment of their obligations as specified in the *Student Charter*. Students should consider the issue calmly and present their complaint in a measured and courteous manner upon which the University can reflect, identify how it may improve its performance and respond in a respectful way. Students who use aggressive, malicious or defamatory language in making complaints to or about staff or other students may not facilitate resolution of their concern.

As a general principle a complaint is to be made independently of an application for review or appeal of a decision/s. To determine whether the matter is a reviewable decision, refer to the *Student Review and Appeals Policy*.

When a student requests a review of, or appeals, a University decision the student may also have a complaint about their treatment, quality of a service or conduct of staff or students. The review officer or appeal body may not be in a position to respond to the complaint when considering the review or appeal. In such instances, the student may make a complaint in accordance with the *Student Complaints Policy*, which will be considered separately from the review or appeal of the decision by the appropriate University officer.

2.2 Student Enrolment

In order to make a complaint in accordance with this policy the complainant is to be a 'student' of the University as defined in section 5 of the *Student Complaints Procedures*. For the student's complaint to be considered and properly or fully investigated in accordance with the *Student Complaints Procedures*, the student must maintain an active enrolment status with the University while the internal complaint handling process is ongoing.

2.3 Anonymous Complaints

It is recognised in some instances students may choose to make a complaint anonymously. While the University treats complaints reported anonymously seriously, it may be unable to either properly or fully investigate such a complaint or provide a decision or take action to resolve the complaint when the source of the complaint is unknown.

2.4 Student Cohort Complaints

Where a student cohort or several students have the same complaint, those students may act as a group in making a complaint, provided that each student is seeking the same outcome.

2.5 Age of Complaint

A complaint will be investigated if the student has made it within 12 months or less from the event that is the subject of the complaint. Where a complaint is older than 12 months, in acknowledging its receipt, the relevant University staff member will advise that the University is unable to investigate it, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

2.6 Roles and Responsibilities in Student Complaint Handling

[Table 1](#) sets out the responsible officers for handling student complaints. The Student Ombudsman provides leadership in the handling of student complaints at the University. The Student Ombudsman considers complaints which arise from students, 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. The Student Ombudsman is not a decision-maker but may make recommendations to the responsible officer of the University Executive to resolve a complaint or to address systemic issues.

Table 1 Responsible Officers for Handling Student Complaints

Area of Complaint	Step 1 Informal Resolution	Step 2 Complaint to the relevant University Staff member	Step 3 Refer to Student Ombudsman
Conduct of Staff			
Academic Staff	Course Convenor Assistant Director of Studies GELI if the matter is specific to academic staff employed by GELI.	Head of School Director, GELI	Student Ombudsman
General staff	Approach the person concerned directly.	Manager of Service Area	
Conduct of Students			
Individual or a Group of students other than HDR candidates	Approach the person or group concerned directly.	Program Director Director, GELI if the matter is specific to students undertaking English language courses offered by GELI.	Student Ombudsman
Individual or a Group of HDR Candidates	Approach the person or group concerned directly.	HDR Convenor	
Student Society/Organisation	Approach the person or group concerned directly.	Associate Director, Campus Services General Manager, Student Guild	
Services			
Campus services including accommodation, Griffith University Residential Colleges, parking, sporting, food and retail facilities. Parking and Security (including Security buses)	Approach a front-line representative of the service area concerned directly or use student feedback services and surveys.	Associate Director, Campus Services Associate Director, Facilities Management	Student Ombudsman
Transport Services Nathan/Mt Gravatt intercampus Bus Gold Coast/Nathan intercampus Bus	Approach a front-line representative of the service area concerned directly or use student feedback services and surveys.	Fleet and Logistics Manager General Manager, Student Guild	
Information services including library and learning resources, academic/learning/study support and IT services.	Approach a front-line representative of the service area concerned directly or use student feedback services and surveys.	Director, Library & Learning Services Director, IT Services	
Program, course and teaching quality including professional accreditation, placements, assessment.	Approach the person concerned directly.	Program Director Course Convenor HDR Convenor If the matter is specific to HDR programs and students. Director, GELI If the matter is specific to English language courses	

