

# Employee Complaints Procedure

## 1 Purpose

To provide the process for the resolution of Complaints made against Employees in order to ensure a safe and inclusive working and learning environment.

## 2 Scope

This Procedure applies to Complaints made by University Members and Students against Employees in relation to:

- Discrimination, Bullying, and Harassment; and
- the conduct of Employees generally (including unprofessional conduct and inter-personal conflicts).

Complaints about unlawful Discrimination and/or Harassment, including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and Sex Discrimination (Sexual Misconduct) against Employees will be managed in accordance with the Employee Complaints (Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault and Sex Discrimination) Procedure.

The University has the right to determine which Policy Instrument or process most appropriately applies to the management of Complaints against Employees.

## 3 Procedure Overview

This Procedure outlines the process to be followed in resolving Complaints made by University Members and Students against Employees. Refer to section 7 for specific definitions relevant to the operation of this Procedure.

## 4 Procedures

### 4.1 Notification of Complaints

#### 4.1.1 Raising Concerns

Individuals are encouraged to resolve concerns with the Employee in the first instance, if it is appropriate and safe to do so.

If an individual chooses to attempt resolution of their concerns through discussion with the Employee, they may raise their concerns with the Employee directly, either verbally or in writing, or may wish to discuss the concerns with the Employee's Supervisor.

If an individual verbally discusses their concerns with the Employee, it is recommended that they keep an accurate record of the conversation.

University Members may seek advice and support from their Supervisor or the People Portfolio, and Students may seek advice and support from the Safer Communities Coordinator, prior to attempting resolution of their concerns through discussion with the Employee or the Employee's Supervisor. This will depend on the nature of the concerns.

If an individual is not comfortable attempting resolution of their concerns through discussion with the Employee, or if it is not appropriate or safe to do so, they may make a Complaint.

An individual should not attempt to raise concerns directly with the Employee if they have concerns about their safety.

#### **4.1.2 Making a Complaint**

Complainants are encouraged to notify the University of their Complaint as soon as possible, as the duration of time between the incident and the making of the Complaint may impact how effectively or efficiently the Complaint can be resolved.

University Members who wish to make a Complaint against an Employee should complete the Employee Complaints Form or submit their Complaint to the Chief People Officer via email. If the Complainant would prefer, a meeting can be arranged with a member of the People Portfolio to record the Complaint.

Students who wish to make a Complaint against an Employee should immediately advise the Safer Communities Coordinator who can record the Complaint or submit their Complaint to the Chief People Officer via email.

##### **4.1.2.1 Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous Complaints will be accepted by the University. However, the University will not normally investigate or act on anonymous Complaints made about Employees unless sufficient information is provided to enable the University to enquire into the allegations, or unless required by law to do so.

##### **4.1.2.2 Complaints by Past Employees or Students**

The University may consider Complaints made by past Employees or Students against current Employees, as appropriate.

##### **4.1.2.3 Public Interest Disclosures**

A Public Interest Disclosure includes reports of matters affecting public interest including, but not limited to, corrupt conduct, maladministration, substantial misuse of public resources, offences, danger to a person with a Disability, or reprisal for making a Complaint.

Any individual can make a Public Interest Disclosure. Public Interest Disclosures must be made in accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* and the Public Interest Disclosure Procedure.

## 4.2 Assessment of Complaints

As soon as possible following the receipt of a Complaint, the Chief People Officer (or their nominee) will consider the Complaint on the basis of the information available to them at the time, and will:

- determine whether the Complaint should be managed in accordance with this Procedure, or another policy, procedure, or University process; and
- appoint a Complaint Manager who has the necessary skills and experience to manage the Complaint; and
- acknowledge receipt of the Complaint.
- As soon as possible following the receipt of a Complaint, the Complaint Manager:
  - will provide the Complainant with general information about the Complaint management process;
  - will identify any potential Psychosocial Hazards and will implement measures to control the risk to the parties in the Complaint; and
  - may request further information from the Complainant, if this information is required to understand the particulars of the Complaint.

If further information is required, the Complainant will provide this information within a reasonable time.

As soon as possible following the receipt of a Complaint (or further particulars, if requested), the Complaint Manager will provide the Respondent with the allegations in the Complaint and with an opportunity to respond to the allegations against them.

If the Complaint includes allegations which, if substantiated, may constitute Misconduct or Serious Misconduct, the Chief People Officer may refer the Complaint for management in accordance with the provisions of the Enterprise Agreement. In this case, this Procedure will cease to apply to the management of the Complaint.

