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
Refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for definitions as they specifically relate to policy documents.

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
Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services

FIRST APPROVED
30 October 2007

LAST AMENDED
4 July 2024

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);
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amend and maintain Schedule A: Relevant decision makers for grievances.</td>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footnotes

(1) Good Decisions resource Queensland Ombudsman

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 Dean of School.
- The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF NON-ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE</th>
<th>RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES</th>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>STEP 2</th>
<th>STEP 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct of Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allegation of discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or breach of other policy/procedures i.e. privacy</td>
<td>Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Governing Policy</td>
<td>Consult with Safer Communities</td>
<td>Formal reports can be made to Safer Communities. The report will be referred to the Director, People and Culture</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category: Conduct of Staff</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Governing Policy</td>
<td>Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy</td>
<td>Approach the person concerned directly or consult with Safer Communities</td>
<td>Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities. The report will be referred to the Director, People and Culture</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Other Grievances related to Conduct of Staff</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy</td>
<td>Approach the person concerned directly or consult with Safer Communities</td>
<td>Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities who will refer the report to the Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services</td>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Conduct of Students</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships (Students) - Governing Policy</td>
<td>Consult with Safer Communities</td>
<td>Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities who will refer the report to the Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services</td>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Category: Other Grievances related to Conduct of Students</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Conduct - Governing Policy</td>
<td>Approach the person concerned directly or consult with Safer Communities</td>
<td>Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities who will refer the report to the Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services</td>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Student Society/Organisation</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Conduct - Governing Policy</td>
<td>Approach the person concerned directly or consult with Safer Communities</td>
<td>Formal reports can be made with Safer Communities who will refer the report to the Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services</td>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)</td>
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</tr>
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Services
<p>| 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 | Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services |
| 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 | Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services |
| 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 | Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services |
| Program, course and teaching quality: including professional accreditation, placements, assessments | Student Charter | Approach the person concerned directly | Dean of School or Associate Dean (Learning &amp; Teaching) Dean, Graduate Research | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) |
| Student Services including: | Numerous, e.g. Student Charter Enrolments and Graduation - Procedures Administration of Central Examinations - Procedures | 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 | Bachelor Honours Degree - Procedures – Part A Honours Coordinator / Program Coordinator | Dean of School (or Director, Thompson Institute) | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) |
| Difficulties meeting project milestones/ program expectations; supervisory relationship; etc | Bachelor Honours Degree - Procedures – Part B Honours Coordinator / Program Coordinator | Dean of School (or Director, Thompson Institute) | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) |
| Higher degree by research (HDR) candidates | Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures HDR Supervision - Procedures | Supervisors, HDR Coordinators, Head of enrolling unit Dean, Graduate Research | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) |
| Difficulties meeting project or thesis milestones/ candidature expectations; supervisory relationship | | | |
| 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 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF DECISION</th>
<th>RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES</th>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>STEP 2</th>
<th>STEP 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful in gaining admission</td>
<td>Admissions - Procedures</td>
<td>Student Central</td>
<td>Associate Director, Student Business Services, Student Services and Engagement or, for international students, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global and Engagement) or nominee</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Grievances managed through the Student Review and Appeals - Procedures
Unsuccessful in gaining admission – Higher Degrees Research

Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures
Dean, Graduate Research
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
N/A

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
Dean of School or Associate Dean, (Learning and Teaching) (or Director, Thompson Institute)
Student Academic Appeals Committee

Failure to make satisfactory academic progress (i.e. Student issued with a show cause notice as to why they should not be excluded)

Monitoring Academic Progress - Procedures
N/A
Dean of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)
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 discontinuation of candidature

Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures
N/A
Dean, Graduate Research
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

Outcome from examination of final HDR thesis

HDR Thesis Submission and Examination - Procedures
N/A
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Student Academic Appeals Committee

Student can lodge request for review of decision for outcome of thesis examination with DVCR&I if they can demonstrate procedural grounds for a review.

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.
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
Dean of School (or Director, Thompson Institute)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Graduation

Bachelor Honours – Embedded (Four Year)
Bachelor Honours Degree - Procedures – Part B
Dean 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)
Dean 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 Dean 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
Original decision maker
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Student Academic Appeals Committee

N/A, where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) was involved in determination of breach outcome
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
• 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