

STUDENT GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

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

1. PRINCIPLES

Ozford Institute of Higher Education (hereafter referred to as “the Institute”) is committed to resolving student grievances/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 procedures have 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 subject of the complaint or appeal equally has the right to due process and a fair hearing;
- Student complaints or appeals will be treated in a serious, sensitive, confidential and timely manner and discussed only with those persons relevant to the case or 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 can formally present his or her own case at minimum cost to themselves, and each party may be accompanied and assisted by any 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. Some complaints may need to be referred to Victoria Police or other relevant authorities (ie. child abuse).

2. SCOPE

This procedure 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, actions of education agents or other service providers of the Institute, bullying, harassment, discrimination and any other areas of perceived inappropriate, unfair or discriminatory treatment, action or decision.

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

1. the outcome of a review of grade;
2. penalty for academic misconduct and plagiarism;
3. refusal of an application for course credit;
4. 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 are 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. PROCEDURE

Expectations of Staff

4.1 All staff involved in complaints investigations:

- have capacity to manage the volume and complexity of Institute complaints
- act fairly, reasonably and impartially
- deal with the matter as expeditiously as possible, consistent with the need to act fairly.
- exercise independent judgement
- conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner
- treat the process as confidential , in accordance with the **Privacy Policy and Procedure**.
- disclose actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest as soon as they become apparent.
- ensure the transfer of complaints casework between staff is minimised

4.2 All staff allocated to handle, and those responsible for making decisions about, student grievances and complaints will have appropriate training in:

- knowing and complying with the **Complaints Policy** and these complaint handling procedures
- keeping informed about the Institute including any changes to programs and services
- trauma-informed and person-centred practice
- supporting culturally and racially marginalised persons
- learning how to identify and feedback systemic issues
- keeping up to date with better practice in complaint handling
- if their role requires, administrative decision making.

4.3 Appropriate mitigations and supports are in place to respond to the wellbeing and safety needs of staff handling grievances and complaints and action is taken to address underlying risks.

4.4 All Institute staff should work collaboratively with complaint handling staff to ensure an accessible and responsive complaint handling system.

Grievance and Complaint Process Accessibility

4.5 The Institute will actively encourage complaints by making it clear that:

- complaints are welcomed and free
- complaint handling is confidential
- there is no penalty for complaining
- complaints are valued by the organisation as a way to improve its service
- complaints can be made anonymously.

4.6 Where the Institute is not the organisation responsible for a complaint, referral (and time limit) information for other relevant complaint bodies will be supplied.

4.7 Students can access the Institute's *Student Grievances and Appeals Policy and Procedure* by the following means:

- within the Student Acceptance Agreement and Student Handbook;
- on the Institute website;
- within the information provided by student services;
- by publication, from time to time, of bulletins and notices.

4.8 Students can make anonymous or confidential complaints and are informed of how anonymity or confidentiality may impact the investigation, consideration or outcome of their complaint.

Should a matter not be satisfactorily resolved internally, higher education students may refer complaints or other matters to the National Student Ombudsman (NSO), a free and independent service offered by the Australian government.

Managing anonymous complaints

4.9 Anonymous complaints are managed differently compared to complaints by identified students. This is due to the complainant's wish to be anonymous and the limitations this places on the Institute's ability to verify claims made, investigate the matter and offer a resolution.

4.10 The Institute can only investigate an anonymous complaint if:

- it relates to Institute operations or policy in a general way;
- there is documentary evidence to support the complaint that can be independently verified; and
- it is not necessary for a staff member or area who is subject to the complaint to be aware of the complainant's identity in order for them to respond.

4.11 A staff member or area subject to an anonymous complaint must be provided an opportunity to respond in accordance with principles of procedural fairness. If this cannot occur without disclosing the identity of an anonymous complainant, the complaint will not be investigated.

4.12 Anonymous complaints will be pursued or referred on to an appropriate staff member or area, if they contain prima facie evidence of misconduct or significant institutional level issues.

Informal Grievances/Complaints

4.13 Any student with a question or concern may raise the matter with the relevant staff of the Institute.

4.14 When making a complaint, students are expected to:

- treat staff with courtesy and respect;
- not engage in behaviour that due to its nature or frequency raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues;
- not make complaints that are frivolous, vexatious or lacking in substance;
- provide truthful information and not purposely misrepresent or withhold relevant information;
- articulate the desired outcome that would resolve the matter;

- cooperate with the process, including answering questions, providing information and copies of documents and attending meetings if requested.

Failure to do so may result in the process being discontinued.

