

STUDENT SERVICES COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

The Student Services division is committed to providing an inclusive environment that is safe, fair and free from discrimination for all students and staff. These Procedures outline a process to ensure complaints are taken seriously and resolved as quickly, fairly and as effectively as possible.

Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to:

- minimise the chances of minor complaints escalating into major problems; and
- establish an effective complaints pathway and foster procedural consistency across Student Services.

Definitions

Complaint - a complaint may be against one of the Student Services or a staff member/s and must establish the student has sustained disadvantage as a result of:

- a. error
- b. failure to observe an established rule or guideline without reasonable cause
- c. unfair treatment

Student Services (SS) - The services covered by these procedures are:

1. Career Development Centre;
2. Disability Information and Support;
3. Locals Programme;
4. Te Huka Mātauraka Māori Centre;
5. Pacific Islands Centre;
6. Proctor's Office and Campus Watch;
7. Social Impact Studio;
8. Te Whare Tāwharau sexual violence support and prevention centre.

Organisational Scope

This procedure only applies to SS areas. The procedure is distinct from, and should not be used for, any dispute having to do with the following:

- [Ethical Behaviour Policy](#) - This policy deals with unethical behaviour including, but not limited to, the following: bullying, sexual harassment, racial harassment or discrimination
- Discipline Statute <https://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago029948.html>
- For University wide information regarding Student Grievances see: <https://www.otago.ac.nz/study/student-grievances.html>
- Student Academic Grievance Procedures <https://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago002982.html>

General Principles

SS responsibilities

SS are expected to comply with contractual and professional obligations within the context provided by the University.

Responsibilities include:

- a. Provision of quality co-ordinated services which are student focussed
- b. Delivery of information and services in a timely manner
- c. Clarity around what students can expect from the services. (Links to each area can be found on the [SS webpage](#))
- d. Delivery of a caring and positive student experience when engaging with SS

University staff will respect a students' rights to express their views and opinions.

Responsibilities of Students

Any student contemplating making a complaint is expected to have fulfilled the following obligations:

- a. Students are responsible for making themselves aware of all University rules and regulations pertaining to their rights and responsibilities as students.
- b. Students have a responsibility to participate actively and positively when accessing individual services. Students will attend meetings where required, respond to emails and feedback provided and comply with reasonable expectations. Students should inform SS how the services can best meet students' needs.
- c. Students are expected to respect the right of staff members to express views and opinions.
- d. Students are expected to take the initiative and consult appropriately when problems arise.

Procedure

Any student who wishes to make a complaint should follow the steps set out below:

Step 1 - Student informal resolution

The student, where possible and within a reasonable timeframe should attempt to resolve the grievance with the SS Manager of the area concerned or the relevant staff member.

Step 2 – SS area response

If unresolved the complaint should be raised with the relevant SS Manager who will, if appropriate, make every effort to resolve the complaint informally. [SS webpage](#)

Step 3 - Complaint to the SS Director

If the matter remains unresolved, the student may put their complaint in writing to the SS Director. Written complaints must detail the precise grounds of the complaint and provide objective evidence where appropriate (refer below for “Support for the Student”) Upon receiving the complaint, the Director must decide the process for dealing with the complaint including whether the SS Complaint Procedure is appropriate for the complaint received.

The Director may delegate another staff member with the requisite skills to investigate the complaint.

When carrying out an investigation into a complaint the Director or delegate must:

- a. give notice to the relevant service manager and staff member(s) of any complaint that is to be investigated as soon as reasonably practical
- b. liaise with all relevant parties, and consider relevant documentary evidence (e.g. relevant email communications) to ensure that any outcomes are based on a thorough and balanced investigation of the complaint;
- c. before finalising any finding, informing the student and relevant staff member(s) of the proposed outcome and allow them the opportunity to comment;
- d. inform the student and relevant staff who are the subject of the complaint of the outcome of the investigation. This will include a written statement of the findings and any recommendations for resolution.
- e. conclude any investigation by compiling a record of the investigation, including any agreements reached, any findings made, any steps taken as a result of those findings, and the reasons for any such steps taken.

Step 4 - Review process

If the student, relevant service manager or relevant staff member(s) are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint they can, within ten working days of receiving written notification of the outcome, request in writing that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic (DVCA) review the outcome.

Due Process

SS Managers and the Director of SS are expected to receive, consider and investigate student services complaints in an open and honest way.

Support Students

Everyone involved in the complaint process must be sensitive to power imbalances that exist between students and staff.

Students must be advised that an OUSA advocate can support them to make the initial complaint and throughout the complaint process.

A student is entitled to have a support person or whānau support at any meeting.

Support for Staff

Any staff who are the subject of a complaint may involve a support person of their choosing. Other options include Human Resources, EAP or their Union for support.

Confidentiality

Complaints will be kept confidential between the parties and the relevant service manager unless disclosure is necessary to ensure natural justice and / or appropriate resolution of the complaint.

Details of complaints will not be entered on the file of an involved member of staff unless this is part of an approved disciplinary process.

All information concerning complaints, replies, recommendations and investigations will be stored in SS files for a minimum of 7 years.