

## STUDENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

<b>Category</b>	Academic
<b>Procedures Owner</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic
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<b>Approved by</b>	Vice-Chancellor
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### 1. PURPOSE | TE ARONGA

To outline the procedures supporting the University Student Concerns and Complaints Policy that ensure Student Concerns and Complaints are dealt with fairly and in accordance with the principles of Procedural Fairness.

### 2. SCOPE | KAUPAPA

These procedures apply to all Staff and Students at the University.

See the Student Concerns and Complaints Policy for information on the types of Complaints that are outside the scope of these procedures.

### 3. DEFINITIONS | WHAKAMĀRAMATANGA

<b>Complaint:</b>	A formal, written expression of dissatisfaction made in good faith about the areas within the scope of this policy that is normally made after efforts to resolve a Concern have been exhausted.
<b>Concern:</b>	An expression of dissatisfaction made in good faith about the areas within the scope of the Student Concerns and Complaints Policy.
<b>CRM:</b>	AUT's Customer Relationship Management system.
<b>External Party:</b>	An individual who is not an enrolled Student but who wishes to raise a Concern or make a Complaint. This includes a prospective Student.
<b>Procedural Fairness:</b>	Also known as 'natural justice', requirements of procedural fairness include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring respondents are provided with all necessary information regarding the complaints that have been made against them; and</li> <li>ensuring respondents are given opportunity to respond to a complaint before a decision is made;</li> <li>that those involved in determining an outcome do not have any bias or conflict of interest;</li> <li>that a decision is based only on relevant evidence.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsible Senior Staff Member (RSSM):</b>	The senior member of Staff responsible for determining the outcome of a formal Complaint. The <b>RSSM</b> is usually a

	Director or Dean.
<b>Staff:</b>	Including academic Staff, administrative Staff or any other of the University's service providers.
<b>Student:</b>	A Student, or group of Students. Former Students of the University may raise a Complaint where the event of the complaint occurred while they were an enrolled Student.
<b>University:</b>	Means the Auckland University of Technology ( <b>AUT</b> ) including all subsidiaries.

#### 4. ACTIONS

University processes are intended to support the resolution of Concerns and Complaints in a mana-enhancing manner, with an emphasis on resolution at the first stage (i.e. Concern level) where possible within a supported and collaborative approach.

See **Section 4.2** below for the process in detail, and **Appendix 1** for the process overview flowchart.

##### 4.1 Support and accessibility

Students are encouraged to access support services at any stage of the Concerns and Complaints process. Regardless of how or where a Concern or Complaint is raised, culturally appropriate, mana-enhancing support is available to help Students submit a Concern or Complaint and navigate the process.

Students can contact the AUT Student Association (**AUTSA** Advocacy) for free, confidential advice on raising or resolving Concerns or Complaints ([advocacy@aut.ac.nz](mailto:advocacy@aut.ac.nz)).

A full list of support services is available at [AUT Support Services](#). These include:

- [Te Pou Māori - Māori Student support](#) (Office of Māori Advancement), offering tikanga Māori tautoko and process.
- [Vā Pasifika Team](#) (Office of Pacific Advancement), offering holistic, culturally grounded guidance
- [Disability Support Services](#), including New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreters
- [Postgraduate Student Advisor](#), available via the Student Hub
- [Mental Health and Counselling Services](#), offering wellbeing support throughout the process.

Students or External Parties raising a Concern or Complaint may request the presence of a support person, whānau member, or interpreter at any point during the process. This same support is also available to Staff members who are the subject of a Complaint, where relevant.

Where possible, meetings to address Concerns will be held kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face). All parties will be notified of any delays in the consideration of a Concern or Complaint.

##### 4.2 Concerns and complaints procedure

These Procedures shall apply when a Student or external party raises a Concern or Complaint regarding:

- their treatment by the University or its Staff; or
- the quality of delivery of a service (including a course or programme) provided by the University;
- the actions or conduct of a Staff member;
- financial or contractual issues with the University.

### ***Raising a Concern or Submitting a Complaint***

Students are encouraged to seek resolution by discussing Concerns with the relevant Staff at the local level where possible and appropriate. However, Students or External Parties may submit a Concern or Complaint at any of the Stages described in the process below by using the [online form](#) available on the AUT website, or by emailing [Studentfeedback@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Studentfeedback@aut.ac.nz).

