Complaints Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy outlines Victoria University's (VU or the University) approach to managing complaints raised by staff, students and third parties relating to their experience, employment or engagement with VU.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Policy applies to complaints raised by:

a. all VU staff;
b. all VU students, including students enrolled in award and non-award courses, VET, higher education, and international programs;
c. former VU students, provided that the complaint relates to matters that occurred while enrolled as a student at VU, and is lodged within six months of their last enrolment; and,
d. members of the public or third parties, including clients of University services, former staff and external candidates/ prospective staff, campus users, visitors, prospective students, alumni, contractors, and community stakeholders.

(3) A complaint raised under this Policy may relate to:

a. academic standards and educational quality issues.
b. any third party involved in the delivery of services on behalf of VU, if the complaint relates to the delivery of those services.
c. behaviour of any person (for example, but not limited to, bullying, discrimination, gender-based violence, harassment, sexual harassment, violence or aggression and victimisation).
d. complaints arising out of the appropriate workplace behaviours policy relating to;
    i. management practices, or
    ii. policy application issues.
e. service delivery, administrative or management practices including University facilities; and
f. the application or misapplication of VU policy, procedures and matters of process related to the University experience.

(4) Where complaints involve gender-based violence, the broader scope defined in the Gender-based Violence Policy applies.

(5) This Policy will not apply to any decision regarding a staff or student matter that has been made under a policy or procedure that contains its own internal review or appeal mechanism. However, a complainant may choose to raise a complaint under this policy if they believe that the applicable policy or procedure was not properly followed.

(6) Policies and processes that include their own internal appeal or review mechanism include:

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

a. Admissions Policy and Admissions Procedure
b. Academic Progress Procedure (VET)
c. Assessment for Learning - Assessment Procedure (VET)
d. Assessment for Learning - Review of Individual Assessment Outcomes Procedure (HE)
e. Enrolments Policy and Enrolments Procedure
f. Student Clinics Policy
g. Animal Welfare Policy and Animal Welfare Complaints Procedure
h. Research Integrity - Guide to the Management of Potential Breaches of the Australian Code Procedure
i. Biosafety Policy
j. Fraud and Corruption Control Policy
k. Fraud and Corruption Control - Disclosure and Whistleblower Procedure
l. Health and Safety - OHS Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure, with the exception of behavioral issues (i.e. bullying and harassment)
m. Higher Education Academic Promotions Policy and Higher Education Academic Promotions Procedure
n. Recruitment and Selection Policy and Recruitment and Selection Procedure
o. Fee Adjustments Procedure

(7) This Policy does not apply to:

a. complaints/disputes notified under an Enterprise Agreement;
b. complaints related to a matter covered by the National Employment Standards;
c. complaints regarding the staff probation process;
d. complaints regarding Academic Promotions (see Higher Education Academic Promotions Policy and Higher Education Academic Promotions Procedure);
e. complaints regarding Human Ethics (Reported via Human Research Ethics Committee);
f. appeals regarding Special Studies Program Policy or Procedure;
g. appeals regarding Higher Education Academic Promotions - Transition from Teaching Focused to Teaching and Research Academic Employment Procedure

(8) Complaints relating to staff conduct and behaviour concerns will be managed in accordance with the Complaints Procedure (Staff).

(9) Complaints relating to student conduct and behaviour concerns can be raised as a complaint but will be managed through the Student Misconduct Regulations 2019 or other relevant procedures as appropriate.

(10) Members of the public and other third-party complainants, including former staff and external candidates, may submit a complaint through the Student Complaints and Integrity Office (SCIO). The SCIO may coordinate with the relevant area of the University to facilitate a response.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(11) VU is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and high-quality learning and working environment, where concerns and complaints are managed with integrity, transparency, and respect.

(12) VU's Complaints Management Framework (the Framework) establishes the principles and governance arrangements that guide VU's approach to complaint management. The University recognises that complaints are a legitimate and valuable form of feedback that supports institutional accountability, improves services, and strengthens trust between the University and its stakeholders.

(13) The University seeks to provide a complaints process that:

a. is easily accessible for all;
b. encourages open discussion and communication;
c. investigates and resolves complaints in a timely manner;
d. applies principles of Procedural Fairness, as appropriate;
e. attempts to resolve complaints as close to the source as possible;
f. is free from victimisation and retaliation;
g. does not pursue investigations of frivolous or vexatious complaints; and,
h. maintains clear and separate roles in supporting Complainants and Respondents, to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure appropriate support is provided to all parties.

