Complaints Management Procedure

1 Purpose

To establish the process for the management of Complaints that is systematic, fair and timely, and in accordance with principles of Procedural Fairness.

2 Scope

This Procedure applies to anyone wishing to make a Complaint to or about the University.

This Procedure will be applied by the University in receiving and managing Complaints where no other University Policy, Procedure or process applies.

Complaints about Employee conduct or performance, or Student conduct or performance, are managed in accordance with relevant University Policies and Procedures as listed in Section 7.

3 Procedure Overview

This Procedure outlines the steps involved in resolving Complaints.

In some cases, the University may be legally obligated to refer the matter directly to the appropriate external agency. The University's obligations in respect of a disclosure of information about suspected wrongdoing in the public sector are set out in the Public Interest Disclosure Policy. The University will inform the Complainant of a referral, where permitted to do so.

This Procedure aligns with the:

- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021:* Standard 2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints
- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (2018):* Standard 10: Complaints and Appeals

4 Procedures

4.1 Early resolution at the local level

In the first instance, complainants are encouraged to try to respectfully resolve their Complaint

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at the local level, where possible. This should be with the person or area most directly involved with, or responsible for, the subject matter of the Complaint.

If a Complaint raised at the local level is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and the University, no further action is required.

If the Complaint is not resolved at the local level to the satisfaction of the complainant, or the complainant is uncomfortable raising the Complaint at the local level, then the complainant may lodge a Complaint.

4.2 Lodging a Complaint

Complaints must be lodged within six (6) months of the Complaint arising or when the complainant first becomes aware of the facts and circumstances of the Complaint. The University will only consider a Complaint lodged after six (6) months if the complainant can provide reasonable justification for the delay in submission.

Complaints are lodged using the relevant online forms, where available, or by contacting the person or area responsible for the subject matter of the Complaint.

The University will normally acknowledge receipt of the Complaint within five (5) University Business Days.

4.2.1 Assessment of a Complaint

Once the Complaint has been received by the relevant person or area, it will be assessed to determine the actions that are required, including redirecting the Complaint to the appropriate area should the matter fall under the scope of a different University Policy Instrument or process.

Additional information may be sought from the complainant to assist in the assessment of the Complaint.

In assessing the Complaint, consideration may be given to:

1. whether the Complaint involves a communication problem or misunderstanding that can be resolved through an explanation, discussion, or apology
2. the time that has elapsed since the concern occurred
3. alternative ways of resolving the Complaint
4. the significance of the Complaint to the complainant and to the University.

The University can decline to consider a Complaint where:

1. there is insufficient connection with the University
2. it is a frivolous or Vexatious Complaint
3. there is insufficient information to enable proper examination
4. it is outside the reasonable time limits specified for the applicable resolution process
5. it has been previously dealt with under another appropriate University process
6. it is more aptly dealt with as feedback.

A complainant will normally be advised in writing within 10 University Business Days of acknowledgement of receipt of the Complaint on how the matter will be managed including, where appropriate, referral to a different University Policy Instrument or process.

4.2.2 Outcome of a Complaint

On the receipt of the Complaint, the relevant University Employee may request further documentation, check University records, conduct interviews, facilitate conversations or take any other actions reasonably required to resolve the Complaint.

The University will endeavour to resolve all Complaints within 20 University Business Days from the date of acknowledgement of the Complaint, where practicable. The University will notify the complainant of the outcome in writing.

A Complaint outcome is final and there is no internal University appeal or review mechanism available to complainants.

Unreasonable complainant conduct will be managed in accordance with the relevant Policy Instruments.

4.2.3 Internal review of Complaints management process

A complainant who is dissatisfied with the process used by the University to manage their Complaint may seek advice from the Student Ombudsperson (Students) or the Director (Governance and Compliance) on alternative pathways for resolution.

4.2.4 Application to external agencies

A complainant who is dissatisfied with the outcome of their Complaint may apply to the appropriate external agency to resolve their Complaint. Some external agencies require that all relevant University Complaints processes have been exhausted before they will consider the matter. If a Complaint is accepted for investigation by an external organisation, the University will normally suspend any in-progress University investigation until the external investigation has been completed and all reports submitted.

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4.3 Other considerations

4.3.1 Anonymous Complaints

The University will consider anonymous Complaints, taking into account whether:

1. the nature or seriousness of the Complaint warrants action
2. there is sufficient information provided for the matters raised to be investigated
3. there is a statutory requirement to consider such anonymous Complaints.

The University's ability to investigate and resolve anonymous Complaints may be limited.

4.3.2 Withdrawing a Complaint

A complainant may withdraw a Complaint at any time by notifying the University in writing. In most circumstances, the University will take no further action.

Where there is a statutory requirement for the University to act on concerns raised in or related to a Complaint, the appropriate actions will be taken including possibly referring the Complaint to an external agency. The University will advise the complainant of any referral, where permitted to do so.

4.3.3 Costs

The University does not charge any fees for lodging or resolving Complaints. Any costs incurred by the complainant in the process will be borne by the complainant without any right to compensation from the University.

4.4 Record management

In accordance with University Policy Instruments and regulatory obligations, Employees involved in Complaints management processes are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records of all communications pertaining to a Complaint, including:

1. copies of all documentation and correspondence with the complainant including emails sent and received
2. a written record of the outcome of any internal process including the reasons for any outcomes reached

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3. evidence of any action taken by the University in response to the Complaint.

