

GRIEVANCES [COMPLAINTS]

Grievances (COMPLAINTS)

What is a grievance?

A grievance is a formal complaint that is lodged with the Faculty by a student who feels that they have been adversely affected by an issue or decision.

How do I lodge a grievance?

The University has a Student Grievance policy that seeks to provide a means for individual problems to be dealt with. This is available at: <http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/excerv/student-grievances/index.html>

Start with the staff member involved as soon as possible. The longer you take to resolve the problem, the harder it will be to solve, or worse, it may compound. If you cannot resolve the issue with the person concerned, contact a Student Rights Officer, who can help you with the process. A Student Rights Officer will firstly speak with this person and try to negotiate an outcome on your behalf.

If there is no resolution, make an appointment to see the Chief Examiner / Unit Leader / Head of School (which ever is appropriate) to discuss the issue. A Student Rights Officer can attend this meeting to support you. If there is still no resolution, a formal written complaint needs to be lodged. Once a written request for resolution is submitted to the Grievance Officer of the Faculty, Division, Section or organisational unit it is considered a 'Grievance'.

The Grievance Officer will determine if the matter is academic or administrative in nature, record details of the grievance, acknowledge receipt of the Grievance, and explain the timelines for resolution and any other relevant information.

If the Grievance is academic it will be referred to the Associate Dean (Teaching) or their nominee, of the appropriate Faculty. If the grievance is administrative, the matter will be directed to the Faculty Manager, or nominee.

The person to whom the Grievance has been directed will attempt to resolve it through investigation and conciliation, and may also direct you to the appropriate University support services. The person to whom the Grievance has been directed must conduct an investigation, normally within ten working days of receiving the Grievance, and consult with relevant staff.

The person to whom the Grievance has been directed may determine that the Grievance is frivolous, vexatious, or lacking in substance, and decide that no enquiry is necessary. You must be advised in writing if this is the decision.

The person to whom the Grievance has been directed may call a conciliation meeting with all parties concerned, for the purpose of arriving at an agreed upon solution.

If, due to unforeseen circumstances an investigation or conciliation cannot be concluded within ten working days, the person, to whom the Grievance has been directed will keep you informed of the status of the matter and the reasons for any delay.

If a resolution cannot be met after an agreed upon number of conciliation meetings, and you are not satisfied by the solution proposed to you, you may within ten working days of either the offer or the dismissal of the Grievance, forward the details of the Grievance to the University Student Ombudsman for consideration. If the University Student Ombudsman considers that the matter warrants further action, he or she will conduct an independent investigation and may consult with any staff member whom he or she regards as relevant to the case.

The University Student Ombudsman will make recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) (DVC(E)) for the resolution of the grievance within twenty working days from receipt of the appeal.

The DVC(E) will consider the recommendations of the University Student Ombudsman and take action where appropriate within twenty working days from receipt of the recommendations.

If the Grievance is academic, the DVC(E) will make recommendations to the Faculty with whom the ultimate decision making power resides.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the University, or the way a Grievance has been handled by the University, you may make a complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman.

What should I write in my grievance?

Try to separate objective fact from subjective interpretation.

Know your case:

- what is the issue(s)?
- how is it a problem (and for whom)?
- what are possible solutions?

Get the facts clear in your mind. Make sure to include:

- dates and a sequence of events
- summaries of any verbal or written communication
- other supporting evidence

The following information is a general guide to assist you in relation to lodging a letter of grievance.

Suggested Introduction:

I am writing to you to request that my concerns about my treatment in relation to (unit/process) be considered through the Formal Grievance process as I have spoken with (staff member/ Head of Department/ School/ Chief Examiner) and I do not feel that the issue has been resolved.

State what was meant to occur and what actually occurred:

- effect of a process or system on your education ability or outcomes
- behaviour of staff / students that imposed on your ability to fulfill your academic requirements, and describe any relevant events that support your case.
- the action you took to try to resolve the difficulty

State how this outcome has affected you:

- your ability to study as a result of indirect effects
- relationship difficulties with staff / students
- directly reduced academic results or quality of study
- effects on other activities external to study

State why you believe your situation is contrary to the decisions or actions of the staff member/ Faculty/ University. If necessary, outline sections of relevant university policy that could have been breached:

- Unit Guides/ Outlines
- Academic Policies on Assessment
- Faculty Guidelines
- University equity policy
- Other Monash University policies or procedures

State why you believe this is an unacceptable outcome and attach documents that support your claim. Also state what you think is an acceptable outcome:

- your preferred solution
- other solutions you may consider
- suggestions you have found unacceptable

Give reasons as to why this grievance is not frivolous or vexatious. Include any questions you have in regards to your case and how you would prefer to be contacted for future dates.

Suggested Closing Statement:

Thank you for your consideration of these matters, I look forward to your response.

Attach any copies of documents you wish to use to assist your case:

- emails
- specific documents e.g. assignment marking sheets or medical certificates.

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