## 4.3 Resolution of Complaints

The strategies and mechanisms used to resolve a Complaint are at the Chief People Officer's discretion during every stage of the Complaint management process, and may include, but are not limited to:

- a conflict resolution process, such as:
  - facilitation; or
  - mediation; or
- an investigation.

As soon as possible following the receipt of the Respondent's response, the Complaint Manager will advise the parties of the most appropriate mechanism for resolving the Complaint and will provide the parties with advice and guidance in this regard.

### 4.3.1 Conflict Resolution Process

#### 4.3.1.1 Facilitation

A facilitated discussion is an informal voluntary process in which the parties to a Complaint are assisted by a third party (i.e., a facilitator) to identify the details of the Complaint, consider and communicate their perspectives, and attempt to resolve the Complaint in a supportive environment.

A facilitated discussion is aimed at addressing misunderstandings or concerns between the parties, clarifying expectations, improving collaboration, creating mutual understanding, and building trust.

The role of the facilitator is not to make findings of fact or a determination of wrongdoing, but rather to guide the conversation between the parties and, if necessary, to provide the parties with general advice and guidance about the expected standards of conduct and performance in the workplace, to inform the conversation between the parties.

The Complaint Manager will usually be appointed as facilitator. However, the parties' direct Supervisor, a senior manager in the parties' Organisational Unit, or anyone else deemed appropriate by the Chief People Officer (or their nominee) in the circumstances, may also be appointed as facilitator in the Complaint.

A facilitated discussion is appropriate for resolving Complaints of Inappropriate Conduct or Inter-personal Conflicts and may also be appropriate for the resolution of Complaints relating to Discrimination, Bullying, and Harassment which arise from workplace interactions or behaviours.

#### **4.3.1.2 Mediation**

Mediation is a formal voluntary process in which the parties to a Complaint are assisted by a third party (i.e., a mediator) to identify the details of the Complaint, consider and communicate their perspectives, and attempt to resolve the Complaint through an agreement, which may be formalised in writing and signed by both parties.

Mediation is aimed at resolving disagreements between the parties by using a non-adversarial and structured process.

The role of the mediator is not to make findings of fact or a determination of wrongdoing, but rather to support the parties to reach their own solution to the Complaint.

The Complaint Manager will normally be appointed as mediator. However, any third party with the necessary qualifications and skills may be appointed as mediator at the Chief People Officer's discretion.

If a Complaint is unable to be resolved through a facilitation process, or if it is not appropriate to do so, Complaints may be resolved through a mediation process.

A mediation process can be undertaken at any stage of the Complaint management process, with the agreement of the parties to the Complaint.

#### **4.3.2 Investigation**

An investigation is a formal and systematic examination of the allegations in a Complaint, in which a third party (i.e., investigator) makes enquiries, gathers information, and makes findings of fact about the allegations in the Complaint.

The role of the investigator is to determine the facts in a Complaint, on a balance of probabilities, and to provide a report on their findings.

Having regard to the allegations in the Complaint, the Chief People Officer may appoint an independent investigator (either external or internal to the University) to undertake an investigation of the Complaint.

Prior to the commencement of an investigation of the Complaint, the Complaint Manager must provide all information and supporting documents relevant to the Complaint, to the investigator.

If the Complaint Manager advises the parties that the Complaint will be investigated, they may request the details of any Witnesses or other individuals who may be able to assist the investigator in their investigation, from the parties. The parties will provide the requested information within a reasonable time and without delay.

It is in the investigator's sole discretion to include or exclude Witnesses or other individuals, including the evidence provided by these Witnesses or other individuals, from the investigation.

The investigator will observe the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice in their

investigation of the Complaint.

At the conclusion of the investigation process, the investigator will make findings of fact and report these findings to the Chief People Officer (or their nominee) for their consideration and decision.

The Chief People Officer (or their nominee) will consider the investigation report and make a determination as soon as possible to resolve the Complaint.

The Chief People Officer (or their nominee) may issue lawful directions and/or take reasonable management action against Employees for conduct which does not constitute Misconduct or Serious Misconduct and will notify the parties of their decision.

The investigation report will remain confidential and will not be provided to the parties to the Complaint.

## **4.4 Timeframes**

The University will endeavour to resolve Complaints within 30 University Business Days (or within 40 University Business Days if the Complaint is managed through an investigation process).

