

Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- (a) to provide a framework for students to submit a grievance;
- (b) provide a framework to investigate and resolve student grievances in a timely, fair and just way and ensures all grievances are resolved without victimisation or intimidation of anyone connected with the grievance; and
- (c) describe the expectations and responsibilities of staff and students engaged in the student grievance resolution processes.

2. Policy scope and application

2.1 This policy applies to all students and recently enrolled students of the University regardless of the location of their studies either on-campus or off-campus.

2.2 This policy applies to all grievances raised by students.

2.3 For the purpose of this policy, a person whose enrolment is suspended or cancelled by the University may access this process to raise a grievance about the decision to suspend or cancel their enrolment.

2.4 For the purpose of this policy, a former student wanting to raise a grievance Section 5.5 may access this process.

2.5 A University of the Sunshine Coast student who undertakes cross-institutional study at another university is considered a student of the host institution for matters directly relating to their studies at that institution.

2.6 The University will respond to any grievance submitted by an international student enrolled at the University of the Sunshine Coast related to the University, the University's education agents or any related party with whom the University has an arrangement to deliver the international student's course or related services.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to this policy and are critical to its effectiveness:

Anonymous complaint: A grievance may initially be made by a complainant or representative anonymously and, where sufficient information is provided to make an investigation feasible, such grievances will be investigated.

Appeal: A written application by a complainant to have a decision affecting the complainant investigated. An appeal may be upheld or dismissed in part or in whole or a new determination made.

Complainant: The student raising the grievance.

Discrimination related grievances: Matters relating to unfair treatment based on attributes such as a person's race, disability, gender or sexuality. Refer to the Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Governing Policy.

External review: An application to an external agency by a complainant dissatisfied with the grievance process seeking an appraisal of the fairness and appropriateness of the grievance process undertaken by the University.

Frivolous grievance: A grievance that is deemed to be groundless and trivial. A complaint found to be frivolous will be dismissed by the University.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Council

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)

FIRST APPROVED

30 October 2007

LAST AMENDED

20 December 2021

REVIEW DATE

27 April 2026

STATUS

Active

Grievance: A real or perceived cause for complaint, dissatisfaction, disagreement or dispute, concerning a student for which resolution is being sought. Grievances must be related directly to the student's studies at the University or life as a student.

Human rights: as defined in the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld). Rights relevant to a student's relationship to the University may include (but are not limited to) the rights of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief; freedom of expression; peaceful assembly and freedom of association; cultural rights including those of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples; the right to a fair hearing; and the right to protection of privacy and reputation.

Mediation/conciliation: Informal discussions and negotiations involving the complainant and respondent(s) trying to reach a mutually acceptable resolution of the student's grievance. Resolution is therefore reached by agreed outcome, and not by an imposed decision.

Procedural fairness:

“Procedural fairness is about providing a person who might be adversely affected by a decision a ‘fair hearing’ before the decision is made.”⁽¹⁾ It refers to the process by which a decision is reached and not the decision itself. With regard to misconduct, procedural fairness requires that a student against whom an allegation of misconduct is made by the University be provided with:

- all relevant details and evidence of the alleged misconduct; and
- an opportunity to present their version of events concerning the alleged misconduct.

The procedure also requires an investigator and/or decision maker to:

- act impartially, without bias and without preconceived notions of culpability;
- commence and complete the investigation without undue delay;
- make inquiries and make findings of fact about the matter/s raised based on sound reasoning and relevant evidence;
- consider all relevant information and evidence;
- not take into account any irrelevant matters;
- inform the student(s) concerned of the allegation and the range of possible consequences if the investigation results in the allegation being substantiated;
- provide the student(s) concerned with the opportunity to respond to and put forward evidence or arguments in their favour;
- provide an opportunity for the student(s) concerned to make a case concerning why a particular consequence should not follow in the event that the allegation is substantiated; and
- deal with the allegation in a timely manner.

Review: A written application by a complainant requesting an appraisal of an initial decision affecting the complainant. The review is conducted by an independent or more senior officer of the University who is a designated decision maker. A request for a review may be upheld in part or in whole or a new determination made.

Vexatious grievance: A grievance made maliciously with the intent to annoy or embarrass the respondent or made with another ulterior purpose. A grievance found to be vexatious will be dismissed by the University. Making a vexatious grievance may constitute misconduct under the Student Conduct – Governing Policy.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 The University will maintain and comply with processes which ensure it fulfils the responsibilities and obligations under procedural fairness and provide processes to investigate grievances.

