Public Complaints Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(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

(2) This Policy applies to complaints by members of the public or organisations about the University, its staff, its students, or third parties providing services to or on behalf of the University; including businesses and their direct supply chain. This includes complaints made by past(whose enrolment was completed or withdrawn prior to lodging the complaint) and future students. Complaints made by future students regarding admission decisions must be lodged within 6 months of the decision's outcome.

(3) This Policy does not apply to students eligible to complain under the Student Complaints Policy; Clients of VU Clinics (who may complain under the Student Clinics Policy); Staff of the University (who may complain under the Staff Complaints Resolution Policy); or 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:

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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. Proximity: Every reasonable effort will be made by the parties to the complaint and the decision-maker to resolve the complaint at the level closest to the parties.
d. Continuous improvement: VU will make a record of, and follow up on, the causes of the complaint, and put in place suitable remediations to mitigate against a recurrence.
e. 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.
f. Recordkeeping: A record will be kept of all complaints and their resolution.

Part B - Local Level Resolution

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

a. Giving feedback to the relevant VU staff member either directly or at a VUHQ (Student Services Centre).

(10) The Staff member or Student Services Centre will endeavour to resolve the matter in the first instance. If this is not possible or becomes inappropriate, they will refer the matter to the appropriate part of the University for response or local level resolution.

Part C - University-managed Resolution (Complaint)

(11) If the matter cannot be resolved at a local level, the member of the public may lodge a complaint, they may make their complaint through the Integrity Office using the University online complaint form.

(12) Members of the public unable to use the online complaint form may contact the Integrity Office or Student Services Centre for assistance to provide a hard copy form. They may lodge the form at integrity.office@vu.edu.au or submit via a Student Services Centre in a sealed envelope addressed to: Integrity Office, Footscray Park Campus, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001.

(13) The Integrity Office will refer the matter for review to the appropriate senior staff member.

(14) Where a complaint involves a staff member's conduct, the appropriate senior staff member may refer the complaint to People and Culture who may address the matter as a personnel issue.

(15) Acknowledgement in writing will be sent to complainants to their nominated mailing or email address within 15

University business days.

(16) The University process for addressing complaints made by a member of the public will 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.

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

Part D - External Review

(18) Members of the public dissatisfied with the outcome of the University-managed resolution may then contact the Victorian Ombudsman (which reviews the University processes for adhering to complaints).

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

a. The Australian Skills Quality Authority (if a vocational education and training matter).
b. The Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (if a higher education matter).
c. The Victorian Information Commissioner (if a privacy matter).
d. The Health Complaints Commissioner (if a health privacy matter).

Section 5 - Procedures

(20) Nil.

Status and Details

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Accountable Officer	Trish Roberts Chief Financial Officer trish.roberts@vu.edu.au
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