A7.0 Student Grievance Management Policy

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**Related Documents**
- Academic Grievance Procedures
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Integrity Procedures
- Academic Progress Policy
- Academic Progress Procedures
- Administrative Grievance Procedures
- Fair Treatment Policy
- Fair Treatment Procedures for Students
- Student Appeal Application
- Student Grievance and Appeals Committee Procedures
- Student Misconduct Policy
- Student Misconduct Procedures
- Student Refund Policy

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1. **Context**

Torrens University Australia recognises that effective grievance management and equitable and transparent appeal mechanisms contribute to a positive study environment. Students should feel confident in the knowledge that their complaints about academic and administrative decisions, or their concerns about the behaviour of others towards them, will be addressed appropriately, fairly and in a timely manner by the University. Students should also be confident that they will not be penalised or disadvantaged as a result of lodging a grievance. This Policy is designed to ensure that student grievances and appeals are resolved promptly, with sensitivity to all parties, and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.

2. **Definitions**

**Domestic student**: a student who is an Australian citizen, a New Zealand citizen, or a holder of an Australian permanent visa.

**Student grievance**: a complaint about a decision, action or behaviour that results in a claim that the student has sustained academic or non-academic disadvantage.

**International student**: a full fee-paying student studying in Australia on a student visa as defined in the ESOS Regulations 2001.

**Procedural fairness**: a fair and proper procedure appropriate to the circumstances, where decisions are made without bias and are supported by evidence and communicated with reasons.
3. **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- all students who have a grievance against the University;
- prospective students with a grievance relating to administrative processes during application, selection and admission; and
- University staff involved in the grievance resolution and appeals process.

4. **Principles**

The University is guided by the following principles in resolving all student grievances and appeals:

- grievance and appeal procedures will be well publicised and promoted to ensure that staff and students understand their rights and responsibilities, including their right to have a support person present at any interview or proceeding. (The support person may not be a legal representative or a currently practicing solicitor or barrister);
- every opportunity will be provided to resolve grievances informally and quickly at the local level through mediation and negotiation;
- parties to the grievance resolution process will not be disadvantaged as a result of lodging the grievance, investigating the grievance or responding to the grievance;
- The principles of courtesy, mutual respect, confidentiality and procedural fairness will be observed by all parties to the grievance resolution process;
- grievances and appeals will be resolved expeditiously and there will be no direct financial cost to the student relating to internal review and appeal processes;
- grievance and appeal procedures will be applied consistently and transparently;
- a student’s enrolment will be maintained while the grievance and appeal process is ongoing;
- the grievance and appeals process will be well documented, and the results of reviews and appeals will be communicated to relevant parties in a timely manner;
- Records will be kept for a minimum of five years; and
- the grievance resolution process will be used by the University to identify areas for improvement in the quality of services and support it provides to students.

5. **Types of Grievances**

The University employs a similar four step approach (see 6 below) in dealing with all student grievances and appeals, though the procedures and timelines for dealing with specific types of grievances may be different.

5.1 **Unfair treatment**

Students with complaints about unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment, victimisation, vilification and/or bullying by another member of the University community should consult the [Fair Treatment Policy](#) and follow the [Fair Treatment Procedures for Students](#) in an attempt to resolve their grievance in the first instance.

5.2 **Academic Grievances**

Academic grievances are complaints about decisions (usually made by academic staff), and which involve the exercise of academic judgement. Examples include, but are not limited to, dissatisfaction with:
• a grade given for an assessment task or with the final result awarded in a course or program;
• a decision to deny the award of credit towards a University qualification;
• a decision to deny admission or transfer to a University program;
• a decision not to award a scholarship or prize;
• a decision under the Academic Progress Policy and Procedures;
• determinations made or penalties applied under the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures; or
• determinations made or penalties applied under the Student Misconduct Policy and Procedures.

Students with academic grievances should follow the Academic Grievance Procedures which explain the process and timelines for resolving different types of academic grievances.

5.3 Administrative Grievances
Administrative grievances are complaints about the services and facilities provided by the University, or about administrative decisions made by the University, usually by professional staff. Examples include, but are not limited to, dissatisfaction with:

• a decision to deny a request for a refund under the University’s Student Refund Policy;
• a decision to deny a remission of FEE-HELP liability
• a decision to impose penalties for the non-payment and late payment of fees and charges;
• the administration of admission, enrolment, scholarships and prizes, examinations and graduation;
• services and facilities provided, such as restrictions to library borrowing, limits on access to buildings and facilities, and quality of support services; or
• health and safety management.

Students with administrative grievances should follow the Administrative Grievance Procedures which explain the process and timelines for resolving different types of administrative complaints.

6. Approach

Consistent with the principles of this policy, and taking into account that some types of grievance are addressed according to specific policies and procedures, the University’s approach to grievance resolution generally involves:

6.1 Informal Discussion
Grievances should be resolved informally whenever possible through discussion between the student and the person directly responsible for the decision or behaviour that is the subject of the student’s complaint. The grievances should be raised promptly via email, phone or direct conversation. It is the responsibility of both parties to explore options for resolving the issue as soon as possible after it has been raised and to do so in a courteous and respectful manner. It is acknowledged that in some circumstances, students may not feel comfortable in raising their complaint directly with the person who is the subject of the complaint. There is no compulsion to do so, and students have the option of requesting a formal review as the first step in the grievance resolution process.
6.2 Formal Review
If the issue cannot be resolved informally, a student may ask for a review of their complaint by lodging a formal written grievance with the line manager of the person who is the subject of the grievance. The formal written grievance must include a clear statement of the grievance, all relevant facts about the grievance and what resolution the student is seeking.

6.3 Internal Appeal
If the student remains dissatisfied with the results of the formal review, they may apply to have the matter heard by the Student Grievance and Appeals Committee by submitting a Student Appeal Application. The Committee will make a determination on the basis of the evidence before it.

6.4 External Review and Appeal
A student with a grievance against the University may seek external appeal and review at any stage of the grievance resolution process (though it is usually expected that a student will have accessed the University’s internal review and appeal processes before referring the complaint to an external agency). If the University receives notification that a grievance is the subject of formal external enquiry or legal action, the internal resolution process will be suspended until the external action is completed.

If a student’s grievance against the University has been heard by the Student Grievance and Appeals Committee, the only avenue for further review or appeal is external. No further internal review or appeal is available.

Students can seek external review or appeal of their grievance by consulting a solicitor or seeking assistance from agencies such as the Equal Opportunity Commission of South Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Office of Training Advocate.

International students can also seek information and advice from the Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the department responsible for administering the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

Contact details for these agencies are available on the University’s website.

7. Record Keeping
Torrens University Australia keeps appropriate records of all grievances, including documentation relating to formal reviews and appeals for at least five years, and allows parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records.

8. References


Higher Education Support Act 2003, 19-45