

## STUDENT GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS POLICY

<b>Approving authority</b>	Academic Board
<b>Purpose</b>	This policy outlines the grounds on which students can have their complaints and appeals heard and outlines the processes and procedures to be followed for resolution.
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Academic Leadership team (Academic Dean and/or Head of Academic Programs) and Head of Student Services (Currently the Student Service & Administration Coordinator)
<b>Next scheduled review</b>	April 2031
<b>Document Location</b>	<a href="http://www.ozford.edu.au/higher-education/policies-and-procedures/">http://www.ozford.edu.au/higher-education/policies-and-procedures/</a>
<b>Associated documents</b>	Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure Academic Progress Policy and Procedure Assessment Policy and Procedure Credit Transfer and Articulation Policy and Procedure Deferring, Suspending or Cancelling a Student's Enrolment Policy and Procedure Human Resources Policy and Procedure (Manual) Privacy Policy and Procedure Records Management Policy and Procedure Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure Staff Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure Student Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure Student Consultation Policy and Procedure Student Feedback Policy Student Grievances and Appeals Procedure Student Support and Services Policy and Procedure

### 1. PRINCIPLES

Ozford Institute of Higher Education (hereafter referred to as “the Institute”) is committed to considering and resolving student grievances and complaints and providing a formal mechanism for students to appeal in a manner that both protects and respects the rights of both the Institute and the student.

The Institute's policy has the intent of achieving resolution of grievances as effectively as possible, to minimise the occurrence of unresolved grievances, and to achieve these goals with minimal adverse consequences for the Institute or student(s) involved.

The ***Student Grievances and Appeals Policy and Procedure*** for considering student complaints or appeals is governed by the following principles:

- Students who lodge an academic or administrative complaint or appeal have the right to due process and a fair hearing. Any staff member involved in the complaint or appeal equally has the right to due process and a fair hearing;
- Student complaints or appeals will be treated in a sensitive, confidential and timely manner and discussed only with those persons relevant to the case or with persons who can provide specialist advice;
- Staff involved in resolving student complaints or appeals will act fairly at all times and base their decisions on a thorough and unbiased consideration of facts and views expressed by all parties;
- A student must be able to invoke the complaints or appeals procedures without fear of reprisal, discrimination or victimisation;
- Each complainant and appellant will have the opportunity to formally present his or her own case, and each party may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meeting;
- There is provision for review by an independent third party is available if the internal process fails to resolve a grievance or if students are dissatisfied with an internal appeal outcome;
- The Institute will implement the ***Student Grievances and Appeals Policy and Procedure*** at no cost to the complainant or appellant. There may be costs involved in external appeal processes, the Institute will not charge a cost for its involvement in the process.

While some types of grievances are best resolved locally and informally, more serious grievances, including allegations of assault or sexual harassment, are unlikely to be suitable for informal resolution. Where complaints involve sensitive matters (including sexual assault, sexual harassment, threats or other safety concerns), the Institute will respond in a person-centred and trauma-informed manner, prioritising student safety, support and choice. Students may choose to seek support without making a formal complaint, and may choose whether to report to the Police or other authorities, subject to legal obligations. The Institute will clearly explain confidentiality limits and available support options.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff and covers all forms of student complaints and appeals in relation to the operations of the Institute that may include, but are not limited to, the quality of the teaching, administration, student support and services, bullying, harassment, discrimination and any other areas of perceived inappropriate, unfair or discriminatory treatment, action or decision.

This policy does not apply to the appeal by students against academic issues such as:

- the outcome of a review of result of assessment or grade of subject;
- a penalty for academic misconduct and plagiarism;
- a refusal of an application for course credit;
- a failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress.

Students wishing to appeal against any academic issue will be referred to the *Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

Staff grievances will be addressed as set out in the *Human Resources Policy and Procedure (Manual)*.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

#### *Appeal*

An appeal is a request to review a decision or outcome made under an Institute policy or procedure.

Appeals about academic matters (e.g., grade review outcomes, academic misconduct, credit decisions, academic progress) are managed under the *Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

#### *ESOS National Code*

The ESOS National Code refers to the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 established under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000.