These timeframes are indicative only and are subject to change depending on the particular circumstances in the Complaint.

Circumstances which may impact the indicative timeframes for managing Complaints under this Procedure include, but are not limited to:

- the complexity and nature of the Complaint (such as the number of allegations, the availability of information relevant to the Complaint, and the number of parties involved in the Complaint);
- the availability of individuals relevant to the Complaint (such as the Complainant, Respondent, any Witnesses, and/or external third parties); and
- whether there are other processes which apply concurrently to the parties involved in the complaint.

The Complaint Manager will ensure the parties are informed of any delays in the Complaint management process.

## **4.5 Recordkeeping**

The Complaint and the process undertaken by the University in resolving the Complaint must be appropriately recorded in a confidential and secure manner by the Complaint Manager.

If the Complainant's or Respondent's Supervisor acted as the Complaint Manager, they are responsible for providing the People Portfolio with all relevant materials in relation to the Complaint, for appropriate recordkeeping in a confidential and secure manner.

## 4.6 Referral of Complaints

If a Complainant or Respondent is not satisfied with the decision and actions taken by the University with respect to the resolution of a Complaint, they may refer their Complaint to the relevant external agency.

Individuals may make a Complaint or seek assistance from a range of external agencies depending on the nature of their Complaint and the reason for their dissatisfaction with the University's Complaint management process, which may include, but are not limited to, the following agencies:

- the Australian Human Rights Commission, or the Queensland Human Rights Commission;
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland;
- WorkCover Queensland;
- the Fair Work Ombudsman;
- the Fair Work Commission; or
- the Queensland Police Service.

## 4.7 Support

Employees are encouraged to access the confidential and free counselling service provided through the Employee Assistance Program.

Additionally, Employees are encouraged to contact the People Portfolio for advice in relation to the Complaint management process, conflict resolution measures, and alternative support available to reduce the risk to Employees involved in the Complaint.

Students are encouraged to seek advice and support from the Safer Communities Coordinator.

## 4.8 Delegations

Position	Delegation
Category 3 Delegate	<b>Chief People Officer:</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint a nominee for the purposes of this Procedure.</li> <li>• Appoint a Complaint Manager and/or investigator / mediator / facilitator.</li> <li>• Decide to manage a Complaint in accordance with the Employee Complaints Procedure or another policy, procedure, or University process.</li> <li>• Decide and issue lawful directions and/or take reasonable management action to resolve a Complaint.</li> <li>• Refer a Complaint for management in accordance with section 47 of the Enterprise Agreement (Managing Misconduct or Serious Misconduct).</li> </ul>
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## 5 References

Nil.

## 6 Schedules

This procedure must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

## 7 Procedure Information

<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Chief People Officer
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Chief People Officer
<b>Policy Type</b>	University Procedure
<b>Policy Suite</b>	<a href="#">Employee Complaints Policy</a>
<b>Subordinate Schedules</b>	
<b>Approved Date</b>	30/7/2025
<b>Effective Date</b>	30/7/2025

*Failure to comply with this Policy or Policy Instrument may be considered as misconduct and the provisions of the relevant Policy or Procedure applied. A hard copy of this electronic document is uncontrolled and may not be current as UniSQ the University regularly reviews and updates its Policies and Policy Instruments. The latest controlled version can be found in the UniSQ's [Policy and Procedure Library](#).*



<b>Review Date</b>	29/5/2029
<b>Relevant Legislation</b>	<a href="#">Enterprise Agreement</a> <a href="#">Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 (Qld)</a>
<b>Policy Exceptions</b>	<a href="#">Policy Exceptions Register</a>
<b>Related Policies</b>	<a href="#">Public Interest Disclosure Policy</a>
<b>Related Procedures</b>	<a href="#">Employee Complaints (Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault and Sex Discrimination) Procedure</a> <a href="#">Public Interest Disclosure Procedure</a>
<b>Related forms, publications and websites</b>	<a href="#">Employee Complaints Form</a>
<b>Definitions</b>	<p><b>Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary</b></p> <p><a href="#">Employee</a></p> <p>A person employed by the University and whose conditions of employment are covered by the Enterprise Agreement and includes persons employed on a continuing, fixed term or casual basis. Employees also include senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University.</p> <p><a href="#">Sexual Misconduct</a></p> <p>A broad term used to describe a range of isolated or combined behaviours of a sexual nature, used without consent or that are otherwise unwelcome. May include conduct defined as Sexual Harassment or a Sexual Offence.</p> <p><a href="#">Student</a></p> <p>A person who is enrolled in a UniSQ Upskill Course or who is admitted to an Award Program or Non-Award Program offered by the University and is: currently enrolled in one or more Courses or study units; or not currently enrolled but is on an approved Leave of Absence or whose admission has not been cancelled.</p> <p><a href="#">University</a></p> <p>The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.</p>

