

# Student Complaint, Grievance Resolution, and Appeals Policy

## Fact box

- **Policy owner:** Registrar
- **Policy category:** Academic: Community Conduct & Grievances
- **Policy status:** Approved
- **Approval body:** Academic Board
- **Endorsement body:** Quality Assurance Committee
- **Related policies:**
  - [Accessibility and Disability Policy](#)
  - [Assessment Policy](#)
  - [Child and Young Person Protection Policy](#)
  - [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
  - [Course Progression Policy](#)
  - [Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#)
  - [Harassment, Bullying and Unlawful Discrimination Prevention and Response Policy](#)
  - [Higher Degree Research Candidature Policy](#)
  - [Leave of Absence Policy](#)
  - [Refund Policy](#)
  - [Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment \(SASH\) Prevention and Response Policy](#)
  - [Support for Students Policy](#)
- **Last amended:** 5th May 2025
- **Relevant HESF:** Part A, Standard 2.4 / National Code: Standard 10 / RTO: Standards 5.2, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the approach of Alphacrucis University College (AC) to resolving a complaint or grievance involving a prospective, current or former student of AC, inclusive of education agents and third-party arrangements.

## Scope

This policy applies to the above student types as well as staff, AC and its third party partners, involved with students.

Staff complaints and grievances, as well as complaints of unlawful discrimination, workplace harassment, sexual assault or harassment and bullying by staff or students are outside the scope of this policy and are addressed in separate policies.

## Policy

AC is committed to providing an effective complaints and grievances resolution system which prioritises the welfare of those involved. AC ensures:

- transparent, ethical, and timely procedures for addressing complaints, grievances and appeals;
- equality and fairness to all parties, without prejudicial treatment;
- protection of privacy and reputation of all parties involved;

- the right of all parties to have a support person present during meetings;
- accordance with current legal requirements;
- administering without charge to a bona fide grievant;
- adherence to the principles of integrity, probity and social justice as embodied in its mission statement;
- procedural fairness in investigation and resolution.

## Definitions

1. **Complaint:** an informal or formal expression of concern or dissatisfaction lodged by a student about an experience at AC that requires review, investigation and/or action, and that is drawn to the attention of AC;
2. **Complainant** – the student or other stakeholder who lodged the complaint.
3. **Grievance:** has the same meaning as that of a complaint, with understanding that a grievance is of a more serious nature and substance.
4. **Vexatious Complaint:** complaints or grievances which are considered without merit, malicious or already resolved.
5. **Anonymous Complaint:** a complaint that is made without providing identification or personal information (such as name or contact details). Anonymous complaints will be accepted, reviewed and investigated to the extent possible, but only where sufficient information has been provided.
6. **Respondent** – a person/s against whom a complaint or grievance is lodged.
7. **Academic decision or action:** a decision/action made by an AC staff member that is directly related to a student's academic progress in their course of study. This may include, but is not restricted to: an issue arising from progression in a course of study, academic supervision, academic freedom, ethical practice, professional experience performance, quality of feedback from faculty or course workload. In the case of disputed assessment grades, the student should refer to the Assessment Policy. In the case of exclusion from a course of study, the student should refer to the Exclusion from a Course or Subject Policy.
8. **Non-academic decision or action:** a decision/action made by an AC staff member that is not directly related to a student's academic assessment or progress in his/her course of study. It may include, but is not limited to: customer service and administration, marketing and information, facilities, fees/finance related matters, welfare.
9. **Authorised Officer:** A relevant AC staff member with authority who may be approached at any time in relation to the policy, process and implications of making a complaint or grievance. This may include, but is not limited to, a Subject Coordinator, Program Director (or equivalent), Marketing Officer, Administrative Officer or Facilities Coordinator.
10. **Senior Officer:** If a grievance escalates, the next most senior officer becomes the point of contact regarding that grievance. This may include, but is not limited to, a Head of School, Deputy Vice President - Faculty, Director of Quality Assurance, Director of Student

Experience, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Marketing and Future Students, Facilities Manager or State Director.

11. **Procedural Fairness:** Procedural Fairness is the procedural requirement to ensure that a standard of fairness is applied in the investigation and adjudication of a dispute. This involves:

- fully informing a person of any allegation/s made against them;
- giving them the opportunity to state their case, provide an explanation or put forward their viewpoint;
- conducting a proper investigation of the allegations, ensuring that all parties are heard and that all
- relevant submissions are considered, with reasons given for any decision;
- acting fairly, impartially and without bias; and
- declaring any real or potential conflict of interest.
- False or misleading allegations will be investigated and action may be taken.