4.5 Confidentiality and privacy

The personal information of the complainant and any people who are the subject of a Complaint should be kept confidential and only used for the purposes of addressing the Complaint and any follow up actions.

The University will not disclose personal information collected during the Complaint process to a third-party except in circumstances where the complainant has given their consent, or the University has an obligation to do so. This may include:

1. to prevent or lessen a serious threat to the life or health of an individual the information is related to
2. to produce records required by law
3. to notify a law enforcement or government agency as required by law
4. where a duty exists to disclose information to a professional accreditation entity.

4.6 Reporting

Complaints will be used as part of the University's process of continuous improvement to mitigate against recurring issues.

An annual report on Complaints managed under this Procedure, coordinated through the Associate Provost's Office, will be provided to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive.

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

Accountable Officer	Vice-Chancellor

Responsible Officer	Vice-Chancellor Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Education) Chief Operating and Financial Officer Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement) Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations)
Policy Type	University Procedure
Policy Suite	Complaints Management Policy
Subordinate Schedules	
Approved Date	2/1/2026
Effective Date	2/1/2026
Review Date	8/3/2028
Relevant Legislation	*Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* *Disability Services Act 2006* (Qld) *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* *Human Rights Act 2019* *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Qld)
Policy Exceptions	Policy Exceptions Register
Related Policies	Code of Conduct Policy Corrupt Conduct Reporting Policy Corruption Complaints About the Vice-Chancellor Policy Employee Complaints Policy Fraud and Corruption Risk Management Policy Prevention of Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy

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	Privacy Policy Public Interest Disclosure Policy Records and Information Management Policy Refund of Student Fees Policy and Procedure Research Code of Conduct Policy Right to Information Policy Student Academic Integrity Policy Student General Conduct Policy Student Grievance Resolution Policy Students with a Disability Policy and Procedure
Related Procedures	Employee Complaints (Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault and Sex Discrimination) Procedure Employee Complaints Procedure Modern Slavery Prevention Procedure Privacy Procedure Records and Information Management Procedure Research Code of Conduct: Management of Potential Breaches Procedure Student Academic Progress Procedure Student General Misconduct Procedure Student Grievance Resolution Procedure
Related forms, publications and websites	Online Complaints Form Queensland Human Rights Commission Australian Human Rights Commission Department of Home Affairs Queensland Ombudsman

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	Guidelines for Complaints Management Student General Misconduct Procedure Penalty Schedule Research Misconduct Penalty Schedule
Definitions	**Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary**
	Bullying Bullying occurs when a person or group of people repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards a person or group of persons, and that behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. Interpretation Rule: Unless context otherwise requires, a reference to 'bullying' (or other grammatical forms of any of this term) wherever appearing in University policy or procedure, and whether or not those terms are capitalised in any such instrument, is taken to include a reference to 'Antisemitism' as defined in the Definitions Dictionary . Complainant A person who has made a Complaint. Complaint A Complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the University, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required”. Discrimination Occurs when a person or a group of people are treated less favourably than another person or group because of race, colour, national or ethnic origin; gender or marital status; disability; religion or political beliefs; sexual preference; or some other central characteristic. Discrimination may occur when a person is denied the opportunity to participate freely and fully in normal day-to-day activities, for example being harassed in the workplace or being denied entry to public places and other facilities. Interpretation Rule: Unless context otherwise requires, a reference to 'discrimination' (or other grammatical forms of any of this term) wherever appearing in University policy or procedure, and whether or not those terms are capitalised in any such instrument, is taken to include a reference to 'Antisemitism' as defined in the Definitions Dictionary . Employee 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.

Grievance

Typically defined as a concern or Complaint raised by an Employee against a process, action, omission or Decision within the responsibility and control of the University which relates to employment or related internal People Portfolio matters, which has or is likely to have an unreasonable negative impact on the ability of an Employee to undertake their duties, or similar impact on their career.

Harassment

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, treating a person less favourably because of a person's characteristic such as their sex, race, age, disability, sexuality, religious or political belief or activity, or some other characteristic protected under anti-discrimination laws. Harassment may include Bullying a person and may also breach human rights legislation. Interpretation Rule: Unless context otherwise requires, a reference to 'harassment' (or other grammatical forms of any of this term) wherever appearing in University policy or procedure, and whether or not those terms are capitalised in any such instrument, is taken to include a reference to 'Antisemitism' as defined in the Definitions Dictionary .

Policy

A high level strategic directive that establishes a principle based approach on a subject. Policy is operationalised through Procedures that give instructions and set out processes to implement a Policy.

Procedural Fairness

Has the meaning ascribed to it from time to time by the applicable common law of the State of Queensland.

Procedure

An operational instruction that sets out the process to operationalise a Policy.

Respondent

A member of the University community against whom a Complaint has

	been made. Student 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. University The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland. 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. Vexatious Complaint A Complaint may be decided to be vexatious or frivolous when the substance of the Complaint is reasonably recognised as one or more of the following: Trivial; Without merit; Not in good faith; Pursued with undue persistence or with malice.
	Definitions that relate to this procedure only
Keywords	Complaints management, Complainant, early resolution, outcome, investigation, external agency, Procedural Fairness, Vexatious Complaint, Grievance, remediation, remediate, complain, Complaint, ethical
Record No	21/272PL

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