4.2 The University is committed to making decisions consistent with the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld).

5. Principles

5.1 Depending on the type of grievance (refer to Schedule A), the grievance will be resolved using one of the following procedures:

- (a) Student Grievances - Procedures; or
- (b) Student Review and Appeals - Procedures.

5.2 If a student raises a grievance that relates to a review or appeal that also involves a separate grievance that falls under the scope of the Student Grievances – Procedures, the review or appeal decision maker may not be in a position to respond to all aspects of the grievance. In such instances, the grievances may be separated so that the review or appeal is managed under the Student Review and Appeals – Procedures and the separate grievance is managed under the Student Grievances – Procedures.

5.3 The University will:

- (a) manage student grievances in accordance with procedural fairness principles;
- (b) ensure that student grievances are properly and impartially considered by the relevant decision maker (see Schedule A);

- (c) administer student grievances within the time limits as determined in the Student Grievances – Procedures or the Student Review and Appeals – Procedures, dependent on the type of grievance;
- (d) respect confidentiality by disclosing only information necessary to consider and respond to a request for resolving a grievance;
- (e) explain a decision clearly in writing and ensure that any further steps the student may take in the resolution process are conveyed with the decision; and
- (f) neither intimidate nor victimise a complainant, respondent or any other person involved with the grievance.

5.4 Students are expected to:

- (a) familiarise themselves with the Student Grievance Resolution – Governing Policy and, depending on the type of grievance (see Schedule A), the relevant procedures prior to submitting a request for the resolution of a grievance;
- (b) ensure that a formal grievance is submitted in writing within the specified deadlines;
- (c) provide the required documentation for the type of grievance in accordance with the relevant procedures;
- (d) explain their grievance clearly with reasons;
- (e) provide evidence in support of their grievance; and
- (f) act in good faith and not submit grievances for frivolous or vexatious reasons.

5.5 Student Grievances

5.5.1 Grievances considered in accordance with the Student Grievances - Procedures relate to:

- (a) an administrative decision;
- (b) a problem or concern raised by a student regarding their treatment as a student;
- (c) the quality or delivery of a service or advice provided by the University;
- (d) the conduct of staff; or
- (e) the conduct of other students.

5.5.2 Categories of grievances considered under the Student Grievances - Procedures are set out in Table 1 of Schedule A.

5.5.3 The process for raising these grievances is governed by the Student Grievances – Procedures. The process has two or three required steps depending on the category of grievance (as specified in Table 1 of Schedule A):

Step 1: Resolve the non-academic grievance informally;

Step 2: Make a formal grievance; and

Step 3: Refer the grievance to the final decision maker.

5.5.4 The student, in raising these grievances, is typically seeking:

- (a) an apology;
- (b) correction of an error in relation to the student or the student's record;
- (c) a decision by the University; and/or
- (d) improvement of existing services and processes.

5.5.5 Decision makers for each step of grievances managed through the Student Grievances – Procedures are set out in Table 1 of Schedule A.

5.6 Review and Appeals

5.6.1 The Review and Appeals – Procedures manage student grievances related to University decisions which may be reviewed and/or appealed and include substantiated findings of student general misconduct and student academic misconduct.

5.6.2 University decisions which may be reviewed and/or appealed are set out in Table 2 of Schedule A.

5.6.3 The process for making an academic grievance is governed by the Student Review and Appeals – Procedures. The process has two or three required steps depending on the particular decision (as specified in Table 2 of Schedule A):

Step 1: Understanding the decision;

Step 2: Reviewing the decision; and

Step 3: Appealing the decision.

5.6.4 The student, in raising a review or appeal grievance, is usually seeking:

(a) the original decision to be set aside; and/or

(b) the original decision to be amended.

5.6.5 The University will not set aside a decision simply because the student disagrees with it.

5.6.6 Decision makers for each step of review or appeal grievances managed by the Student Review and Appeals - Procedures are set out in Table 2 of Schedule A.

5.6.7 If a student is raising a review or appeal grievance related to suspension, expulsion or exclusion, they will usually be entitled to continue being enrolled in their program of study while the grievance is being resolved by the University.

