On this page you will find information to assist you to pursue a complaint about your student experience. Your complaint can be made anonymously.

The Student Integrity Unit can provide information about the complaint process. Phone (02) 9385 8515 or email studentcomplaints@unsw.edu.au

**What is a complaint?**

A complaint is any type of problem, concern or grievance about your studies, student life, the University or the University environment. Basically, anything which negatively affects your studies or experience at University can be raised as a complaint.

**Before you make a complaint**

Talk to someone about your concerns and familiarise yourself with the policy and procedure that relate to your concerns as well as the Student Complaint Procedure.

The following resources can help you to decide how to address your concerns:

- Educational Support Advisors are available to discuss concerns and may be able to help you sort them out without lodging a complaint.
- The Student Advocate at Arc@UNSW provides independent advice and advocacy.
- The Student Integrity Unit can provide information about the complaint process. Phone (02) 9385 8515 or email studentcomplaints@unsw.edu.au

**The complaints process explained**

The University follows a three stage complaints handling model. Here you will find an overview of the complaints process.
Wherever possible complaints will be resolved by a process of discussion, cooperation and, where appropriate, mediation, as soon as possible after an incident or situation has occurred. Complaints will be acknowledged and handled promptly. Complaints will be treated sensitively having due regard to procedural fairness and confidentiality. You will be protected from detriment or disadvantage if you lodge a complaint.

In most circumstances the University follows a three stage complaints handling model: download flowchart (.pdf). NB: For accessibility, below is a written version of this flowchart.

Overview of Student Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Local Resolution

If it is appropriate and you feel comfortable handling your issue then the best resolution of a complaint is near its source.

Stage 2: Central Resolution

This is a formal process for more serious or complex complaints, or for matters unresolved by or inappropriate for the local process.

Stage 3: Appeals

An appeal in respect of a decision following a Stage 2 process may only be lodged on the grounds of a lack of procedural fairness in the investigation process. Appeals should be lodged with the Director of Student Life and Learning. The Director will convene a Student Complaint Appeal Committee.

External Review - An appellant dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal may seek external review, for example by an agency such as the NSW Ombudsman.

Tips for making a complaint

Find out how to make your complaint count.

Don’t leave it too late

The Student Complaint Procedure requires that you must lodge a complaint within 12 months of becoming aware of the issue. The sooner you lodge a complaint, the quicker the issue can be resolved. Records are more likely to be available and people who were involved are able to explain what happened.

Keep your cool

You might be dissatisfied about something but you still have an obligation to communicate your concerns with courtesy and respect. If you explain your concerns clearly and calmly you will likely get a response that is clear and calm.

Making your stage 1 complaint count

If you haven’t raised your concerns with anyone, you should start at stage 1. People close to the source of your complaint are best placed to consider your complaint and resolve it quickly.

If you are lodging a stage 1 complaint, we recommend you send an email to the relevant staff member and include the following details:

- Explain what your complaint is. Does it involve a staff member, a course, a piece of assessment, or a service provided?
- Explain the reasons why you think the decision or action you are complaining about is unfair or wrong
- Think about what outcome you are seeking. What would resolve your complaint?

Relevant staff members may include:

- Staff at the Faculty Student Centre
• Manager of Student Administration (not Faculty based)
• Course Coordinator
• School Grievance Officer
• Head of School

If you are a Higher Degree Research Student, relevant staff members may include:
• Your supervisor
• School Postgraduate Coordinator or Head of School
• Associate Dean Research or Director of Postgraduate Research in your Faculty
• Dean of Graduate Research

Making your stage 2 complaint count

If you have already tried unsuccessfully to resolve your concerns with the relevant School or business unit you can lodge a complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the Student Complaints Procedure.

Your complaint should be lodged via the Student Complaints Form.

You know the most about your complaint so you should include any evidence that you have supporting your complaint. This might include copies of email exchanges during stage 1, file notes of discussions you had, assessment pieces or marking schemes. You should provide all the relevant information when you first lodge the complaint.

Lodging an appeal

The Student Complaint Procedure provides that if you are dissatisfied with the way your complaint was handled you may lodge an appeal with the Director of Student Life and Learning. An appeal may only be lodged on the grounds of a lack of procedural fairness in the investigation process.

Procedural fairness is about ensuring that:
• people are provided with all necessary details of the complaint that has been made against them
• people are given a proper opportunity to respond to the complaint against them before a decision is made (including as to any mitigating circumstances)
• persons involved in deciding an outcome do not have any bias or conflict of interest
• a decision is based only on relevant evidence.

You can lodge your appeal by email to: studentcomplaints@unsw.edu.au

For more information on Procedural Fairness, please view the NSW Ombudsman’s fact sheet on Natural Justice/Procedural Fairness.

External complaint mechanisms

You can lodge a complaint to an external agency at any time. External Agencies include:
• Anti-Discrimination Board
• Australian Human Rights Commission
• Independent Commission against Corruption
• NSW Ombudsman
• NSW Police

Please note that some external agencies may require you to have lodged an internal complaint first.

Submit your complaint

Find out how you can submit your complaint.

Your complaint should be lodged via the Student Complaints Form.

If you have difficulties using this form, please email studentcomplaints@unsw.edu.au.
Contacts for advice

Discover contacts that can help you with your complaint.

Student Integrity Unit

The Student Integrity Unit can provide information on the complaints process.

Phone: (02) 9385 8515
Email: studentcomplaints@unsw.edu.au

Educational Support Advisor

Educational Support Advisors are available to provide support in making a complaint, particularly at the informal level.

Student Advocate

For independent advice and advocacy, you can contact:

Student Advocate at Arc@UNSW

Grades or class difficulties

If you have a complaint about a mark or an overall grade, an event in class or difficulty in your program, talk to the lecturer, tutor, coordinator or technical officer. If you don’t feel comfortable approaching the person directly, you should seek the advice of the School Grievance Officer or Head of School.

Administrative matters

For a course-related complaint talk to your tutor, your lecturer or the course coordinator. Alternatively, you could seek advice from your School Grievance Officer or Head of School.

Postgraduate research students

The Graduate Research School is the central administrative and support unit for all higher degree research students and their supervisors at UNSW. For more info contact:

Graduate Research School

Personal matters

Counselling and Psychological Services [CAPS] offers individual counselling and support in helping students to find their way at university. If you have a personal matter that you would like to discuss contact:

Counselling
Personal safety

If you are facing an immediate threat to your safety, contact University Security. For more info see:

Security and Safety

Policies and resources

In this section you will find policy documents relating to complaints, contacts for outside agencies and some useful links.

UNSW’s complaint handling and related policies

These two documents provide a framework for the resolution of complaints from UNSW students:

- Student Code Policy (pdf) and
- Student Complaint Procedure (pdf)

For definitions of bullying see:

- University's Workplace Bullying Policy

For definitions of harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation or vilification see:

- Equal Opportunity in Education Policy Statement

External agencies

NSW Ombudsman
Level 24, 580 George Street, Sydney, 2000
Ph: 9286 1000

Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW
Level 17, 201 Elizabeth Street, Sydney 2000
Ph: 9268 5544
Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission
Ph: 1300 369 711
Web: www.humanrights.gov.au

Useful links

- Policy@UNSW
- Student Code Policy
- Special Consideration – Illness and Misadventure
- Assessment Policy
- Academic Standing Rules

Student Complaints and Appeals

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