#### *Compassionate or Compelling circumstances*

Compassionate or compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the student's course progress or wellbeing. These could include, but not limited to:

- serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the student was unable to attend classes;
- bereavement for the death of close family members such as parents or grandparents (documented evidence must be provided);
- serious illness, accident or family incident which requires immediate travel which has impacted the student to studies;
- the inability to begin study on the course commencement date stated on the CoE due to delay in receiving a student visa if relevant;
- major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring immediate travel and this has impacted on the student's studies;
- a traumatic experience supported by police or psychologist's reports which could include but is not limited to:
  - involvement in or witnessing of an accident; or
  - a crime committed against the student; or
  - the student being a witness to a crime and this has impacted on the student.
- where the Institute was unable to offer a pre-requisite unit.

Notes:

- misreading the examination timetable, examination anxiety or returning home will not be accepted as Compassionate and Compelling circumstances;
- religious or faith-based issues are not in themselves grounds for special consideration. However, they may be used in support of an application that meets the Compassionate and Compelling circumstances set out above.

#### *Complaint*

An implied or express statement of dissatisfaction where a response is sought, reasonable to expect or legally required. It includes dissatisfaction with the Institute's:

- education services
- behaviour of a staff member, contractor or student which contravenes a policy or procedure
- third parties providing services to students on behalf of the Institute
- actions or decisions
- inaction or delay
- policy or processes.

## **What is not a complaint?**

- An initial request for a service or action. However, subsequent requests may be an implicit complaint about service, inaction or delay.
- Statements about an overall opinion are generally not complaints, unless a response or resolution is expected, or should reasonably be provided.
- Requests for information or explanations. However, repeated requests for explanations may be implied complaints about the quality of services, decisions or reasons previously provided.
- Requests for updates are not generally complaints. However, some requests for updates may be implied complaints about delay or inaction.

## ***Feedback***

Feedback is a compliment, criticism, comment or suggestion where a response is not sought, or not reasonable to expect.

The key difference between complaints and critical feedback is the reasonable expectation of a response. Like complaints, it is important to ensure that feedback can be analysed to identify opportunities for improvement.

## ***Frivolous***

Not serious, relies on trivialities, does not warrant a review of the matter concerned.

## ***Grievance***

A grievance is any expression of dissatisfaction with some aspect of a student's experience (including with agents or other related parties who represent or act on behalf of the provider). Grievances typically fall into two classes:

- minor issues that are suitable to be addressed informally and usually resolved easily (e.g. by a discussion with local staff, clarification of a misunderstanding etc.)
- those that involve a formal process for resolution (such grievances are typically known as a 'complaint' or a 'formal complaint', to distinguish them from matters that are resolved informally).

## ***Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS)***

Means the Provider Registration and International Students Management System (the electronic system that holds CRICOS and the electronic confirmation of enrolment).

## ***TEQSA***

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

## ***Vexatious***

Done to cause unjustified trouble or for a purpose other than genuine

## 4. POLICY

- 4.1 Information about complaint policies and procedures is advertised, clearly written, and easily accessible, including for students with diverse needs. Students will be informed of the availability of the Institute's ***Student Grievances and Appeals Policy and Procedure*** during the enrolment process. The information will be in the public domain (e.g. on the provider's website) and accessible to students:
- within the ***Student Acceptance Agreement*** and the ***Student Handbook***;
  - on the Institute website;
  - within the information provided by student services;
  - by publication, from time to time, of bulletins and notices.
- 4.2 The Institute will ensure that students can lodge complaints and appeals through multiple channels, and that contact points and instructions for lodgement are clearly published and easy to locate. The Institute will receive student complaints or appeals concerning any decision, action or situation relating to or arising from the operations of the Institute. A student making a complaint has the right to a fair and thorough investigation, based on the principles of this policy.
- 4.3 Should the appeal relate to the Institute's intention to suspend or cancel the enrolment of an international student, the student must lodge an appeal within 20 working days of receiving the notification of intention from the Institute.
- 4.4 The Institute will support a complainant's right to submit reasonable feedback, grievances, concerns, complaints or appeals through a complaints resolution process that:
- is accessible, impartial, fair, equitable and without financial cost to complainants
  - is person-centered aiming to ensure a complainant's needs and preferences are at the centre of decisions made in response to its disclosure.
  - is trauma-informed applying core principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment, aims to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation of a complainant, and promotes recovery and healing to the greatest extent possible.
  - carefully and respectfully consider all complaints and appeals in a fair and judicious manner.
  - is transparent and consistent
  - encourages, where possible, informal resolution of concerns
  - is implemented in a timely and responsive manner
  - ensures, so far as is practicable, privacy, confidentiality and the health, wellbeing and safety of all parties
  - encourages the maintenance of harmonious relationships.
- 4.5 All complaints and appeals will be handled professionally and confidentially in order to achieve a satisfactory resolution that is fair and equitable to all parties. Any staff member allocated to manage, investigate, advise on, or decide a complaint/appeal must be independent of the matter.
- 4.6 The Institute will encourage the parties to approach a complaint or appeal to engage in good faith with an open view and to attempt to resolve problems informally through discussion and conciliation.
- 4.7 If the informal approach through discussion and conciliation is unsuccessful, the student may make a formal complaint.

