Murdoch University

Complaints Procedure

Purpose and Scope

Provide the procedure and responsibilities for the management of complaints in relation to the University, a University education Agent, or related party where a response or resolution is sought, expected or legally required.

This procedure will not apply where another Policy Document applies, such as those covering student appeals and grievances related to employee conduct.

Overarching Policy

Complaints Policy

Procedure

Definitions

1. In this procedure, the following terms have the following meanings:
   - 1.1. “Agent” is defined in the *Agent Procedure*.
   - 1.2. “Person-centred” is defined in the *Complaints Policy*.
   - 1.3. “Policy Document” is defined in the *Policy Governance and Management Policy*.
   - 1.4. “Trauma-informed” is defined in the *Complaints Policy*.
   - 1.5. "Working Day" is defined in *Statute No. 8 – Interpretation*.

General

2. Information about how to make a complaint and associated support services will be publicly available.
   - 2.1. Complaints may be made via multiple channels, for example, by phone, email or in-person.
3. Information provided through a complaint will be:
   - 3.1. collected, held and handled securely
   - 3.2. reviewed for completeness

3.3. de-identified unless it is necessary for the recipient to know the identity of a person to fulfill a responsibility

3.4. shared only as necessary to undertake the process.

4. Making a complaint is free of charge.

5. A person:

5.1. cannot have another person make a complaint on their behalf

5.2. may withdraw a complaint at any time.

6. Information will be provided about any potential impact of:

6.1. providing de-identified information

6.2. placing restrictions on the sharing of information

6.3. ceasing involvement in the process.

7. The University may be limited in how it can respond if the person who is the subject of a complaint is not a student or an employee.

8. Employees in a role responsible for managing or resolving the University's response to a complaint will undertake appropriate training in accordance with regulatory expectations.

8.1. This training will be reviewed at least every three years.

9. Other organisations may be notified when necessary.

10. Decisions will be made after appropriate consideration and based on evidence.

11. Any outcome in favour of a student will be implemented immediately and the student will be advised of the action taken.

Support and Wellbeing

12. A complaint will be:

12.1. met with compassion, without judgement or blame

12.2. taken seriously.

13. Students will be notified of publicly available information about support services.

14. Students may obtain independent professional advice and advocacy services.

15. Students are encouraged to engage with the Murdoch University Guild of Students or Murdoch University Postgraduate Student Association.

16. Prior to taking action or making a decision, the preferences of those involved will be considered.

17. The number of times and depth of detail to which a person is asked to recount a potentially traumatic experience will be minimised.

18. Any person may be accompanied by a support person whenever they are asked about matters which are the subject of a complaint.

18.1. A support person cannot act as a legal representative.

19. The transfer of complaints casework between employees will be minimised.

20. At any stage in the process any person may identify a need for consultation to ensure a practice is culturally safe, Trauma-informed or Person-centred.
21. Decision-makers and any person providing advice to decision-makers during a complaint cannot act as a support person for that complaint.
22. Those responsible for managing or resolving a complaint will consult, as required, with:
    22.1. subject matter experts
    22.2. cultural advocates
    22.3. a Trauma-informed and Person-centred practice advisor.
23. Other Policy Documents, such as codes of conduct, provide protection against the risk of reprisal or victimisation for students or employees involved in a complaint.

Informal Complaint Process

24. As soon as practicable after a problem develops, a person is encouraged to seek a resolution informally.
25. Information about which role to contact to communicate an informal complaint will be publicly available.
26. Initial consideration of an informal complaint will be completed within five Working Days.
    26.1. An informal complaint will proceed where sufficient information has been provided and the complaint is appropriate.
27. An informal complaint will be:
    27.1. resolved by the role that receives the informal complaint where the matter is their responsibility, or
    27.2. assigned to the appropriate role to resolve.
28. An informal complaint will be finalised as soon as practicable and normally within 15 Working Days of receipt of submission.
29. Once finalised, the person who made the informal complaint will be advised of the outcome.
30. A person may only make an informal complaint about a specific issue more than once with permission.

Formal Complaint Process

31. A formal complaint may be made without it having been through an informal complaint process:
    31.1. when the complaint is submitted anonymously, or
    31.2. when otherwise permitted.
32. Information will be provided about any potential impact of submitting a formal complaint anonymously.

33. Where the person who made a formal complaint is identified, information will be provided to them about:
    33.1. the formal complaint process, confidentiality and potential outcomes
    33.2. any available support services.
34. An initial assessment of a formal complaint will be completed within seven Working Days.
    34.1. Formal complaints will be prioritised based on a risk assessment.
    34.2. A formal complaint will proceed where sufficient information has been provided and the complaint is appropriate.
35. Written notice about whether a formal complaint will or will not proceed will be provided to all involved in the complaint.
36. Where a formal complaint proceeds it will be:
    36.1. resolved by the University Secretary, where appropriate, or
    36.2. assigned to the appropriate Head of School, Director or equivalent, or their line manager, to resolve, or
    36.3. assigned to an independent external role to resolve.
37. A formal complaint will be finalised as soon as practicable and within 30 Working Days of receipt of submission, unless an extension is approved.
38. Those involved will be kept informed about the progress of a formal complaint at agreed intervals, including any factors that may cause a delay.
39. A formal complaint may proceed alongside a related external process following consultation to assess and mitigate potential impacts.
40. A discussion in relation to a formal complaint may be requested by the University or the person making the complaint:
    40.1. reasonable notice will be given
    40.2. a discussion will include:
        40.2.1. one University representative
        40.2.2. the person making the formal complaint
        40.2.3. a support person, if the person making the formal complaint chooses to have one present
    40.3. a discussion will be recorded
    40.4. a written response may be made in place of taking part in a discussion.
41. All involved with a formal complaint will be given an opportunity to respond to matters relevant to them within a reasonable time frame.
42. A person may only make a formal complaint about a specific issue more than once with permission.