6. Authorities/Responsibilities

6.1 The following authorities/responsibilities are delegated under this policy:

ACTIVITY	UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE
Amend and maintain Schedule A: Relevant decision makers for grievances.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Footnotes

(1) Good Decisions resource *Queensland Ombudsman*

(<https://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au/improve-public-administration/public-administration-resources/good-decisions>)

END of Policy

Schedule A: Relevant decision makers for resolution of grievances

Notes:

- Where the nominated decision maker was involved in the decision at a previous stage, the review or appeal will be delegated to another appropriate senior staff member, for example, where the Course Coordinator is also the Head of School.
- The Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) or Student Services and Engagement receive grievances submitted through the online portal and will refer the grievance to the relevant decision maker. If the submission does not have sufficient information as per the relevant procedures, the student may be requested to provide the information before the grievance is accepted for consideration.

Schedule A includes two tables:

- Table 1: Grievances managed through the Student Grievances - Procedures
- Table 2: Grievances managed through the Student Review and Appeals - Procedures

Table 1: Grievances managed through the Student Grievances - Procedures

CATEGORY OF NON-ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE	RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
Conduct of Staff				
Allegation of discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or breach of other policy/procedures i.e. privacy	Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Governing Policy	Consult with Safer Communities	Formal reports can be made to Safer Communities. The report will be referred to the Director, People and Culture	N/A

Note: once referred as alleged staff misconduct, the matter will be managed under the Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy. The timeframes and process will be as stated in the Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy.	Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students)- Procedures			
	Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy			
	Information Management Framework - Governing Policy			
	Guidelines for the Resolution of Complaints - Staff			
Other grievances related to conduct of staff	Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy	Approach the person concerned directly or consult with Safer Communities	Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities. The report will be referred to the Director, People and Culture	N/A
Conduct of Students				
Allegation of discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or sexual assault	Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Governing Policy	Consult with Safer Communities	Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities who will refer the report to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Note: once referred as alleged student misconduct, the matter will be managed under the Student Misconduct – Procedures. The timeframes and process will be as stated in the Student Misconduct – Procedures.	Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Procedures			
	Student Conduct - Governing Policy			
	Student Misconduct - Procedures			
Other grievances related to conduct of students	Student Conduct - Governing Policy	Approach the person concerned (respondent) directly or consult with Safer Communities	Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities who will refer the report to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
	Student Misconduct - Procedures			
Student Society/Organisation	Student Conduct - Governing Policy	Approach the person concerned directly (respondent) or consult with Safer Communities	Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities who will refer the report to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Services				

Campus services including parking, sporting, security, food and retail facilities.	Student Charter	Approach a front-line representative of the service area directly or consult with Safer Communities	Director, Facilities Management	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Transport Services intercampus bus services	Student Charter	Approach a front-line representative of the service area directly or consult with Safer Communities	Director, Facilities Management	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Information services including library and learning resources, academic / learning / study support and IT services	Student Charter	Approach a front-line representative of the service area directly or consult with Safer Communities	Director, Library Services Director, Information Technology	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Program, course and teaching quality: including professional accreditation, placements, assessments	Student Charter	Approach the person concerned directly	Head of School Dean, Graduate Research	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Student Services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examinations, timetabling, graduations and Student Central• Counselling, student equity and disability and welfare• Careers and employment, peer mentoring, tutoring support, scholarships	Numerous, e.g. Student Charter Enrolments and Graduation - Procedures Administration of Central Examinations - Procedures	Student Central	Manager of relevant work area in Student Services and Engagement	Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services
Higher Degrees by Research				
Bachelor Honours End-on or Embedded (Differentiated Pathway) Degrees Difficulties meeting project milestones/ program expectations; supervisory relationship; etc	Bachelor Honours Degree - Procedures – Part A	Honours Coordinator / Program Coordinator	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Bachelor Honours – Embedded (Four Year) Degree Issues with program arrangements	Bachelor Honours Degree - Procedures – Part B	Honours Coordinator / Program Coordinator	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Higher degree by research (HDR) candidates Difficulties meeting project or thesis milestones/ candidature expectations; supervisory relationship	Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)	Dean, Graduate Research	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Administrative				
Application for removal of financial liability (in special circumstances)	Student Fees, Charges and Refunds - Procedures	Student Central	Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services	N/A

Refund of fees	Enrolments and Graduation - Procedures	Student Central	Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services	N/A
Administrative decision, service or advice e.g. deferred examination, enrolment	Numerous, e.g. Enrolments and Graduation - Procedures Administration of Central Examinations - Procedures	Student Central	Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Decision by a staff member (or other person acting for the University) in relation to the delivery of a course	Various, e.g.	Course Coordinator	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Scholarships				
Decision not to award a Commonwealth Scholarship	Selection of Students for Commonwealth ISSP Scholarships - Procedures	Chairperson, Scholarships Selection Panel (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) or Dean, Indigenous Education and Engagement)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Vice-Chancellor and President
Decision not to award a HDR Scholarship	Higher Degrees by Research Scholarships - Procedures	Dean, Graduate Research	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Withdrawal of a Commonwealth Scholarship	Selection of Students for Commonwealth ISSP Scholarships - Procedures	Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Withdrawal of a HDR Scholarship	Higher Degrees by Research Scholarships - Procedures	Dean, Graduate Research	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Table 2: Grievances managed through the Student Review and Appeals - Procedures