- 4.8 Resolution of a formal complaint or appeal will commence within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint or appeal.
- 4.9 The Institute will provide reasonable adjustments to enable access to the complaints and appeals process upon request. At any stage in the internal complaints or appeals process students are entitled to be assisted or accompanied by a support person. Any staff member who is the subject of a complaint or appeal also has the right to have an accompanying support person.
- 4.10 Where a complaint or appeal cannot be resolved by the Institute or the Institute's determination of a matter is not accepted by all parties, all students can access an appropriate external and independent body to review the process and decision of the Institute. A student's enrolment will be maintained whilst consideration of a complaint or whilst the appeal is in progress and the outcome has not been determined.
- 4.11 The outcome of any appeal or complaint will be communicated in writing to the student within 5 working days of the determination. Written advice of the outcome will include the reasons for the decision, any corrective or preventative actions to be taken (if applicable), and information on internal and external review options and relevant time limits. If there is any matter arising from a student complaint or appeal that is a systemic issue which requires improvement action this will be reported to the Institute management as part of the continuous improvement process.
- 4.12 The Institute will provide the student with written advice identifying the appropriate external and independent review option for the student's circumstance, including contact details. Students will be provided within 10 working days of completion of the internal complaints and appeals process with details of external authorities they may approach, if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the appeals process.

## NATIONAL STUDENTS OMBUDSMAN

[Phone: 1300 395 775 available Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm \(AEDT\).](tel:1300395775)

The NSA [online form](https://www.nso.gov.au/contact-us) can be accessed at <https://www.nso.gov.au/contact-us>

Melbourne address – Level 2, 452 Flinders Street - Melbourne office is currently closed for in-person complaints. See the NSA website for more information.

The NSO is a free service.

### ***For overseas students on student visa***

## OVERSEAS STUDENT OMBUDSMAN (OSO)

Level 6, 34 Queen Street

Melbourne Victoria 3000

Phone: 1300 362 072

Website: [International student complaints | Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) The OSO is a free service.

### ***For general complaints***

Resolution Institute

Phone: 02 9251 3366

Address: Level 1, 13 -15 Bridge St, SYDNEY 2000

Website: <https://www.resolution.Institute/contactus>

### ***For complaints in respect to a Refund or Remission of FEE-HELP***

Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)

<https://www.aat.gov.au/>

Call 1800 228 333 from anywhere in Australia

If on Norfolk Island or overseas, call +61 2 9276 5000.

### ***For complaints regarding fees, refunds or cancellations***

ACCC website [Where to go for consumer help | ACCC](#)

TEQSA

TEQSA Website: [Raising a complaint or concern | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency](#)