### University Business Days

The days of Monday to Friday inclusive between 9am and 5pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST), with the exclusion of gazetted Public Holidays for the relevant campus location, plus the closure of the University between 25 December and 1 January in the following year inclusive as specified in the Enterprise Agreement, as well as any closure of the University either at one or several campuses in accordance with a direction of the Crisis Management Team.

### University Members

Persons who include: Employees of the University whose conditions of employment are covered by the UniSQ Enterprise Agreement whether full time or fractional, continuing, fixed-term or casual, including senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University; members of the University Council and University Committees; visiting, honorary and adjunct appointees; volunteers who contribute to University activities or who act on behalf of the University; and individuals who are granted access to University facilities or who are engaged in providing services to the University, such as contractors or consultants, where applicable.

### **Definitions that relate to this procedure only**

#### **Bullying**

Bullying is defined by the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) as repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of people, either in person or online, that creates a risk to health and safety.

Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

- abusive, insulting, or offensive language or comments;
- intimidation;
- unjustified criticism or Complaints;
- deliberately excluding an individual from work- or study-related activities;
- deliberately withholding information that is vital for effective work or study performance;

- setting unreasonable or constantly changing deadlines;
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level;
- denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of an Employee or Student;
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours about an individual; and
- changing work arrangements to deliberately inconvenience a particular Employee.

Reasonable management action, carried out in a reasonable manner, does not constitute Bullying. Reasonable management action is action taken by management to direct and control the way work is carried out, such as the fair and reasonable allocation of work and providing feedback on performance in a constructive way.

### **Complainant**

A Complainant is the individual who makes a Complaint against an Employee.

### **Complaint**

A Complaint is a statement of dissatisfaction or concern made by an individual against an Employee in relation to the Employee's conduct towards the individual.

### **Complaint Manager**

A person nominated by the Chief People Officer to manage a Complaint.

### **Discrimination**

Australia has laws regarding unlawful Discrimination, such as the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth), *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld) (Act) prohibits Discrimination on the basis of the following protected attributes:

- sex;
- relationship status;
- pregnancy;
- parental status;
- breastfeeding;
- age;
- race;
- impairment;
- religious belief or activity;
- political belief or activity;
- trade union activity;
- lawful sexual activity;
- gender identity;
- sexuality;
- family responsibilities; and/or
- association with, or relation to, a person identified on the basis of any of the above attributes.

Direct Discrimination means to treat, or propose to treat, an individual less favourably because an attribute listed in the Act (such as age or sex) applies to them.

Indirect Discrimination means to impose, or propose to impose, terms on a person to whom an attribute listed in the Act applies, which are unreasonable and with which they are unable to comply, such as a rule that applies to everyone but has the effect of being less favourable to a person of a particular gender or impairment.

The University recognises that an individual can be discriminated against because of one or more characteristics that are part of or are perceived as part of their identity. This is known as the intersectionality of Discrimination. For example, where a person is

Discriminated against on the grounds of their ethnicity may also be considered Discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, and age.

Other conduct which meets the definition of Discrimination, includes:

- Vilification which is to publicly incite hatred, serious contempt, or severe ridicule of a person on the grounds of race, religion, sexuality, gender identity, or disability; and
- Victimisation which is treating or threatening to treat a person detrimentally because they have made or intend to make a Complaint or because they have supported the Complainant in making a Complaint.

### **Harassment**

Harassment includes any behaviour that is unwelcome, unsolicited or unreciprocated and is likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate a person.

Examples of Harassment include, but are not limited to:

- telling insulting or offensive jokes;
- sending offensive emails or text messages;
- displaying offensive posters or screen savers;
- making derogatory comments or taunts about someone; or
- asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life.

### **Inappropriate Conduct and Inter-personal Conflict**

Inappropriate conduct is behaviour by an Employee which is unprofessional or inappropriate towards another person or within the workplace, which does not constitute Bullying, Harassment, and/or Discrimination (including Sex Misconduct).

