Tips for making a complaint

Here you can find out tips for 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, Student Life. 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](mailto:studentcomplaints@unsw.edu.au)

**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.

**See next**

- Submit your complaint
- Contacts for advice
- Policies and resources