		offered by GELI and GELI students.	
<p>Student Services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examinations, timetabling, graduations, and Student Administration/Centre Services • counselling, student equity and disability, welfare and student liaison • careers and employment, peer mentoring, tutoring support, scholarships. 	Approach a front-line representative of the service area concerned directly or use student feedback services and surveys.	<p>Director, Student Administration</p> <p>Director, Student Services</p> <p>Director, Student Success Unit</p> <p>Associate Director, International Administration (if the matter is specific to the student's enrolment as an international student).</p> <p>Director, GUMURRII SSU (if the matter is specific to the student's enrolment as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student).</p> <p>Director, Griffith Graduate Research School (if the matter is specific to the student's enrolment as a HDR student).</p> <p>Director, GELI (if the matter is specific to students undertaking English language courses offered by GELI)</p>	

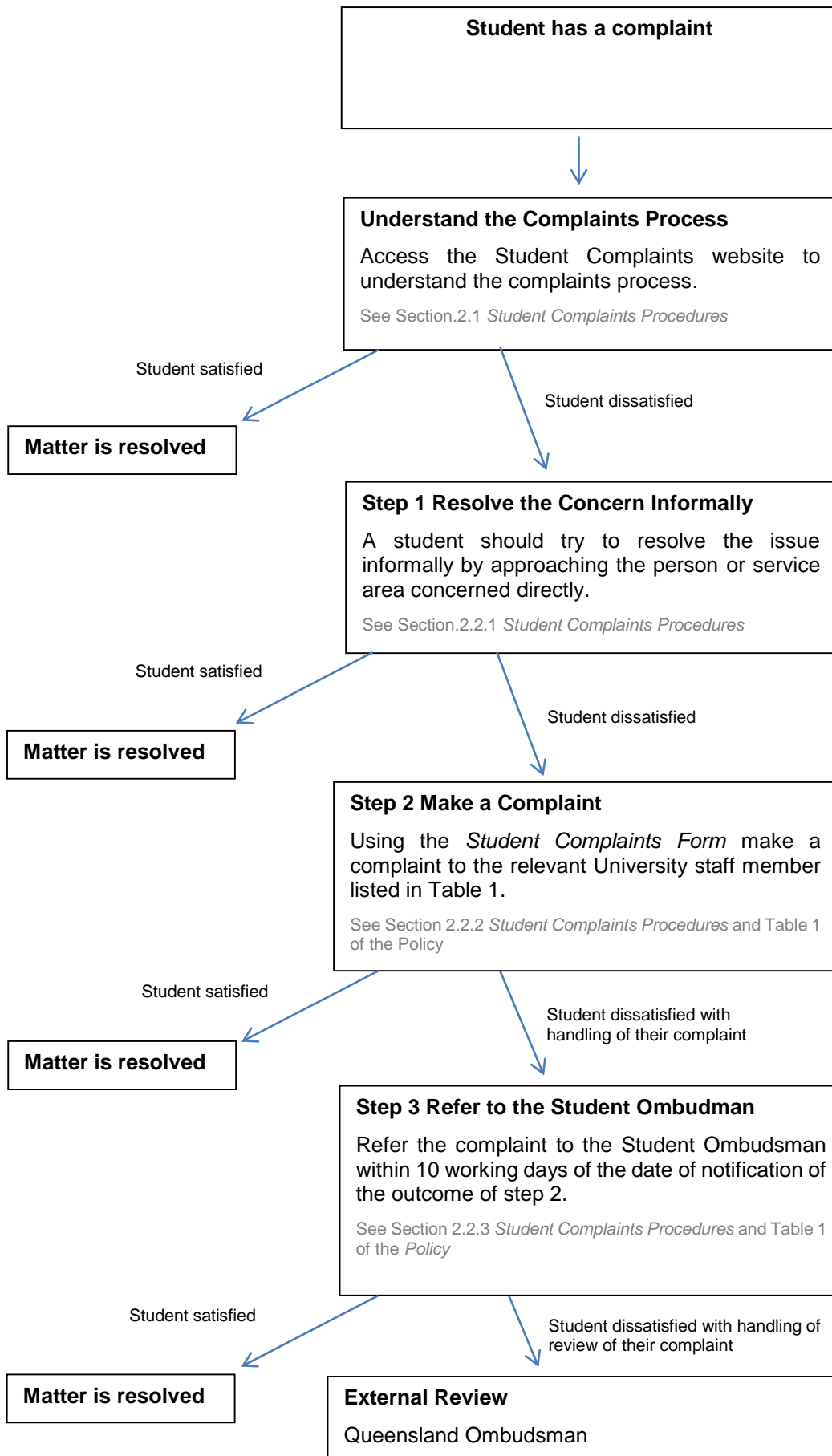
2.7 Process

The process of making a complaint is governed by the Student Complaints Procedures. The process has three steps:

- *Step 1 Resolve the concern informally*
- *Step 2 Make a complaint to the relevant University Staff member*
- *Step 3 Refer the complaint to the Student Ombudsman*

The process is illustrated as a flow chart in [Diagram 1](#) below, which is intended to be a useful guide for students on the process. However students who are making a complaint must have reference to the Student Complaints Procedures which governs the process of making a complaint.

DIAGRAM 1 – PROCESS FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT



2.8 Confidentiality

All documentation relating to complaints will be kept confidential and shall be disclosed only to those persons who have a right to the information by virtue of their role in the complaints process, or as required by law.

2.9 Complaints Involving Allegations Concerning a Staff Member

Where a student complaint includes allegations concerning the conduct of a staff member, and the substance of those allegations may constitute misconduct or serious misconduct as defined in [Griffith University Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement](#) and the [Griffith University Professional and Support Staff Enterprise Agreement](#), the allegation shall be managed in accordance with the provisions in the relevant agreement. Where a student complaint includes allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination by a staff member, these matters are to be dealt with under the University's *Staff Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy*, *Staff Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy* and *Reporting and Resolution of Staff Sexual Assault, Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Procedures*.