Inter-personal conflict can arise between two or more individuals in the course of their work or study at the University and can lead to poor workplace relationships. Inter-personal conflict can include, but is not limited to:

- a difference of opinion or a misunderstanding;
- a disagreement on facts;
- a disagreement on an approach for addressing a problem or task; or
- a difference in values.

### **Misconduct and Serious Misconduct**

In response to allegations of conduct that may be considered Misconduct or Serious Misconduct, the University may immediately initiate an investigation process in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement without further application of the *Employee Complaints Procedure or Employee Complaints (Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault and Sex Discrimination) Procedure*.

Misconduct means conduct which is not Serious Misconduct but is nonetheless unacceptable or inappropriate, including but not limited to:

- wrongful or improper conduct of the kind which constitutes an impediment to carrying out an Employee's duties or to the Employee's colleagues carrying out their duties;
- dereliction of the duties required of the Employee; or
- research misconduct of a minor nature.

Serious Misconduct means conduct which involves deliberate behaviour by an Employee that is inconsistent with the continuation of their employment, and includes, but is not limited to:

- the Employee, in the course of their employment, engaging in:
  - conduct that causes serious and imminent risk to the health or safety of another person;
  - conduct that causes serious and imminent risk to the reputation or profits of the University;
  - theft;

- fraud;
- assault;
- Sexual Harassment; or
- research misconduct of a serious nature;
- the Employee being intoxicated at work; or
- the Employee refusing to carry out a lawful and reasonable instruction that is consistent with their employment agreement.

### **Psychosocial Hazards**

The *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* (Qld) defines a Psychosocial Hazard as a hazard that:

- arises from or relates to:
  - the design or management of work;
  - a work environment;
  - plant at a workplace; or
  - workplace interactions or behaviours; and
- may cause psychological harm, whether or not the hazard may also cause physical harm.

The University has a duty to identify, manage and eliminate Psychosocial Hazards as far as reasonably practicable and to implement, maintain and review measures to control psychosocial risks.

### **Respondent**

A Respondent is the Employee against whom a Complaint is made.

### **Sex Discrimination**

Sex Discrimination can be direct or indirect.

Direct Discrimination is treating a person less favourably because of their sex than someone of a different sex, in similar circumstances.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when there is an unreasonable requirement that people with a certain attribute or characteristic have difficulty complying with, compared to others without that attribute. The intentions of the decision maker in this circumstance are irrelevant.

The University recognises that an individual can be discriminated against because of one or more characteristics that are part of, or are perceived as part of, their identity. This is known as the intersectionality of Discrimination. For example, a person who is discriminated against on the grounds of their sexuality may also be discriminated against on the grounds of gender.

Sex Discrimination is unlawful in all aspects of work, including recruitment, terms and conditions on which a job is offered, employment benefits, training, transfers, promotion and dismissal.

### **Sexual Assault**

Is any unwanted or forced sexual act or behaviour without consent. This covers a broad range of sexual activity. Sexual assault occurs when an individual:

- without lawful reason indecently assaults a person including but not limited to groping or inappropriate touching of a sexual nature; or
- procures a person, without their consent, to commit an act of a sexual nature.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual Harassment is prohibited under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld) and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). Sexual Harassment is defined as unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours, directed at an individual in circumstances in which a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the individual would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual Harassment is unlawful.

Examples of Sexual Harassment include but are not limited to:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unwelcome physical touching;</li> <li>• sexual or suggestive comments or jokes;</li> <li>• unwelcome requests for sex;</li> <li>• intrusive questions about a person's private life or body;</li> <li>• the display of sexually explicit material, such as posters or pictures;</li> <li>• unwanted invitations to go on dates;</li> <li>• staring or leering;</li> <li>• sex-based insults or taunts; and</li> <li>• sexually offensive communications, including telephone calls, letters, text messages, email, and online interactions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Victimisation and Vilification</b></p> <p>Victimisation means any unfavourable treatment, or threats of unfavourable treatment against a person as a result of their actual or intended involvement in a Complaint.</p> <p>Vilification means the public incitement of hatred, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of a person or a group of people on the basis of a protected attribute.</p> <p>Victimisation and Vilification constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct Policy and Employees who victimise or vilify a Complainant, may be subject to Disciplinary Action.</p> <p><b>Witness</b></p> <p>A Witness is an individual who may have information or evidence in relation to a Complaint.</p>
<b>Keywords</b>	Complaints, Discrimination, Bullying, Harassment, conduct, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Sexual Misconduct
<b>Record No</b>	13/331PL