(14) Complaints will be managed in accordance with the University Privacy Policy. This means, among other things, that:

a. complaints will be treated by all parties with appropriate confidentiality;
b. the number of people involved in the complaint resolution process is kept to a minimum;
c. complaint records may be disclosed to appropriate officers of the University or external authorities, as required by law and/or in accordance with the University's duty of care obligations;
d. complaints will be able to be raised anonymously;
e. de-identified data may be used by the University for reporting purposes, including to external agencies; and,
f. information systems and records are maintained securely and confidentially as necessary to document and record responses to formal complaints.

(15) Complaints involving Gender-Based Violence may engage additional processes under the University's Gender-based Violence Policy and associated procedures. These processes may operate alongside or in coordination with this Complaints Policy.

(16) Complainants may elect to remain anonymous when lodging a complaint. In certain circumstances, electing to remain anonymous may restrict the University's ability to assist, or may limit the complaint outcomes available and may limit the University's ability to respond to the matter or parties involved.

(17) Complaints will be handled in accordance with the principles outlined in the VU Complaints Management Framework, and as per the processes specified in the Complaints Procedure (Staff) and Complaints Procedure (Student and Public).

(18) A Complainant has the right to withdraw a complaint at any stage of the process. However, VU retains the right to investigate and/or address complaints, even in cases where a complaint has been withdrawn. For example, VU may be required to investigate a complaint in order to meet its obligations.

(19) Lodging a complaint does not excuse a Complainant from compliance with their own obligations. For example, a Complainant may still be subject to disciplinary action by VU if they are also:

a. the subject of an action under the Student Misconduct Regulations 2019; or
b. subject to exclusion under the Exclusion for Safety Reasons Regulations 2019; or
c. subject to a cancellation of enrolment due to unpaid fees, where fees are unrelated to the substance of the complaint; or
d. the subject of any relevant court order or action; or
e. subject to any disciplinary action under the relevant policies or Enterprise Agreements.

Complaint-handling approach

(20) The status of the respondent will guide which procedure each investigation follows:

a. Matters where both parties are Staff will be handled by People and Culture under the Complaints Procedure (Staff). People and Culture may appoint a relevant independent expert within or outside the University to conduct the investigation.
b. Where the Discloser is a Student who identifies the Respondent as a VU Staff member for the purposes of the report, the matter will be investigated and dealt with by People and Culture under the Complaints Procedure (Staff) or the relevant Staff Enterprise Agreement, if the matter is alleged as Misconduct or Serious Misconduct.
c. Where the Complainant is a Staff member who identifies the Respondent as a VU student for the purposes of the report, the matter will be investigated and dealt with by the Integrity Office under the Complaints Procedure (Student and Public).
d. Where the Respondent is from an organisation affiliated with the University, the University may, with the Complainant's consent, refer the matter to the affiliated or associated organisation for the organisation to investigate.
e. Where the Respondent is a member of the public and is not affiliated or associated with the University in any way, the University has no authority to investigate the report and determine if they are substantiated. Support and referral services will still be made available to the Discloser.

(21) All complaints are centrally coordinated and managed by either the University's SCIO and/or People and Culture (P&C) team, who ensure a fair, timely, and consistent process. This Policy supports a transparent and accessible complaints system that contributes to continuous improvement.

(22) Complaints will be addressed by either:

a. Local-level Resolution: Complainants are encouraged, if appropriate and possible, to try to resolve their complaint with the relevant person or area if they feel comfortable doing so. For example, a staff member may raise their concerns directly with the respondent or their manager, and a student may choose to raise concerns with their lecturer if they feel comfortable doing so.
b. University managed resolution: The University will manage the resolution of complaints in accordance with this policy and the appropriate procedure.

(23) Complaints that include allegations of gender-based violence may be referred into staff or student misconduct/disciplinary processes, with risk assessment and protective measures applied on a survivor-led, trauma-informed basis.

(24) Complaint outcome review processes are outlined in the Complaints Procedure (Student and Public) and Complaints Procedure (Staff). These procedures outline where to go to apply for review or to lodge a further complaint with an external organisation such as the Australian Human Rights Commission, Victorian Privacy Commissioner, Victoria Police or National Student Ombudsman.