Students may also raise an issue directly with AUTSA who will provide advice on the process or, where requested, act on the Student's behalf to escalate the Concern and/or or submit a Complaint.

#### ***Concern (stage one)***

In keeping with the principle of encouraging local resolution where possible, the Student or External Party may raise the Concern with the person(s) responsible for providing the service considered unsatisfactory.

The Student or External Party will outline their Concern and the resolution they are seeking. Written acknowledgement of receipt of the Concern must be sent within three working days.

The parties will work together to resolve the issue informally either kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face), by email, or remotely. Where a kanohi ki te kanohi meeting is held, a second Staff member must be present, and a record of the discussion must be retained.

If it is clearly inappropriate to raise the matter first with the person(s) directly responsible, the matter may be raised with:

- the course coordinator or programme leader, or supervisor (for postgraduate research Students); or
- the manager of the service area involved.

The relevant Staff member will propose actions to resolve the matter within the authority and delegations of their role.

#### ***Concern (stage two)***

Where the complaint is unable to be resolved at Stage One, it may be escalated to Stage Two and referred to a more senior member of Staff.

A meeting may be requested with any of the following, as appropriate:

- the programme leader (if not already contacted); or
- head of the department or school;
- the associate dean (academic) or associate dean (postgraduate);
- the faculty registrar or head of the academic office;
- the director of the service area involved;
- representatives from the Office of Pacific Advancement;
- representatives from the Office of Māori Advancement.

The Student or External Party must outline their Concern, the resolution they are seeking, and any previous attempts to find a resolution. Written acknowledgement of receipt of the Concern at Stage Two must be sent within three working days.

The responsible Staff member may seek further information from the Student or External Party, or from members of Staff involved in the attempted resolution of the Concern at stage one.

The parties will work together to resolve the issue informally either by email, kanohi ki te kanohi, or remotely. Where a kanohi ki te kanohi meeting is held a second Staff member must be present and a record of the discussion will be retained.

The Staff member addressing the Concern at Stage Two will propose actions to resolve the matter, where possible, within the authority and delegations of their role.

### ***Complaint (stage three)***

Where resolution of a Concern has not been agreed, or the Student or External Party is dissatisfied with the proposed resolution, they may lodge a Complaint.

A Complaint must be received within 15 working days of the last attempt to resolve the issue and may be submitted directly by the person(s) concerned, or by AUTSA, or another member of the University on behalf of the Student or External Party, and with their permission.

Complaints must be made in writing to the Senior Specialist Student Complaints (**SSSC**) and may be submitted through the online form available on the University website or to [studentcomplaints@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studentcomplaints@aut.ac.nz). Students who are unable to lodge a complaint in writing or would prefer to submit their complaint in another medium may contact the SSSC to arrange an alternative.

The written submission must clearly outline:

- the basis of the Complaint and any documentary evidence supporting the Complaint; and
- the resolution sought; and
- details of attempts to resolve the issue (i.e. at stage 1 and/or stage 2).

The SSSC will acknowledge the Complaint in writing within three working days.

The SSSC will assess the Complaint and, where necessary, refer the matter for consideration under another University policy or process. In some circumstances, the SSSC may refer the matter back for resolution at stage two.

If a Complaint warrants immediate action the SSSC may elect to investigate further or to refer the matter, regardless of whether the issue was raised first as a Concern.

The SSSC may seek further information from the Complainant, or the Staff member/s involved, and may request additional information or records regarding actions taken at the Concerns stage/s to address the matter.

Where appropriate, the SSSC will inform the Staff member(s) against whom the Complaint has been made and give them the opportunity to respond.

The Senior Specialist Student Complaints will refer Complaints related to the professional conduct of Staff members to AUT's Employee Relations team for investigation.

In all cases, the SSSC will prepare a draft written response and recommendation as to whether the Complaint has been substantiated, partly substantiated, or not upheld; and put forward suggested actions for resolution. The SSSC will send the draft response and recommendation, with all supporting material, to the relevant Responsible Senior Staff Member (**RSSM**).