- 4.15 The Student Services team are the first point of call for students who may want to make a complaint or lodge an appeal or simply wish to discuss their options on any matters of concern.
- 4.16 A student making a complaint or appeal must clearly identify the issue, provide all available information in support of their case, decide on desired outcomes and cooperate with the investigation of the complaint or appeal.
- 4.17 The Institute will attempt an informal resolution based on principles of mediation and negotiation.
- 4.18 To ensure all issues and grievances are being addressed by the appropriate person, with student consent, the Student Services team may raise the issue with the relevant staff members and attempt a resolution.
- 4.19 Questions or complaint or appeals dealt with in this way do not become part of the formal complaint or appeal process and will not be documented, recorded or reported on unless the Institute staff member involved determines that the issue question or complaint or appeal was relevant to the wider operation of the Institute as it identifies potential areas of risk or improvement.

Internal Grievances/Complaints and Appeals

- 4.20 Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal process, or, who want to register a formal complaint or internal appeal, may do so by filling in the relevant forms and submit to the Institute.
- Student Internal Complaints Form
 - Student Internal Appeals Form
- 4.21 Students may lodge a complaint or appeal via: the online form, email, telephone, in-person or post. The Student Services team will assist students with completion of the Complaints and Appeals forms.
- 4.22 In the case of any allegation regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, bullying, harassment or discrimination, the complainant is encouraged to contact the Head of Student Services for initial assistance. Alternatively, a complaint may be made through this complaint resolution process.
- 4.23 The resolution phase must commence within 10 working days of the complaint or appeal being lodged in writing. The students will be provided with clear information concerning:
- the complaints process, the scope of what the Institute can consider, how personal information is handled by the Institute, and typical outcomes that may result from the complaint process
 - a timeline for resolution, including potential factors that may foreseeably and reasonably cause delays
 - how to access the National Student Ombudsman (NSO) and other available external avenues of complaint resolution.
- 4.24 Students will be encouraged to seek the support and assistance of the Institute's Student Services team to assist them with the complaints process.
- The Institute will provide reasonable adjustments (e.g. accessibility assistance, alternative formats, or additional meeting request) to enable access to this process upon requested.
 - Student complainants or respondents who require support through a complaint process may be referred, or receive an Institute-facilitated referral where appropriate, to suitable support services.

- 4.25 The Student Services team will triage complaints so that simple complaints can be resolved quickly – freeing up resources for thorough investigation of more complex complaints.
- 4.26 A meeting will be organised for students and the Responsible Officer or delegate (or President and CEO if the Responsible Officer is an involved party) to hear the complaint/appeal.
- Each complainant, and appellant will be provided with 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.
 - If requested by the student, the Responsible Officer or any other Student Services staff member may accompany students in any formal complaint or internal appeal hearing. In this situation they are in attendance as advisors, not as advocates and to ensure all students receive professional, fair and equitable treatment at the Institute.
- 4.27 The Responsible Officer will respond and attempt to resolve the complaint or appeal with the student and any other parties who may be involved.
- determine the matter on the basis of evidence brought forward by the complainant, the respondent, and/or the Institute, and act in accordance with the relevant policy and procedures;
 - give all relevant parties a copy of, or an opportunity to inspect, all documentation relevant to the subject matter of the complaint;
 - give the parties a reasonable opportunity to make a case or response in writing and/or in person; and
 - manage any actual or imminent threat of harm including using a trauma-informed and person-centred approach.
 - request or access additional information;
 - seek advice from third parties, either internally or externally, including legal advice;
 - use a combination of investigation, mediation or negotiation to attempt to resolve the complaint;
 - where there is conflicting evidence, make a determination based on the balance of probabilities.
- 4.28 A maximum time of 20 working days from the commencement of the resolution phase will be allowed for the resolution unless an extension of time is required of which all parties will be informed in writing.
- 4.29 At the end of the resolution phase the Responsible Officer will report the outcome of the complaints/appeal, including
- the outcome,
 - the reasons (including key information considered). for the outcome, and
 - any further internal/external review options to the student in writing
 - a copy is recorded in the student's file and the Complaints register
- 4.30 Substantiated complaints or appeals will be redressed appropriately according to the nature, severity and complexity of the complaint. Remedies may include, but not limited to:
- listening to and acknowledging the person's experience
 - an apology;
 - expediting an action

- providing a better explanation
 - reversal of the initial decision that gave rise to the complaint or appeal;
 - correction of any misleading information or incorrect records;
 - a change of Institute policy, procedures and practice.
- 4.31 If the outcome of an internal appeal by an international student against the Institute’s decision to suspend or cancel the student’s enrolment is unfavourable to the student, then the Institute will provide the student with the opportunity to access the external process appeal within a set time frame (10 working days).
- 4.32 In cases where the matter is related to unsatisfactory course progress and students do not access the internal or external appeal within the set time frame or withdraw from the appeal process, the Institute will report the student to the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS. In cases where students access both the internal and external appeal concerning unsatisfactory academic course progress, the Institute needs to await the outcome of the external appeals process before notifying the Government through PRISMS.
- 4.33 There are no further avenues internally within the Institute for appeals after the internal appeals process has been completed.