Outcomes of a Formal Complaint

43. Typical outcomes of a formal complaint may include:

43.1. implementation of a resolution with the agreement of those involved, following mediation if appropriate

43.2. an apology

43.3. restorative engagement between the person and an appropriate University representative

43.4. activities undertaken to prevent recurrence of an issue

43.5. acknowledgement of the formal complaint with no further action.

44. Within five Working Days of finalisation of an outcome, all involved in a formal complaint will be provided with written notice of:

44.1. the activities undertaken to manage the formal complaint

44.2. the outcome, including reasons for the outcome

44.3. any further avenue for review, which for students includes the National Student Ombudsman.

Monitoring, Review and Improvement

45. Students and employees involved in a formal complaint process will be invited to provide feedback to inform improvements.

46. De-identified complaints data will be analysed at least once every six months to inform improvements.

47. A report containing high level, de-identified information will be:

47.1. provided to the Senior Leadership Team, Student Experience Committee and People, Safety and Culture Committee every six months

47.2. made publicly available each year.

Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Senior Leadership Team	• Promotes a culture that prioritises management of complaints. • Reviews complaint themes and opportunities for improvement to inform consideration and responses to risks and actions.

University Secretary	• Oversees the management of complaints.
	• Ensures complaint processes:
	  ○ meet regulatory requirements and expectations
	  ○ are advertised, accessible, publicly available and communicated in plain English.
	• Ensures information about which role to contact to make an informal complaint is publicly available.
	• For formal complaints:
	  ○ ensures information is provided in accordance with this procedure

	○ determines if a complaint may be made without an initial informal process ○ determines if a complaint may be made more than once ○ determines how risk assessments are undertaken ○ determines whether a complaint will proceed ○ approves an extension of time taken to finalise a complaint ○ ensures outcomes are recorded and implemented in accordance with this procedure. • Ensures those in a role who resolve or manage a complaint have completed required training. • Ensures training is reviewed. • Ensures complaints data is analysed. • Ensures barriers to complaint submission are identified and addressed. • Provides: ○ reports to committees ○ publicly available reports. • May approve an exemption to this procedure.
Role contacted to finalise an informal complaint	• Manages an informal complaint: ○ determines if a complaint may be made more than once ○ finalises the complaint, or ○ reassigns the complaint to an appropriate role to manage and finalise. • While managing an informal complaint: ○ ensures information is provided in accordance with this procedure ○ ensures outcomes are implemented in accordance with this procedure.
Role assigned to resolve a formal complaint	• Determines a formal complaint outcome.
Director Student Wellbeing	• Provides advice to ensure practices are Trauma-informed and Person-centred. • Ensures information about support services is publicly available. • Ensures support services are available to a student when needed.
Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations	• Determines whether First Nations cultural advocates must be consulted.
Pro Vice Chancellor Equity Diversity and Inclusion	• Determines whether cultural advocates, other than First Nations advocates, must be consulted.

Governance

Approval Authority	Senior Leadership Team
Owner	Vice Chancellor
Legislation mandating compliance	*Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* *Higher Education Support Act 2003* *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and supporting legislative instruments including the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and supporting legislative instruments including the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* *Freedom of Information Act 1992* *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024*
Category	Management
Related University Legislation and Policy Documents	*Academic Staff Probation Procedure* *Animal Ethics Complaints Procedure* *Authorship Attribution and Dispute Resolution Procedure* *Conflict of Interest Procedure* *Copyright Procedure* *Delegations and Authorisations Policy* *Delegations and Authorisations Procedure* *Election Regulations* *Fraud and Corruption Procedure* *Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Regulations* *Gender-based Violence Response Procedure* *Grievance Resolution Procedure* *Health Safety and Wellbeing and Injury Management Issue Resolution Procedure* *Human Research Ethics Policy* *Managing Misconduct Procedure* *Murdoch University Recordkeeping Plan 2024* *Privacy Procedure* *Psychological Safety and Wellbeing Procedure* *Public Interest Disclosure Procedure* *Research Integrity Procedure* *Sexual Harm Procedure - Dubai* *Staff Code of Conduct* *Student Academic Misconduct Procedure*

	Student Appeals Procedure *Student Code of Conduct* *Student General Misconduct Guidelines* *Student General Misconduct Procedure* *Support for Students Policy*
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Approved by Vice Chancellor	06/05/2016	

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