

Student Complaints and Appeals Management Guidelines

Introduction

Melbourne Polytechnic is committed to providing students with a supportive and inclusive learning environment. As part of this commitment, Melbourne Polytechnic acknowledges that student complaints may arise from time to time. Melbourne Polytechnic recognises that addressing student complaints in a respectful, timely and responsible manner at, and at no cost to students, benefits everyone involved and contributes to the continuous improvement of the institute as a whole.

The main purpose of these Guidance Notes is to assist staff and students as they follow the processes outlined in the following documents:

- Student Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Student Complaints & Appeals procedure.

Please Refer to the [Student Complaints and Appeals Policy](#) and [Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#)

The Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and its accompanying Procedure outline Melbourne Polytechnic's informal and formal procedures for managing student complaints and the external review process.

The Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and the associates procedure is available via the:

- Melbourne Polytechnic website
- Student Portal
- Staff Portal <https://staff.nmit.vic.edu.au/campusservices/Student%20Experience/Pages/Managing-Student-Complaints-and-Grievances.aspx>

For More Information

For more information about any aspect of the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and associated Procedure contact:

Anita Harris,
Student Complaints Liaison Officer
Ph 9269 1530

feedbacksystem@melbournepolytechnic.edu.au

A. OVERSEEING STUDENT COMPLAINTS AT MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC

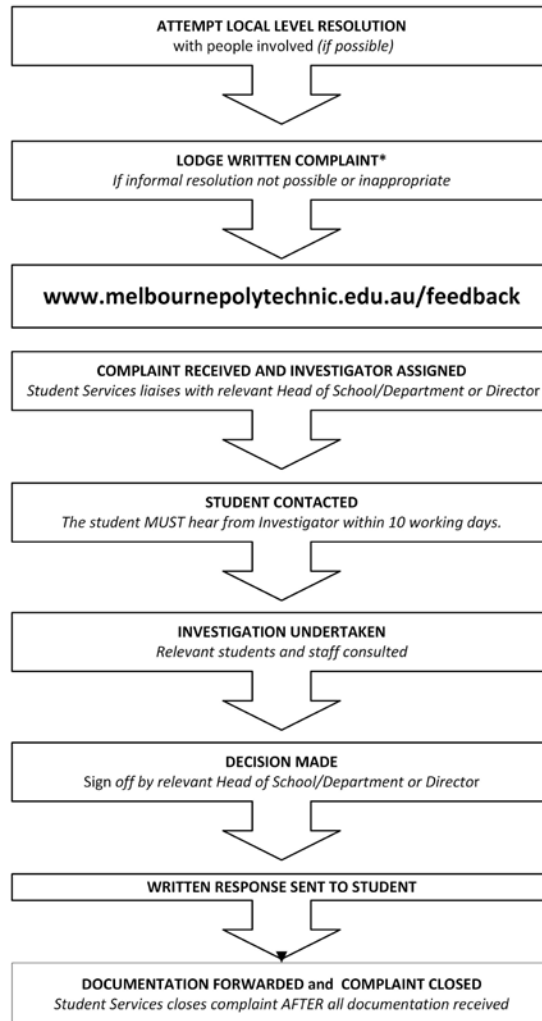
Melbourne Polytechnic's Student Complaints processes are:

- Overseen by the Office of the Deputy CEO
- Administered by the Student Complaints Liaison Officer, to support and assist staff to:
 - Ensure timeframes are met.
 - Ensure all appropriate records relating to Complaints are kept on file
- Managed, in the first instance, by the School or Department against which the Complaint is lodged. Please see process summarised in Table 1 on next page.

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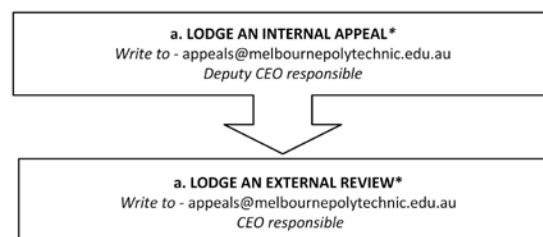
TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF STEPS: Management of Student Complaints

STUDENT COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCESSES



ESCALATION PROCESSES

A student can appeal a decision relating to a complaint or an Internal appeal within 10 working days of receiving written response.