Withdrawal of Complaint

- 4.34 A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any time during the process in writing.
- 4.35 Upon receipt of this notification, consideration of the complaint may be discontinued, or the Institute reserves the right to further investigate the matter on its own initiative based on information that has been provided or has subsequently been acquired relevant to the withdrawn complaint. This may occur if the
- the complaint raises significant systemic issues that should be addressed; or
 - the complaint is considered serious enough for an investigation to continue.

External Appeals

- 4.36 If all the above internal procedures have been followed and student is still not satisfied with the outcome, the Institute will advise the student that they have the right to access an external complaints/appeal process by contacting the nominated independent third parties below for a review. Students will be advised in writing that the purpose of the external process is to consider whether the Institute has followed its policies and procedures, rather than make a decision in place of the Institute.

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](#)

- 4.37 Students are required to pay a fee to the Resolution Institute to submit an external review. However, if the result of the external appeal is in favour of the student, all costs imposed will be reimbursed/paid by the Institute within 10 working days following the receipt of a request for reimbursement or provision of original or certified/verified copy of the invoice. No other costs incurred by the appellant will be reimbursed.
- 4.38 The external appeals procedure is determined by the nominated independent third party who is external to the Institute and all parties will be notified by them of the required steps, actions and outcomes.
- 4.39 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.

- 4.40 The Institute will maintain the student enrolment whilst the external appeal is in progress if the matter is related to cancellation of enrolment.
- 4.41 When an external process has been completed, the Institute will immediately implement any decision or recommendation, and or corrective /preventative action (if applicable) required by the outcomes of the external process. The student will be advised in writing of this outcome of the external process.
- 4.42 Nothing in this procedure inhibits student's rights to take action under the Australian Consumer Law or pursue other legal remedies. Students wishing to take this course of action are advised to contact a solicitor, or the Law Institute of Victoria (<https://liv.asn.au>) or Queensland Law Society ([Home - Queensland Law Society](#)) for a referral to a solicitor.

Assurance, Review and Improvement

- 4.43 A collective record of student complaints and appeals will be kept in a secured shared drive. The records will include:
- when and how the complaint was made
 - the complainant's personal details including:
 - demographics, (such as age, gender, language, location)
 - vulnerability or accessibility considerations (such as homelessness, domestic violence, interpreter, remoteness or isolation).
 - what the complaint was about and the complainant's expectations
 - causes (such as policy, delay, inaction, behaviour)
 - how the complaint was resolved (such as complaint upheld, not upheld, inconclusive)
 - remedies (such as better explanation, decision varied or set aside, specific action, apology)
 - all actions, decisions and interactions.
 - further steps (and when implemented)
 - systemic issues.
 - problems with record keeping
 - broader training and support needs where a number of staff have made mistakes or given inaccurate information
 - delays and bottlenecks caused by issues such as poor communication or integration
 - inconsistencies between internal procedures and legislative obligations
 - lack of clarity in internal policies and procedural guidance
 - new or existing programs or processes that are not working
 - changes in the geographical or demographic spread of complaints
 - changes in remedy and outcome trends.
 - gaps where people or work 'falls through the cracks', for example, due to inadequate delineation of responsibilities.
- 4.44 The Institute expects its staff to be reflective, self-critical and innovative, and encourages staff to look for opportunities to continuously improve the Institute. Patterns of recurring complaints relating to a

particular issue or processed will be brought to the attention of EMT to discuss and implement corrective action and improvement plan that includes:

- identifying training and development needs
- strengthening supervision and quality assurance processes
- eliminating or reducing 'pain points' for complainants
- reducing duplication and double handling.

4.45 The Student Services team will prepare a six monthly report presented to the Academic Board and Governing Board. The report will:

- include analysis of complaint trends, identification of underlying causes, and actions taken to address underlying causes
- list the review and improvement activities undertaken related to complaint handling, including identification of areas for improvement, and actions taken to improve service delivery, and clearly identify delegations of authority and accountability.

4.46 Records of student complaints and appeals will be maintained as set out in the ***Records Management Policy and Procedure***.

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

- 5.1 internally approved by the Executive Management Team on development or review
- 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 procedure is welcomed by the listed Responsible officers of the Institute.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This procedure 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
2.0	May 2017	Initial issue	AB
3.0	June 2018	Change to National Code 2018	EMT
4.0	May 2019	Internal Review	EMT
5.0	June 2023	Internal Review	EMT
5.1	September 2023	Internal review – minor formatting changes, alignment of definitions and add external referencing	EMT
5.2	April 2026	Internal review	EMT
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 Standard 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)		

Note : EMT = Executive Management Team