

Complaints Management Policy

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles for the management of complaints received by Murdoch University.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction made in relation to the University, a University education agent, any related party the University has an arrangement with to deliver a course or related services, a staff member, or a student where a response or resolution is expected.

Murdoch University is committed to ensuring all complaints are handled effectively and efficiently; and acknowledges that the feedback received assists the University in continually improving its performance.

The University also acknowledges that it will not be possible to resolve every complaint to the satisfaction of the person lodging the complaint. As such, external processes are available to complainants.

This Policy applies to Staff, Students, University Senate members (including external members of Senate Committees), tenants, contractors, visitors, (the “University Community”) and the public.

Objectives

- With regard to the nature of the complaint, to provide for a consistent complaints management process that is accessible, impartial, confidential, equitable and sensitive.
- To ensure that all complaints are managed with respect for all parties involved and procedural fairness in accordance with best practice standards.
- To set out the rights of parties to a complaint.

Performance Indicators:

- A reduction in the number of complaints forwarded to external agencies.
- Improved University processes as a direct result of addressing issues raised in complaints.

Policy

1. In this policy, the following words have the following meanings:
 - 1.1. “Sexual Harm” is defined in the [Sexual Harm Policy](#)
2. **Complaints management process**
 - 2.1. The University is committed to a process for managing all aspects of complaints that is:
 - 2.1.1. visible and accessible.
 - 2.1.2. simple and effective.
 - 2.1.3. open and transparent.
 - 2.1.4. objective and impartial.
 - 2.1.5. confidential.
 - 2.1.6. fair and equitable; and
 - 2.1.7. consistent and responsive.
3. **Who may complain?**
 - 3.1. The University accepts complaints from members of the University Community and the public.
 - 3.2. Details of how to make a complaint and how the University will manage complaints are set out on the University’s website. Students and staff should lodge complaints via the ‘Staff’ and ‘Students’ links on the University Complaints web portal. Members of the University Community who are not students or staff should lodge complaints via the “University Community” link on the Complaints web portal.
 - 3.3. While it is preferable that the complainant is identified, the University may accept and investigate an anonymous complaint if:
 - 3.3.1. it is deemed to be of a serious nature.
 - 3.3.2. it contains or points to good evidence of misconduct, error or some other significant institutional flaw; or
 - 3.3.3. so required by law.
 - 3.4. It may be necessary to disclose the identity of a complainant in order to properly prepare a response to a complaint.
4. **What may people complain about?**
 - 4.1. Complaints may be submitted about any aspect of the University’s business. However, complaints about external entities, including those fully or partially owned or controlled by the University, should normally also use the complaints procedure of the relevant entity.
 - 4.1.1. International students may submit a complaint about their dealings with the University’s education agents and/or any related party the

University has an arrangement with to deliver courses or related services. The University will always respond to such complaints, but while best efforts will be made, it may not be possible to achieve a resolution or to properly investigate a complaint with these third parties.

- 4.1.2. Disclosures and reports of Sexual Harm are covered by the [Sexual Harm Policy](#).
 - 4.2. The University expects that complaints will be made in good faith and reserves the right to dismiss those which are deemed vexatious.
 - 4.3. Staff and students who lodge a complaint that is deemed to be vexatious or otherwise not made in good faith may be subject to disciplinary proceedings under the relevant Code of Conduct.
 - 4.4. At times complaints may be referred to external agencies, for example in the case of alleged criminal matters.
 - 4.5. At times complaints may be referred to the external agency about which they are made, for example in the case of a complaint against an external party.
- 5. Rights of complainants**
- 5.1. Complainants have the right to:
 - 5.1.1. have their complaint treated in a professional, fair, transparent, welcoming and respectful manner.
 - 5.1.2. have their complaint treated confidentially (subject to 2.4 above);
 - 5.1.3. have their complaint addressed in a manner of helpful cooperation.
 - 5.1.4. have the assessment of their complaint commenced within 10 working days of it being made.
 - 5.1.5. formally present their case at minimal or no cost, where the complainant is a student.
 - 5.1.6. be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings; and
 - 5.1.7. have their complaint resolved as soon as practicable with due regard to principles of procedural fairness.
- 6. Rights of parties who are the subject of a complaint**
- 6.1. Respondents have the right to:
 - 6.1.1. be informed as a matter of urgency and completely on any complaint.
 - 6.1.2. be treated with respect and dignity.
 - 6.1.3. confidentiality.
 - 6.1.4. receive fair and consistent consideration; and
 - 6.1.5. access reasonable avenues of redress.

7. Response to or resolution of a complaint

- 7.1. The response to or resolution of a complaint must be in keeping with the seriousness of the incident that gave rise to the complaint.
- 7.2. Responses to or resolution of complaints must be applied consistently across the University.
- 7.3. The outcome of the management of a complaint will be used to inform continuous improvement in the practices of the University.

8. Recourse to external bodies

- 8.1. The University recognises that at times the complainant will not be satisfied with the outcome of the procedure at the University. The complainant may at any stage in the complaints management process elect to refer their complaint to an external body.
- 8.2. Where a complaint is referred to an external body prior to internal processes being completed, the internal processes will be paused pending the outcome from the external body.

9. Continuous improvement of processes

- 9.1. An annual report is submitted to the Chief Operating Officer, which will analyse information relating to complaints to identify trends.

Governance

Approval Authority	Senior Leadership Team
Owner	Vice Chancellor
Legislation mandating compliance	
Category	Primarily a function of management
Related University Legislation and Policy Documents	<u>Sexual Harm Policy</u> <u>Student Complaints Management Procedure</u> <u>Student Code of Conduct</u> <u>Student Appeals Policy</u> Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations (ISO 10002:2004, MOD) Australian Standard

	<p>Good Practice Guide for Handling Complaints and Appeals in Australian Universities, Jackson, Fleming, Kamvounias, Varnham, Australian Learning & Teaching Council, May 2009 (ISBN 978-0-9807355-3-6)</p> <p>NSW Ombudsman – Complaints Handling at Universities: Best Practice Guidelines, December 2006.</p> <p>Australian Universities in Court: The Causes, Costs and Consequences of Increasing Litigation, Hilary Astor.</p> <p>Improving Dispute Resolution in Australian Universities: Options for the future, Hilary Astor (Sydney University, NSW, Australia)</p> <p>Grievance Handling in Australian Universities: the case of the university ombudsman and the dean of students, Anita Stuhmcke (University of Technology, Sydney, Australia)</p>
Date effective	10/11/2020
Review date	10/11/2023

Revision History

Approved/Amended	Date Approved	Resolution No. (if applicable)
Administrative amendment	16/05/2023	
Approved by VC	10/11/2020	
Approved by VC	10/06/2020	
Approved by Acting VC	20/06/2019	
Administrative amendments	18/03/2019	
Administrative	31/07/2017	

review by University
Secretary

Approved	19/08/2014
----------	------------

Approved	18/09/2012
----------	------------

Please refer to the electronic copy in the Policy and Procedure Manager to ensure you are referring to the latest version.