**Complaints, Internal Appeals or External Reviews that are found to be frivolous, vexatious or lacking in substance will not be investigated.*

Please Note: *This policy does not affect a student's rights under relevant legislation or to make a complaint to an external or regulatory authority (for example, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission).*

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a. Where Students Can Access Assistance with Lodging a Complaint

Help Required	Resource Available
Information and advice about process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Complaints and Appeals Policy • Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure • Visit Student Portal • Contact Student Services on 9269 1314
Emotional support and impartial guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Student Services to make an appointment with a Melbourne Polytechnic Counsellor on 9269 1314
Support when attending meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-legal Support Person can attend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can be Friend/Family or Student Services can provide someone ○ Attend meetings and take notes on discussions and agreements and debrief after meetings <p><i>Please Note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Student Services or other Support Person does not act as an advocate for the student in meetings.</i> • <i>Melbourne Polytechnic Counsellors may not act as a Support Person or provide legal advice.</i>

b. Where Staff Can Access Assistance with Managing a Complaint

Type of Help	Resource Available
Procedural and Process Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Complaints and Appeals Policy • Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure • Contact Student Complaints Liaison Officer on 9269 1530 • Staff Portal: "Managing Student Complaints". <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See https://staff.nmit.vic.edu.au/campusservices/Student%20Experience/Pages/Managing-Student-Complaints-and-Grievances.aspx
Correspondence and Record Keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Student Complaints Liaison Officer on 9269 1530 • Templates and Examples available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See https://staff.nmit.vic.edu.au/campusservices/Student%20Experience/Pages/Managing-Student-Complaints-and-Grievances.aspx
Mentoring, advice or support regarding managing the Complaints Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact direct supervisor or manager
Additional mentoring and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Director Student Experience or Deputy CEO if Complaint is regarding the Director Student Experience

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B. A COMPLAINT IS CONSIDERED RESOLVED

A Complaint is deemed as resolved when:

- The Complainant provides a written withdrawal of the Complaint.
- The Complainant signs or confirms in writing (for example by email), a statement confirming that the Complaint has been resolved.
- A settlement has been agreed to in writing and signed by the Complainant and the Respondent(s).
- The CEO, after consideration of an External Review Report, deems the matter to have been fully dealt with by Melbourne Polytechnic and to be now closed.
- After receiving outcome advice, no request for further appeal/review has been made by the Complainant within timeframes specified in the Policy & Procedure.
- A court or tribunal of competent jurisdiction has handed down a decision dealing with the subject matter of the Complaint.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTIES DURING THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCESSES

Here is a summary of the responsibilities of different parties who may be involved in resolving a Complaint

a. Responsibilities of ALL Melbourne Polytechnic STAFF

- Ensure they are familiar with the terms of the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and associated Procedure.
- Upon inquiry, provide Students with general information about the Student Complaints and Appeals processes, including where to access the Policy and Procedure and who can give them advice or support.
- Address and attempt to resolve Complaints they are involved with in a respectful, responsible and timely manner
- Address and attempt to resolve Complaints they are involved with without engaging in any form of victimisation or discrimination.

b. Responsibilities of the STUDENT (Complainant)

- Maintain respectful conduct in accordance with Melbourne Polytechnic policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Seek advice from Melbourne Polytechnic staff and define the exact nature of the issue.
- Present the facts that relate to the complaint.
- Collect and provide objective evidence to support the facts.
- Outline the resolution they are seeking and cooperate with reasonable conciliatory offers.
- Maintain confidentiality. The person who the Complaint is about must NOT be publically named.

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c. Responsibilities of the RESPONDENT

(A Respondent is a person/department the complaint is being made about).

- Be informed about the substantive allegations in the complaint.
- Be given time and the right to respond.
- Participate in options for resolution
- Seek support and advice, e.g. colleague, friend.

d. Responsibilities of WITNESS

(A Witness is any person, other than the Complainant or Respondent, who is questioned as part of investigating a Complaint, Internal Appeal or External Review).

- Attend interviews or meetings and provide written responses to assist with determining the facts of the matter relating to a Complaint, Internal Appeal or External Review.

e. Responsibilities of SUPPORT PERSON

(A Support Person is a non-legal person who provides support to or acts as an observer for a Complainant, Respondent or Witness during any Complaints process. Usually the Support Person will not be a potential Witness in the same Complaint process.)

