

Complaint Policy - Staff

Purpose and Scope

- (1) This Policy establishes a process for handling complaints made by University staff members in the course of their employment.
- (2) This Policy is also to be used by students in the event of a complaint directed against a University staff member concerning their behaviour or conduct.
- (3) This Policy does not cover:
- a. Complaints managed under other University policies (e.g., [Sexual Misconduct \(Prevention and Response\) Policy](#), [Complaints Policy – Students and Members of the Public](#) and [Whistleblowing \(Public Interest Disclosures\) Policy](#)).
 - b. Complaints about University actions required by legislation, awards, or commercial agreements.
 - c. Complaints related to the application of provisions in the University's Enterprise Agreement or the National Employment Standards under the [Fair Work Act 2009 \(Cth\)](#), which are handled under the Dispute Resolution Procedures of the University's Enterprise Agreement.
 - d. Complaints regarding decisions of the University Council.

University Commitments

- (4) In managing complaints, the University will endeavour to:
- a. treat complaints seriously;
 - b. ensure that its processes will not be affected by favouritism, bias or conflict of interest;
 - c. respond in a timely manner and maintain contact where there is a delay;
 - d. act fairly and impartially;
 - e. respect privacy and minimise the disclosure of complaints, personal information or unsubstantiated allegations except as necessary for natural justice, effective complaint management or other reasonable purposes;
 - f. be mindful and sensitive to participants' cultural differences and personal attributes, including disabilities; and
 - g. support complainants by ensuring access to [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) services.
- (5) This Complaint Policy is separate and distinct from staff performance and disciplinary processes. If any issues of unsatisfactory performance, misconduct, or serious misconduct arise during complaint management, the University will address them through the relevant process.
- (6) The University will generally not act on anonymous complaints unless the issues raised are serious and sufficient information is provided to warrant further enquiry into the complaint.
- (7) The University will support and take reasonable steps to protect individuals who make a legitimate complaint from victimisation or retaliation. Examples of retaliation include:
- a. Making a complaint against a complainant in response to being the subject of a complaint;
 - b. Making a complaint to obstruct the reasonable application of performance management, counselling or disciplinary processes initiated by the University;

- c. Demotion, reduction in work hours, or exclusion from workplace activities as punishment for filing a complaint;
- d. Threatening, harassing, or intimidating the Complainant in any form.

Staff Obligations

(8) Staff involved in complaint management processes must:

- a. Conduct themselves honestly and in good faith, be forthcoming with reasonably requested information, cooperate and participate in the University's complaint management processes as required, and maintain the University's trust and confidence throughout their employment.
- b. Maintain confidentiality and not collude with other participants or witnesses.
- c. Ensure the integrity of complaint management processes and protect all parties involved.
- d. Act in accordance with their employment obligations, including those detailed in the University's [Code of Conduct](#).

(9) Staff may fail to meet their obligations by act or omission.

Misuse of Policy

(10) The University may initiate disciplinary processes against a person who misuses this Complaints Policy or otherwise acts in an unreasonable or unacceptable manner when participating in the complaints management process.

(11) Examples of behaviour that may constitute misuse of this Complaints Policy include:

- a. Making a complaint:
 - i. in bad faith;
 - ii. that is frivolous, vexatious or baseless;
 - iii. in retaliation to a separate complaint (with no other proper basis).
- b. Being dishonest at any stage of the complaint process;
- c. Breaching confidentiality obligations;
- d. Colluding with or coercing (or attempting to collude with or coerce) other participants at any stage in the complaints process;
- e. Taking adverse action against another staff member because they have made a complaint.

(12) Where the University considers there has been misuse of this Policy:

- a. In the case of potential misuse by a staff member, the misuse may be referred to the Vice-Chancellor, who will determine whether disciplinary processes shall be commenced.
- b. In the case of potential misuse by a student, the matter is to be managed in accordance with the [Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Rules](#).

(13) For the purposes of this Policy:

- a. A frivolous complaint is a complaint that lacks serious purpose or value.
- b. A vexatious complaint is a complaint made to annoy or cause trouble rather than to address a genuine concern.
- c. A baseless complaint is a complaint without any factual basis or supporting evidence.
- d. A complaint made in bad faith is a complaint made in a dishonest manner or with an intention to deceive.

Personal Support

(14) Staff and students may invite a support person to any meeting initiated under this Policy.

Staff Members

(15) The University is committed to ensuring all staff have access to appropriate support throughout the complaint management process. Staff involved in a complaint, whether as a complainant, respondent, or witness, may experience stress or emotional challenges. The University offers various support services to assist staff during these times.

(16) All staff and their family members can access confidential counselling, coaching, and support services through our EAP, delivered by Assure Programs. This service provides staff access to qualified health professionals who can assist with work, personal, or family-related concerns. Support is available in person, via phone (1800 808 374), text (0439 449 876), or online.

(17) Key services include access to 24/7 crisis and emergency counselling available at no cost, 365 days a year; coaching and counselling across a range of issues, including financial coaching, introductory legal referrals, and nutritional coaching; and access to the SCU [Wellbeing Gateway](#), a personal digital platform that provides 24/7 access to health professionals and resources to support mental health and wellbeing.