- 4.13 The Institute will maintain records of all complaints and appeals as set out in the ***Records Management Policy and Procedure*** and will make them available for external review authorities upon request.
- 4.14 The Institute will provide all requested documentation to the external independent third party and comply with all steps and directions of the external independent third party in the process of the review.
- 4.15 The Institute will consider all outcomes from formal complaints and appeals. If the result of the appeal or complaint is favourable to the student, the Institute will immediately implement the decision, and take necessary corrective or preventative action, if applicable.
- 4.16 The Institute will respond to any complaint or appeal that an overseas student makes regarding his or her dealings with the Institute, or the Institute's education agents or any related party the Institute has an arrangement with to deliver the overseas student's courses or other related services.
- 4.17 The Governing Board will assure itself that the occurrence and nature of formal complaints are monitored, and action is taken to address underlying causes. The Institute does not tolerate victimisation and may take action against a student or staff member who is found to have victimised another student or staff member on the basis of their involvement in a student complaint or appeal.
- 4.18 The Institute will not consider or will cease to consider:
- Frivolous or vexatious complaints, and the complaint may be subject to the Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure.
  - complaints where it is determined that the behaviour of a complainant is having a disproportionate and unreasonable impact on the Institute, its staff, services, time and/or resources.
- 4.19 A student may withdraw a complaint or request for a review of a complaint outcome at any time by notifying the Institute in writing.

## **Governance and Accountability**

- 4.20 The Institute's culture prioritises and resources complaints handling and values complaint data, with the Executive Management team demonstrating a firm commitment to review, design, manage and deliver processes and policies to improve grievance and complaint mechanisms.
- 4.21 The Institute (and contracted third parties) will meet the current expectations and their obligations around student grievance and complaint management and maintaining the wellbeing of staff (including staff involved in complaints-handling).
- 4.22 The Governing Board will review a report of de-identified complaints data at least once every 6 months and can assure itself that any underlying causes of identified trends or issues are being adequately addressed.

## 5 QUALITY ASSURANCE

To ensure that this policy is fit for purpose and meets the requirements of the TEQSA Compliance Frameworks the policy will be:

- 5.1 internally endorsed by the Executive Management Team on development or review, prior to approval by the Academic Board ;
- 5.2 externally reviewed as part of any independent review of the TEQSA Compliance Frameworks approved by the Governing Board;
- 5.3 internally reviewed by the Responsible Officer every five years from the date of approval (if not earlier).
- 5.4 referenced to the applicable TEQSA Compliance Frameworks requirement(s) and/or other legislation/regulation.

## 6 FEEDBACK

Feedback or comments on this policy are welcomed by the listed Responsible officers of the Institute.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This policy was developed with reference to the following:

- Deakin University, Student Complaints Resolution Policy, 2026 ([Student Complaints Resolution policy / Document / Deakin Policy Library](#))
- Monash University, Student Complaints Policy, 2025 ([Policies and procedures for student complaints - Current students](#))
- Victoria University, Student Complaints Policy, 2025 ([Complaints Policy / Document / Victoria University Policy Library](#))
- Avondale College of Higher Education, Student Grievances and Appeals Policy, 2025 ([Complaint Resolution Policy & Procedure - Avondale Policies - Avondale University](#))
- TEQSA, Guidance note: Grievance and complaint handling, Version 1.1, 2019 ([Guidance note: Grievance and complaint handling | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(teqsa.gov.au\)](#))
- TEQSA Statement of Regulatory Expectations: Student grievance and complaint mechanisms ([Statement of Regulatory Expectations: Student grievance and complaint mechanisms | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency](#))
- Commonwealth Ombudsman, Better Practice Complaints Practice Guide ([Better-Practice-Complaint-Handling-Guide.pdf](#))

## 8 VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date approved	Description	Approved by
1.0	April 2014	Initial issue	AB
2.0	May 2017	Internal review	AB
3.0	June 2018	To align with National Code 2018 and HES Threshold Standard 2.4  Minor formatting and edits	AB
4.0	July 2019	Internal Review	AB
4.1	October 2019	Internal Review	AB
5.0	June 2023	Internal Review	AB
5.1	September 2023	Internal review – minor formatting changes, alignment of definitions and add external referencing	EMT
5.2	April 2026	Internal Review	AB
Related legislation/ regulation/standard	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS) 2000 Education Services for Overseas Students Regulations 2019 The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 Standards 10 Statement of Regulatory Expectations: Student grievance and complaint mechanisms (Statement of Regulatory Expectations: Student grievance and complaint mechanisms   Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency)		

Notes:

AB = Academic Board

Executive Management team