2.10 Recordkeeping

In accordance with the University's *Records Management Policy*, the Student Ombudsman's Office maintains in a business system records of student complaints referred to the Student Ombudsman. These records are maintained to protect the rights and interests of all parties; explain and justify the actions of the University and its employees; and document and explain the decision-making of the University. The record will include information about the complaint, including: what occurred; when it occurred; how it occurred; the parties involved; and the outcome. These records form the data upon which the Student Ombudsman's Office's Annual Report to the Academic Committee on its activities is based.

2.11 Consultation and Feedback

The University, through the Student Ombudsman's Office, will periodically seek feedback on satisfaction with complaint processes from complainants, persons and bodies involved in addressing student complaints. The information will be used only for quality review and improvement purposes.

2.12 Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

The University may decline to take action in respect of a complaint that is assessed as frivolous or vexatious. A complaint is deemed to be frivolous or vexatious where the complaint 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 threatens, menaces or harasses a member of University staff or fellow student.

Complainants who engage in unreasonable behaviour in respect of making complaints may be dealt with in accordance with the University's [Student Misconduct Policy](#).

2.13 Withdrawal of a Complaint

A request by a student to withdraw a complaint may be made in writing at any time during the complaints process to the relevant University staff member or the Student Ombudsman. Notwithstanding this, the University reserves the right to continue to investigate a complaint if required to do so to satisfy other requirements or protect its own interests.

2.14 Outcomes of Complaint

In making a complaint a student requests a review (among other matters) of 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.

2.15 External Review

Where the student is dissatisfied with the University's handling of their complaint, the student may lodge a complaint with the Queensland Ombudsman.

The complaints process within the University should be exhausted before a complaint is lodged with the Queensland Ombudsman.

3. DEFINITIONS

Terms defined in the *Student Complaints Procedure* have the same meaning when used in this policy.