12. **Appeal** – request from a student to review the outcome of their complaint or grievance. General feedback and comment from applicants and students about administration, academic programs and services will not be treated by AC as a complaint or grievance unless action or a response is required.

Responsible for implementation

Registrar

Key stakeholders

All staff and students of AC and its third party partners

Related documents

[Complaints and Grievance Form](#)

---

Procedures

### **Complaint and Grievance Resolution Procedures**

The following principles guide the complaint and grievance resolution procedures:

- Resolution will be handled informally where possible and appropriate.
- Complaints and grievances will be addressed as close as possible to the source of dissatisfaction.

- Where an individual remains dissatisfied with the decision, they are entitled to appeal the decision, which will result in an additional review of the outcome of their complaint and grievance by the institution. The complaint or grievance must be lodged in writing usually within 10 working days of the day of event or decision.
- The process of resolution is to commence usually within 10 working days of lodgement.
- The complainant will receive a decision in writing within 20 working days of receipt of the application or such other extended time as the relevant Authorised Officer may reasonably authorise.
- If a complainant wishes to appeal the outcome of their complaint and grievance submission, they must do so within 10 working days of receiving the decision unless advised in writing otherwise. The complainant will be notified via email of the outcome of the appeal.
- A student's enrolment will be maintained while the appeal process is ongoing.
- The complainant will not suffer any reprisal as a result of lodging a grievance or an appeal.
- A vexatious complaint lodged by a student will be responded to in relation to the Code of Conduct Policy.
- A complainant attending a meeting associated with resolving a complaint or grievance may be accompanied by a support person. This person must not be a legal representative or a currently practicing solicitor or barrister.
- The Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Register records are retained for a minimum period of seven years.
- A complainant may choose to have their grievance reviewed by an external complaint handling process. In this situation, AC will not continue further consideration of matters where the process options have been exhausted or where the student has taken their grievance to an external agency.

The procedure for the notification and resolution of a complaint or grievance related to sexual misconduct is outlined in AC's Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy.

The procedure for the notification and resolution of all other complaints or grievances is outlined below:

## Appeal Resolution Flowchart

### STAGE 1

#### **Informal Resolution**

Complaint by the Student  
Handled by appropriate staff member (ASM)

ASM gathers and collates relevant information, from student and other relevant stakeholders. Makes decision and communicates to all relevant stakeholders. Complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the student.

RESOLVED

NOT RESOLVED

### STAGE 2

#### **Formal Resolution**

Submission of an online  
Complaint Form by the student

Handled initially by the Registrar who appoints an Authorised Officer (AO) to proceed with the complaint handling

AO gathers and collates additional information if required, from student and other relevant stakeholders. Makes decision and communicates to all relevant stakeholders. Complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the student.

RESOLVED

NOT RESOLVED

### STAGE 3

#### **Internal Appeal**

Submission of an Appeal Form by the student

Handled by the SAC

SAC gathers and collates additional information if required, from student and other relevant stakeholders. Makes decision and communicates to all parties. Complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the student.

RESOLVED

NOT RESOLVED

### STAGE 4

#### **External Appeal**

##### Higher Education

Student appeals handled by the National Student Ombudsman

##### VET Students

Appeal handled by an Approved Independent Party

##### International Students

Handled by the Overseas Student Ombudsman or National Students Ombudsman

Reviews relevant material and communicates the outcome to the student and AC.

ALL EXTERNAL RESULTS ARE FINAL

### **Step 1: Informal resolution**

- An individual who has a complaint or grievance should, where possible, discuss this with the appropriate AC staff member who may be assessing the academic or non-academic decision or action which has given rise to the issue. The above staff member will deal with the issue promptly and, where possible, provide the individual with a full explanation in writing outlining the reasons for the decision/action.
- If there is a conflict of interest arising from the staff member addressing the complaint, the staff member should refer the complainant directly to the relevant Authorised Officer (usually that staff member's supervisor).
- The majority of complaints should be resolved at this stage. If the complaint has not been resolved the complainant may lodge a formal complaint, as outlined below.