(25) Any complainant who uses the complaints process to make a frivolous or vexatious complaint or who is deliberately misleading in relation to a complaint may be subject to misconduct proceedings.

Recording, Reporting and Continuous Improvement

(26) VU will make, maintain and manage a complete record of all complaints raised through this policy and associated processes and their outcomes including withdrawn complaints.

(27) Complaint data, findings and themes will be analysed to identify opportunities for service improvement, and

relevant areas of the University will be provided with feedback to inform continuous improvement.

(28) The SCIO and/or P&C teams will report (at least) annually to the Academic Board and other relevant Corporate Governance Committees on complaints data, trends and analysis in order to address any systemic issues and improve VU's policies, procedures and processes.

Section 4 - Procedures

(29) Complaints Procedure (Staff)

(30) Complaints Procedure (Student and Public)

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(31) HESF: Standards 2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints; 6.1.4 Corporate Governance Standards 6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability (specifically 6.2.1); 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students (specifically 7.2.2f); 7.3 Information Management (specifically 7.3.3c).

(32) National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018: Standards 3 Formalisation of enrolment and written agreements; 10 Complaints and Appeals.

(33) Outcome Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2025: Standard 2.7 Feedback, Complaints and Appeals.

Section 6 - Definitions

(34) Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction with a decision, action, service, behaviour or process of the University, its students, staff or other representatives, where a response, review or resolution is expected or required.

(35) Complainant: A person who raises a complaint under this Policy. Complainants may include VU staff, current or former students, prospective students, third parties or members of the public engaging with VU.

(36) Discloser: a person who has shared information about an experience of harm including Gender-based Violence.

(37) Frivolous complaints: A frivolous complaint is a complaint that is lacking in any substance or merit. Not all frivolous complaints imply an improper motive on behalf of the complainant.

(38) Local Level Resolution: Prompt resolution of low-complexity complaints at the point of service or contact, without escalation, where the matter can be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction. This may involve resolution with the respondent to the complaint directly, or another VU staff member with relevant knowledge and authority to resolve the complaint. The local resolution is supported but not managed by the Student Complaints and Integrity Office and People and Culture.

(39) Member of the public: This Policy applies to complaints made by members of the public or third-party organisations about the University, its staff, its students, or third parties providing services to or on behalf of the University. This includes former and prospective staff.

(40) Procedural Fairness: means acting fairly and transparently in administrative decision making. It relates to the fairness of the procedure by which a decision is made, and not the fairness in a substantive sense of that decision. Procedural fairness requires that decision making processes are:

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

a. Free from bias or conflict of interest;
b. Based on evidence;
c. Equitable to all parties, including providing the opportunity for all parties to be heard and respond;
d. Timely.

(41) Respondent: For the purposes of this policy, a person whom a complaint is raised against, including where it is alleged has engaged in conduct that amounts to Gender-based Violence.

(42) Staff:

a. All employees of the University, on all domestic and offshore locations, including student residences, and while engaged in all work-related activities such as conferences and work-sponsored social occasions.
b. All contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University.
c. Visiting academics, honorary, adjunct and exchange staff.
d. The Council and its committees; and
e. Any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.

(43) Support Person: A person who is able to offer support to a complainant, witness or respondent through attendance at investigations, interviews, or other stages of a complaint. A support person is not to act as an advocate or interfere with the process.

(44) Representative: For staff, a person chosen by a staff member to represent them in relation to a specific matter or process. Refer to the relevant Enterprise Agreement for more information.

(45) Vexatious Complaints: A vexatious complaint is a complaint with no merit, which is specifically being pursued to harass, annoy or cause financial cost to VU or another person.

(46) Victimisation: In the context of this Policy, victimisation refers to the unfavourable treatment of a person as a consequence of their involvement in a complaint.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	19th December 2025
Review Date	19th December 2028
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	19th December 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Accountable Officer	Matthew Walsh Chief Financial Officer officeofCFO@vu.edu.au
Responsible Officer	Anne Siegers Chief Risk Officer anne.siegers@vu.edu.au
Enquiries Contact	April Vocale Student Complaints and Integrity Manager april.vocale@vu.edu.au

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.