(18) The University encourages all staff to utilise these services as needed to ensure they are supported throughout the complaint process.

Students

(19) Students may also access personal support through the SCU [Services and Support Gateway](#).

(20) Key services include access to experienced and compassionate counsellors, access to health clinics, safety and welfare support and 24/7 Mental health support. Students can access the 24/7 Mental Health Support Line via phone (1300 782 676) or text (0488 884 143).

(21) The University encourages all students to utilise these services as needed to ensure they are supported throughout the complaint process.

Overview of Procedures

(22) Complaints may be managed informally or formally. Formal complaints are submitted through Riskware, while informal complaints are addressed directly through dialogue or with support from supervisors and People and Culture without using Riskware.

(23) Informal complaint processes prioritise early resolution through flexible, less structured approaches to managing concerns. Formal complaint processes involve structured management and investigation.

(24) The complainant initially decides whether to pursue an informal or formal process based on their preferred approach to resolving the issue.

(25) When deciding between informal and formal complaint processes, the complainant should consider the seriousness of the issue.

- a. Informal processes are best for minor misunderstandings or communication breakdowns that can be resolved quickly through direct discussion.
- b. Formal processes are more suitable for serious allegations, issues that require investigation, unresolved issues after informal attempts, or cases with broader implications for workplace safety or policy compliance.

(26) While the University will consider the complainant's preferences, it retains the right to manage complaints as it deems necessary.

(27) If a complaint is assessed as unsatisfactory, repetitive, or insignificant, the University may decline to address it, address it only in part, not progress it further, or consider misconduct procedures if appropriate.

Informal Complaint Management

(28) Staff and students are encouraged to raise concerns or complaints directly with the involved party to resolve the issue informally.

(29) If it is inappropriate to raise the issue directly with the relevant staff member or if the issue remains unresolved, it may be escalated to the immediate Supervisor for further assistance.

(30) The Supervisor will manage the complaint within the work unit, addressing the concerns impartially. If appropriate, the Supervisor may seek assistance from People and Culture or escalate the matter to the formal complaint process via Riskware.

(31) Where informal steps do not resolve the issue, any party can seek assistance from the respective P&C Business Partner, who will provide guidance and support in handling the issue.

(32) The P&C Business Partner will assess the complaint, triage it as necessary, and work towards a satisfactory resolution with the parties. Actions may include mediation, counselling, training, or other appropriate measures to address the concerns raised.

Formal Complaint Management

(33) Formal complaints are submitted through Riskware. Formal complaints may be raised by a complainant or others, and the individual raising the complaint must confirm they have reviewed this Policy.

(34) The University will acknowledge the complaint and conduct an initial assessment to determine the appropriate management process. This assessment may include consulting with the University's Workplace Health and Safety team or relevant work unit leaders to evaluate risks and gather further context and assess the need for additional enquiries.

(35) The University will manage the complaint based on the circumstances. Possible actions include:

- a. Referring the complaint to relevant individuals (e.g., Supervisor, Head of Work Unit, P&C Business Partner) for further handling.
- b. Facilitating discussions, mediation, or conciliation to resolve the issue informally.
- c. Initiating a formal investigation to gather facts and review documentation.
- d. Commencing a disciplinary process if misconduct or serious misconduct is suspected.
- e. Redirecting the complaint under a different policy or procedure if applicable.
- f. Dismissing complaints deemed frivolous, vexatious, or baseless, with potential misconduct procedures for false accusations.
- g. Taking no further action if deemed appropriate.
- h. Implementing workplace changes, training, or support services as necessary.

(36) The University may investigate the complaint using an internal or external investigator to support further enquiries. Such investigations may include seeking additional information or evidence, interviewing relevant parties and witnesses, and taking statements.

(37) Upon request, the University will briefly explain the rationale for the chosen approach to the parties involved in the complaint.

(38) At the conclusion of the complaint management process, the University will provide a written response to the parties involved and close the matter in Riskware.

Timeframes

(39) The University is committed to handling formal complaints promptly and efficiently. The following timelines provide a general guideline:

- a. The University aims to acknowledge receipt of a formal written complaint within two to three working days.
- b. An initial assessment to determine the appropriate action is typically completed within five working days after acknowledgment.
- c. If an investigation is required, it generally begins within 15 working days of the initial assessment.

Note: These timeframes are indicative and may vary depending on the specifics of each case.

Complaints concerning specific Senior Leaders

(40) Subject to any obligations under legislation:

- a. Complaints concerning the Vice-Chancellor or Council Members should be directed to the Chancellor, who will determine the appropriate course of action.
- b. Complaints concerning members of the Workplace Relations team, the Vice President (People and Culture) or the Chancellor should be directed to the Vice-Chancellor.

(41) The University will manage these complaints impartially so that there could be no reasonable perception of bias or favouritism.

Amendments to Policy

(42) Before implementation, any changes to this Policy will be discussed with the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF).

Status and Details

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Effective Date	7th April 2025
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Responsible Executive	Kim Franks Vice President (People and Culture)
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