### **Step 2: Submission of online Complaint Form**

- If the individual's concerns cannot be resolved informally, they may submit an online Complaint Form, including any supporting documentation. All Complaints and Grievance forms are initially assessed by the Registrar for investigation. They involve other relevant stakeholders as deemed fit and appoint an appropriate delegate (usually a relevant 'Authorised Officer') to provide the student with a formal response.
- The Authorised Officer will address the complainant's concerns promptly and provide to the complainant a full explanation in writing outlining the outcome and reasons for the decision, within 20 working days of the receipt of the complaint for investigation by the Authorised Officer. A further time period may be required in cases where the matter is complex.
- A report will be recorded by the Authorised Officer in the Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Register. An academic decision or action will be tabled at Quality Assurance Committee.
- A non-academic decision or action will be reported to the appropriate Head of Department.

Any grievance or complaint, including those made anonymously, that may allege or involve abuse of a minor or is a protected disclosure of alleged corruption or wrongful conduct in the context of the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) is reported immediately to the President (or other suitable officer, where relevant). Please also refer to the Child and Young Person Protection Policy for more information on the guidelines which aim to protect children and young people from harm.

If the Authorised Officer determines that the complainant has lodged a vexatious complaint, the Officer notifies the complainant accordingly in writing and the complaint or grievance is deemed to have lapsed. If so requested by the complainant, the Authorised Officer provides a detailed and reasoned explanation. All outcomes are to be recorded in the Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Register.

### **Step 3: Review of Complaint Outcome**

- If the complainant is not satisfied that the complaint management process has led to a satisfactory resolution, they may request a review of the investigation and complaint

outcome via an 'appeal'. A request for review of a complaint outcome must be made in writing and must be directed to the Student Affairs Committee within 10 working days of notification of the complaint outcome. Such a review will be limited to:

- that AC has failed to act in accordance with the procedure for managing complaints as set out in this policy; or
- the identification of new grounds or new evidence that could not reasonably have been provided or was not reasonably available at the time of investigation, and in all likelihood would have had a significant bearing on the complaint outcome.
- In order to reach an agreed resolution the SAC may conduct separate interviews, convene conciliation meetings or request relevant information.
- The SAC will provide to the student a full explanation in writing of the reasons for the decision within 20 working days of the receipt of the request for review.
- The SAC retains final responsibility for any decision regarding an appeal.
- A report will be submitted on the relevant Register of Complaints and Grievances.
- Where the SAC is the Authorised Officer at Step 2, an ad-hoc Committee will be convened to review the appeals process. The ad-hoc Committee should include a senior member of Registry, Faculty and Quality and Standards.

### **External Appeal**

Should the internal AC procedures listed above not resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the complainant, provision is made for external, independent grievance resolution. A complainant must submit their request for an external appeal within 10 working days of receiving notice of the outcome of the internal AC process.

### **Higher Education Students**

Higher Education students should contact the [National Student Ombudsman](https://www.nso.gov.au/). <https://www.nso.gov.au/> for grievances relating to:

- student safety and welfare, including gender-based violence
- course administration, such as timeliness and accuracy of information provided to students
- teaching provision and facilities, such as sufficiency of staffing to meet educational, academic and administrative needs of students
- disciplinary processes, such as procedures to address misconduct
- reasonable adjustments for students with disability or experiencing special circumstances

### **Vocational Education and Training Students**

Should the internal AC procedures listed above not resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the complainant, AC will arrange for a review by an appropriate independent party.

VET students will be advised to contact ASQA - [Complaints about training providers | Australian Skills Quality Authority \(ASQA\)](#)

### **International Students**

International students who wish to lodge an external appeal or complaint about the decision resulting from Steps 1 to 3 above can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Commonwealth Ombudsman offers a free and independent service for overseas students who have a complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their private education provider. See the Commonwealth Ombudsman website:

Address: [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#)

Website: <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

Phone 1300 362 072

International students may also complain to the National Student Ombudsman on 1300 395 775 | <https://www.nso.gov.au/making-a-complaint> .

The student and AC will be bound by the decision of the Ombudsman and such decisions are final and non-reviewable. While the parties attempt to resolve the matter the student will continue to attend classes as normal unless the student has a reasonable concern about an imminent risk to his or her health and safety.

### **OUTCOME OF EXTERNAL APPEALS**

Where the external appeal process reaches a decision or recommendation in favour of the complainant, AC will immediately implement that decision or recommendation and/or take preventative or corrective action required by that decision or recommendation and will advise the complainant of actions taken in response to such a decision or recommendation.

---