The Support Person:

- May attend any discussions or interviews convened as part of investigating the Complaint, take notes on discussions and agreements and debrief after meetings.
- Must agree to comply with all reasonable directions given by a Melbourne Polytechnic staff member during any discussions or interviews.
- DOES NOT advocate for the student.

f. Responsibilities of INVESTIGATOR (*see checklist on pg 8 for more information*)

(This is generally the Program Manager or Department Manager).

- Investigate the issues outlined in the complaint in a fair, respectful and timely manner
- Recommend a decision/outcome.
- The key steps and responsibilities in this process are summarised in the checklist on page 8 of this document.

g. Responsibilities of INVESTIGATOR'S SUPERVISOR (*see checklist on pg 9*)

(This is generally the Department Manager or Head of School/Service Area Manager).

- Assign an investigator and support the investigator to ensure they complete the investigation in a fair, respectful and timely manner.
- Approve the decision/outcome as recommended or suggest an alternative
- Ensure any Corrective Actions are implemented in a timely manner

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- The key steps & responsibilities in this process are summarised in the checklist on pg 9.

h. Responsibilities of Relevant HEAD OF SCHOOL or DIRECTOR

(This is generally the Head of School or Director of department which has received Complaint).

- Provide advice and support to staff involved in investigation
- Undertake investigation if Complaint involves senior staff
- Ensure all Complaints & Internal Appeals in their department are being investigated a fair, respectful and timely manner
- Ensure all Corrective Actions in their department are implemented in a timely manner
- Ensure the department undertakes required process improvement analysis and implementation

i. Responsibilities of Melbourne Polytechnic STUDENT COUNSELLOR

- Offer a potential Complainant the opportunity to discuss his or her concerns confidentially prior to deciding whether to lodge a Complaint
- Provide information about the Student Complaints & Appeals Policy and associated Procedure, as well as emotional support and impartial guidance for a Complainant, Respondent or Witness if requested
- Melbourne Polytechnic counsellors may NOT act as a Support Person or provide legal advice.

j. Responsibilities of STUDENT COMPLAINTS LIAISON OFFICER

- Provide information and advice to the staff members about the Student Complaints processes
- Liaise with staff investigating and resolving complaints, ensuring timeframes and other requirements are met.
- Create and promulgate information on Student Complaints & Appeals Policy and associated Procedure
- Oversee maintenance of accurate, objective and confidential records and files.
- Report to Schools, Departments and Executive, as required, including providing statistical data and analysis in the format required.
- In consultation with Director Student Experience, develop and deliver appropriate training to Melbourne Polytechnic staff in Student Complaints Management Processes.

k. Responsibilities of STUDENT SERVICES

- Provide information and advice to the student about the Complaints process.
- Monitor the fairness of the process on behalf of the student.
- At request from the student, attend meetings and take notes on discussions and agreements and debrief after meetings.
- Student Services DOES NOT:
 - Manage any meetings regarding the Complaint
 - Advocate for the Complainant in meetings
 - Give advice to Complainant or Melbourne Polytechnic staff during meetings

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l. Responsibilities of DIRECTOR STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- Create and promulgate information on Student Complaints & Appeals Policy and associated Procedure.
- If requested provide mentoring and support to staff responding to, managing and resolving complaints.
- In consultation with Student Complaints Liaison Officer, develop and deliver appropriate training to Melbourne Polytechnic staff in Student Complaints Management Processes.

m. Responsibility of INTERNAL REVIEWER (see checklist on pg 8 for more information)

(A senior manager nominated by the Deputy CEO to investigate an Internal Appeal.)

- Investigate the issues outlined in the Internal Appeal in a fair, respectful and timely manner
- Recommend a decision/outcome.
- The key steps and responsibilities are summarised in the checklist on page 8.

n. Responsibilities of HEAD QUALITY UNIT

- Ensure the documentation of complaints is maintained in compliance with policy and procedure.
- Monitor, review and improve effectiveness of complaints handling within Melbourne Polytechnic.
- Nominate Investigator if Respondent to a Complaint is a Head of School or Director.
- Make policy determinations and interpretations as required.
- Seek legal advice as appropriate.

o. Responsibilities of DEPUTY CEO

- Analyse complaints and appeals trends
- Report on implementation of appropriate corrective actions and resulting business improvements
- Report, as appropriate, to Melbourne polytechnic Boards and Committees.