The RSSM will respond in writing to accept and/or modify the response and recommendation, working with the SSSC as required. The RSSM may seek further advice as required from members of the senior leadership team, or the General Counsel.

The determination of the RSSM will be communicated in writing by the SSSC to the Complainant and to the Staff member/s (where relevant); and to other relevant members of Staff. As appropriate, Complainants will be provided with information on available support services.

### **4.3 Appeal**

A Student or External Party may lodge an appeal in writing with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic via the Senior Specialist Student Complaints within 15 working days of the communication of the outcome of the Complaint. Where a Student or External Party is unable to submit an appeal in writing, they may contact the Senior Specialist Student Complaints to arrange an alternative.

Appeals may be made only on the basis of Procedural Fairness. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic may decline to hear an appeal where these grounds are not met.

To hear an appeal the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic will convene the Student Complaints Appeals Committee, which will comprise the Group Director Student Services and Administration and a Student representative nominated by AUTSA. The Committee will be supported by the SSSC and will review the evidence. The Student or External Party may be invited to meet with the Committee.

The Committee may:

- uphold the appeal and make a fresh determination on all or part of the complaint; or
- dismiss the appeal.

The SSSC will communicate the outcome to the Student or External Party. The decision of the Student Complaints Appeals Committee is final.

#### **4.4 External review**

If a Student or Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome after these Procedures have been followed, they may raise the matter externally with:

- Study Complaints | Ngā Amuamu Tauira, <https://www.studycomplaints.org.nz>; or
- the Ombudsman, <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/>;
- Universities New Zealand, <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/>
- the New Zealand Qualifications Authority under the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021, <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/tertiary-and-international-learners-code/>.

### **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES | TŪRANGA ME NGĀ HAEPAPA**

Students and External Parties are responsible for:

- ensuring that Concerns and Complaints are made in good faith and are not frivolous or vexatious; and
- providing full and accurate information to the Staff member who will be responding to a Concern or Complaint.

Staff members involved in addressing Concerns and Complaints are responsible for:

- using best endeavours to resolve the matter in timely manner; and
- respecting the rights of all parties with respect to confidentiality;
- ensuring that the process undertaken complies with the requirements of the Student Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures, including the appropriate exercise of their authority in resolving Concerns; and Complaints;
- ensuring records are kept, including actions taken and any agreed resolution.

The Senior Specialist Student Complaints is responsible for:

- using best endeavours to gather information and make a recommendation to RSSM in a timely manner;
- communicating with the Student or External Party and the Staff member(s) involved, including on the outcomes of a Complaints process and on the determination of the Student Complaints Appeals Committee;
- ensuring accurate records are kept of Formal Complaints and outcomes.
- providing advice to the University community on the Student Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures.

The Employment Relations team (People and Culture) is responsible for:

- providing support and guidance to Staff when investigating Concerns at stage 1 and 2
- investigating Complaints in collaboration with the relevant Faculty or Service

- notifying the Senior Specialist Student Complaints when a Complaint is received by the Employment Relations team directly.

The Student Complaints Appeals Committee is responsible for:

- reviewing the evidence and, where required, meeting with the Student or External Party to come to a determination in a timely manner
- ensuring accurate records are kept of appeals and outcomes.

## **6. POLICY BASE | KAUPAPA HERE**

Student Concerns and Complaints Policy

## **7. RELATED DOCUMENTS | NGĀ TUKANGA ME NGĀ TUHINGA**

[Discipline Statute](#)

[AUT Calendar – General Academic Regulations](#)

[Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#)

[Postgraduate Handbook](#)

[Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

[Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

Policies and Procedures can be found on the [AUT Policy Hub Te Poutohu](#), and on TUIA.

## **8. RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING**

All records related to Student Concerns and Complaints are held by the relevant University division and retained in accordance with the requirements of the [Disposal Schedule for New Zealand Universities](#). Records relating to formal complaints are retained by the Academic Quality Office. AUT publishes an annual report on formal complaints, in accordance with the requirements of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.

## **9. DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL | NGĀ HERENGA WHAKAHAERE**

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# Appendix 1: Student Concerns and Complaints Flowchart

