

Public Complaints Policy

Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) This policy provides for the fair and prompt handling of complaints by members of the public about any aspect of the University, its staff, students or operations.

Section 2 - Scope / Application

(2) This policy applies to:

- a. Complaints by members of the public about the University, its staff, its students, or third parties providing services on behalf of the University.

(3) This policy does not apply to:

- a. People eligible to complain under the Student Complaints Resolution Policy;
- b. Clients of VU Clinics (who may complain under the Clinic Complaints Policy);
- c. Staff of the University (who may complain under the Staff Issues and Complaint Resolution Policy); or
- d. People wishing to lodge a complaint relating to Animal Welfare (who may complain under the Animal Welfare Complaints Procedure).

Section 3 - Definitions

(4) Nil

Section 4 - Policy Statement

(5) The University welcomes all forms of feedback, including complaints, regarding its services, activities, and operations.

(6) The University is committed to a culture of continuous improvement, and values comments from the public. The University will handle complaints in a manner that is:

- a. Transparent
- b. Simple
- c. Fair
- d. Timely

Part A - Principles of Complaint Handling

(7) The University will acknowledge complaints made under this policy in writing.

(8) The following principles will be applied to handling complaints received:

- a. Procedural fairness:
 - i. All parties to a complaint will be treated fairly, and in a manner that respects their right to an unbiased, timely and transparent process.
 - ii. The decision-maker will not be biased or appear to be biased nor have a personal interest in the matter of the complaint.
 - iii. Matters that are not relevant will not be taken into account by the decision-maker.
 - iv. All parties have the right to be heard before decision is made, including the right to respond to statements or evidence that are relied upon in reaching a determination.
 - v. Where the complaint concerns the actions of an individual or individuals, respondents have the right to be informed of the allegations and the right to respond.
- b. Confidentiality: All complaints will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Unless the law requires otherwise, only people involved in the complaint will have access to the information about it. However, aggregated and de-identified data can be used to support the University's monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement processes with respect to client services.
- c. Timeliness: All complaints processes will be resolved within 60 days, or, if this is not possible, the complainant must be notified in writing of:
 - i. The delay; and
 - ii. The expected completion or resolution time.
- d. Recordkeeping:
 - i. A record will be kept of all complaints and their resolution.
 - ii. A record will be made of the causes of the complaint and any remedial action the University proposes to take to mitigate the possibility of a recurrence.

(9) The University will accept anonymous complaints. However, ongoing anonymity cannot be assured, and may limit the scope of a response.

(10) No fees will be charged to any person for the handling of their complaint.

Part B - Appeals

(11) If a person is unhappy with the way the University addresses their complaint, they may appeal that decision via the Academic Registrar.

(12) The Academic Registrar will refer the matter for review to the appropriate senior staff member.

(13) If a person remains dissatisfied after the appeal decision, they may refer the matter to the Victorian Ombudsman or the relevant regulatory body.

Section 5 - Procedures

(14) If a member of the public wishes to raise an issue, they may do so by:

- a. Giving verbal comment or feedback to the relevant VU staff member or at a VU service centre.

(15) If they wish to lodge a complaint, either after raising the issue verbally or instead of doing so, they may make their complaint by:

- a. Completing the online complaints form; or
- b. Phoning, coming into, or sending an email or letter of complaint to the Student Contact and Service Centres
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(16) Complaints will be recorded within the appropriate system and complainants notified in writing of the receipt of their complaint.

(17) The Student Contact and Service Centres will endeavour to resolve the complaint in the first instance. If this is not possible or appropriate, they will refer the complaint to the appropriate part of the University for response.

(18) Responses in writing will be sent to complainants to their nominated mailing or email address within 15 University business days.

(19) Any remediation proposed by the University will be implemented as soon as is practicable.

(20) If a complainant wishes to appeal, they should complete the Request for Appeal form available on the website. Requests for Appeal must be received within 10 University business days of the original response by the University.

(21) Appeals should be completed within 15 University working days of receipt of the Request for Appeal.

(22) The University process for addressing complaints will therefore be concluded within 60 days. If this is not possible, the University will inform the complainant of the reason for the delay, and the expected timeframe for completion.

Part C - External Review

(23) Complainants dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal may then contact the Victorian Ombudsman (which provides a review).

(24) Depending on the subject matter of the complaint, external complaint avenues may also exist. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. The Australian Skills Quality Authority (if a vocational or further education matter)
- b. The Victorian Information Commissioner (if a privacy matter)
- c. The Health Records Commissioner (if a health privacy matter)

Section 6 - Guidelines

(25) Nil

Status and Details

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