CATEGORY OF DECISION	RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
Admission				
Unsuccessful in gaining admission	Admissions - Procedures	Student Central	Associate Director, Student Business Services, Student Services and Engagement or, for international students, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global and Engagement) or nominee	N/A

Unsuccessful in gaining admission – Higher Degrees Research	Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures	Dean, Graduate Research	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	N/A
Academic Progress				
Request for variation of program requirements	Enrolments and Graduation - Procedures	Program Coordinator	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	N/A
Application for removal of academic penalty (in special circumstances)	Enrolments and Graduation - Procedures	N/A	Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services	Student Academic Appeals Committee
Final Grade for a course (including request for special consideration)	Review of Assessment and Final Grade - Procedures	Course Coordinator	Head of School or Deputy Head, (Learning and Teaching) (or Director, Thompson Institute)	Student Academic Appeals Committee
Note: This does not apply to the major research project/ thesis within a Bachelor Honours Degree			(Lodge an Application for a Review of Final Grade Form)	
Failure to make satisfactory academic progress (i.e. Student issued with a show cause notice as to why they should not be excluded) (Coursework students)	Monitoring Academic Progress - Procedures	N/A	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute) or nominee (refer to section 7 of the Monitoring Academic Progress - Procedures) (Show Cause)	Student Academic Appeals Committee
Failure to make satisfactory academic progress (HDR candidate issued with a show cause notice as to why they should not be excluded) or Termination of Higher degree by research candidature	Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures	Supervisor	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute) considers the Show Cause and determines in accordance with the procedures	Student Academic Appeals Committee
Assessment				
Marks for an individual assessment task (other than a final mark/ grade) (including request for special consideration)	Review of Assessment and Final Grade - Procedures	Assessor within 5 business days of notification of result	Course Coordinator / Program Coordinator	N/A
Note: This does not apply to the major research project/ thesis within a Bachelor Honours Degree				
Note: Alternatively, students can lodge an Application for a Review of Final Grade (Form)				
Enrolment				

Waiving a pre-requisite or co-requisite condition/s	Enrolments and Graduation - Procedures	Student Central	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Graduation				
Bachelor Honours – Embedded (Four Year)	Bachelor Honours Degree - Procedures – Part B	Head of School	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Student Academic Appeals Committee
Final honours classification				
(process only, not a review of grade)				
Credit for Prior Learning				
Decision not to grant credit transfer	Credit Transfer - Procedures	Program Coordinator. (Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services or nominee may apply decisions based on articulation agreements and precedents register)	Head of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)	Student Academic Appeals Committee
Misconduct				
Substantiated finding and/or penalty of Student General Misconduct	Student Misconduct - Procedures	Original decision maker	N/A	Vice-Chancellor and President on recommendation from the Student General Misconduct Appeals Committee
Substantiated finding and/or penalty of Student Academic Misconduct	Student Conduct - Governing Policy Student Misconduct - Procedures	Original decision maker	Director, C-SALT as delegate of Head of School where the original determination was made by Academic Lead, Integrity and Compliance Unit, C-SALT N/A, where determination of misconduct was made by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Student Academic Appeals Committee
Breach of Responsible Research Conduct	Responsible Research Conduct – Governing Policy Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct - Procedures Student Conduct - Governing Policy Student Misconduct - Procedures	Original decision maker	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) N/A, where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) was involved in determination of breach outcome	Student Academic Appeals Committee

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment - Governing Policy
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion - Governing Policy
- Monitoring Academic Progress - Academic Policy
- Public Interest Disclosures - Governing Policy
- Public Interest Disclosures - Procedures
- Review of Assessment and Final Grade - Procedures
- Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Governing Policy
- Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Procedures
- Student Misconduct - Procedures
- Student Ombudsman - Operational Policy

LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Student Grievances - Procedures
- Student Review and Appeals - Procedures

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

- Student Complaints and Appeals - Governing Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 (Cth)
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- USC Student Charter
- Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)
- AS/NZS 10002:2014 Australian/New Zealand Standard, Guidelines for complaint management
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Grievance and Complaint Handling