



AUT

STUDENT COMPLAINTS

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

It is important that the University receives and considers complaints from students particularly when they are about the University's administration, systems or staff. Adverse events can have an impact on a students' mental health and academic achievements.

Staff who are subject to a complaint are informed and participate in the investigation process and the outcome is communicated to them. As all complaints are investigated, the fact of the investigation is not a finding that anything wrong has occurred.

It is not possible to process complaints without the assistance of administrative teams, Departments, Schools and Faculties. I am grateful to the Faculty Registrars, Heads of Departments/Schools, Chairs of Examination Boards, Administrators and the Student Services and Administration team who have provided factual and timely responses and documentation. I also acknowledge those who have supported the students who use the complaints procedures which is most often the Student Advocacy Service based in AUTSA.

In the cases that were resolved, it was found or agreed, that the information provided to the student was inadequate, or difficult to interpret, or that a decision made about them did not take into account their particular or unusual circumstances, or that there was a miscommunication that negatively impacted them. The circumstances were evaluated, and a solution sought, and the matter was resolved or partly resolved.

Some students raised complaints about the University systems, administration and/or staff or if they were unsuccessful in a course of study or were not accepted into a course of study or were unhappy with a decision the university had made that they did not agree with. This was despite in most cases, the student having received significant support and advice from the University. There was no evidence in those cases that the support systems were inadequate, or that the students had received incorrect or misleading advice or that the decision was unfair to them.

This report provides the statistics to enable the University to monitor matters, track emerging issues and learn from errors made. This report is published on the University website to ensure transparency and confidence in the complaint procedures.

Step 3 Complaints

The University's Complaints Procedures recognises that the relationship between students and lecturers is of a critical, but delicate, nature and that the maintenance of a sound relationship requires commitment from both parties.

The University looks to both its staff and students to work together to achieve an effective relationship that can resolve problems directly, if possible. However, the University recognises that this goal may not always be achievable. The Procedures which are available online, provide the actions that should be taken if a student considers that the way in which matters have been handled is not appropriate, or if they are dissatisfied with the treatment he or she has received. The actions are:

STEP ONE – The student should raise the matter first with the person responsible for providing the service considered unsatisfactory or, if that is clearly inappropriate, raise the matter with the programme leader or the manager of the service area involved.

STEP TWO – As a general rule, the person to whom the complaint has been made will work to have the matter resolved to the student's satisfaction. If the problem persists, or the student is dissatisfied about the way the matter has been handled, he or she should request a meeting with the following: For Faculty issues – the programme leader, head of department, school or the faculty registrar. For general AUT issues – The Director responsible for the service area.

STEP THREE – If steps one and two have been followed and this does not lead to a resolution of the problem to the student's satisfaction, the student may lodge a formal complaint. Any formal complaint must be made in writing and be addressed to the Head Student Grievance. The written statement must outline clearly the student's concerns. A formal complaint may be submitted directly by the person concerned, or by AUTSA on behalf of the student. The Head Student Grievance will investigate the complaint and reply in writing to the student concerned.

The process for resolution involves negotiation toward a mutually agreeable solution wherever possible.

This 2023 Complaints Report is for Step 3 Complaints. No complaints were referred to the Tertiary Education Dispute Resolution Service (TEDR) in 2023.

One complaint was referred to the Disputes Tribunal and was not upheld. Two complaints were referred to the Health and Disability Commissioner, one was not pursued, and the other is under consideration.

Step 3 Complaints

| Group | Formal complaint stage | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--------------|---|--------|------------|---------|
| | Complaints received | Investigated | Resolved/ partly resolved/ withdrawn | Upheld | Not upheld | Ongoing |
| Total | COVID related | Yes | | | 1 | |
| | Quality of service | All | | | 1 | 1 |
| | Quality of decision | All | 2 | | 3 | |
| | Quality of information | All | 4 | | 2 | |
| | Supervision/course | All | 6 | | | |
| | Facilities/access | Yes | | | 1 | |
| Course | Undergraduate: 11 Postgraduate: 9 1 complainant was not enrolled | | | | | |
| Gender | Female: 15 Male: 6 Other: 0 | | | | | |
| Recorded disability | Disability: 1 No known disability 20 | | | | | |

The Tertiary Education Dispute Resolution (TEDR)

Since 1 January 2022, providers are required to comply with NZQA's Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021. The Code is designed to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of domestic and international learners is central to the systems and day-to-day practices.

Complaints under the Code are made to TEDR which has been appointed by the Minister for Education as the provider of the tertiary education domestic disputes resolution scheme. TEDR provides a free, independent service, assisting domestic learners and education providers to resolve contractual and financial disputes.

Students must first go through the Universities internal resolution process. If they are not satisfied with the outcome, they are able to contact TEDR for resolution support. TEDR can if it chooses, appoint an independent decision maker. Complainants and the University must comply with the outcome of the process and any agreement reached and any decision made by the independent person is binding and can be enforced by the District Court.

In 2023 no complaints were referred to TEDR.