p. Responsibilities of CEO

In accordance with the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and associated Procedure:

- Request that an external agency conduct an External Review
 - If request by complainant holds merit
 - If complainant has exhausted all avenues of Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and associated Procedure
- Consider the recommendations of the External Review Report and make a Final Decision.
- Use their discretion to:
 - Reinstate a Complaint
 - Escalate a Complaint to External Review stage
 - Grant a request to review a Complaint that occurred more than 12 months prior

Student Complaints and Appeals Management Guidelines

Checklist for Investigator (or Internal Reviewer)

Receive Complaint

- Review written complaint/appeal.
- Assess merit of complaint/appeal.

Please note: If it is found to be lacking in substance or vexatious, or malicious, the complaint process may be discontinued. (See policy or procedure for definitions).

- Inform any Respondent that a complaint has been lodged against them

Conduct Investigation

- Speak with student (complainant) if required
*Please note: Do not avoid speaking to the student.
An early conversation can make a big difference in resolving a complaint.*
- Interview respondent, if required.
- Interview relevant witnesses (staff and students), if required.
- Speak with other staff who may have information to assist with investigation.
- Review relevant policies and documents which can assist in investigation.

Please note: Any party to this complaint/appeal is entitled to bring a support person with them to the meeting. The support person is a (non-legal) person who provides support to or acts as an observer for any party to a complaint. The Support Person does not advocate for the person and may not be a person was involved in or associated with events giving rise to the complaint/appeal.

Keep Student Informed

- Ensure that student (complainant) has been contacted **within 10 working days** of receipt of complaint.
Please note: It is best practice to close a complaint within 10 working days, however there are times when this is not possible, so simply ensure you have contacted the student & given them an update.

Make Decision

- Based on your investigation, make a decision. The decision is to include:
 1. The outcome of the investigation
 2. Attempts to resolve the issue
 3. Any action to be undertaken*Please note: A template to help you draft decision can be found at [Management of Student Complaints](#)*
- Forward your determination to your supervisor (or Deputy CEO for Internal Appeal) for review and sign off.
- Once approved, send a copy of the decision to the student, and respondent if required.
*Please note: Please respond formally in writing to the student, even if you held a meeting with them. Our policy states "outcomes and decisions in relation to a complaint or appeal will be communicated in writing to all relevant parties **within 10 working days** of the decision being reached."*
- Once approved, ensure any corrective actions are implemented as soon as practical.

Forward Documentation to Student Services

- Once complaint/appeal is finalised, please forward all relevant documentation to feedbacksystem@melbournepolytechnic.edu.au.

Please note: If you need assistance with any step in this process, remember you are not alone! Please contact your direct supervisor, the Student Complaints Liaison Officer or the Director Student Experience for advice.

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Checklist for Investigator's Supervisor

Receive Complaint

- Work with Student Services to assign an Investigator
- Assist investigator to assess merit of complaint/appeal.

Please note: If it is found to be lacking in substance or vexatious, or malicious, the complaint process may be discontinued. (See policy or procedure for definition).

Conduct Investigation

- Provide advice/support to investigator as they conduct the investigation

Keep Student Informed

- Ensure that investigator contacts the student (complainant) **within 10 working days** of receipt of complaint.

Please note: It is best practice to close a complaint within 10 working days, however there are times when this is not possible, so you need to ensure you have contacted the student and given them a progress update.

Make Decision

- Approve the determination/decision before the Investigator sends it to the student.

It is your role to ensure this complaint is being resolved in the best way and suggest any changes or other actions to be undertaken.

- Once approved, ensure a copy of the decision is sent to the student, and respondent if required.

Please note: The student must be responded to in writing, even if a meeting was held with them.

*Our policy states "outcomes and decisions in relation to a complaint or appeal will be communicated in writing to all relevant parties **within 10 working days** of the decision being reached."*

Forward Documentation to Student Services

- Ensure that all relevant documentation is sent to feedbacksystem@melbournepolytechnic.edu.au for saving in the Online Complaints Management System.

Oversee Implementation of Corrective Actions

- Ensure that all corrective actions are implemented in a timely manner.

Please note: If you need assistance with any step in this process, remember you are not alone! Please contact your direct supervisor, the Student Complaints Liaison Officer or the Director Student Experience for advice.