



Student Grievance Policy

Commencement Date

1 June 2014

1. Purpose

This policy provides a framework for ensuring that student complaints are handled fairly, equitably and in a timely manner that is easily accessible to students.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Guild's higher education community.

3. Objectives

The Guild's Grievance Procedures are guided by the principles of equity and transparency, and students are encouraged to provide feedback on the delivery of education provided by the Guild. The Guild ensures appeal processes are available to students who wish to make an appeal against decisions made by the Guild. Facilities and resources are available to assist students with grievance/appeal issues.

There are separate procedures for both academic and non-academic grievances. In both academic and non-academic matters, the complainant and respondent will not be victimized or discriminated against by the Guild at any stage.

The Guild aims to create an environment where complaints are student focused and viewed as an opportunity for improvement.

4. Implementation

This policy is communicated to academic staff through the Staff Procedures book. The Grievances Officer is responsible for the training of academic and support staff in the application of the policy.

This policy is communicated to students through the Guild's website, which students are directed to during open day speeches.

Guild students, and those seeking to enrol in a course of study with the Guild, are entitled to access the complaints and appeals procedures set out in this policy.

Complaints or grievances can be reported for a number of reasons, including:

- A student has been (or perceived to be) impacted by the inappropriate, irregular or incorrect application of the Guild's policies and procedures;
- A student impacted by bias, prejudice or perceived unfair treatment;
- A penalty that seems excessively harsh being applied to a student;
- A student impacted by negligent, unusual or inappropriate conduct; and

- A student impacted by a decision which did not take all the facts and issues into account.

The complainant and/or respondent have the right to be represented by a third party representative (such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person) if they so desire, for all types of complaints and at all stages during the process.

The Guild will document student complaints, grievances and appeals in a constructive and timely manner. The Guild will maintain a register of all complaints/grievances, including any verbal complaints.

Final decisions on academic grievances will be made by the Academic Board. Decisions on non-academic grievances will be made by the Committee of Management.

A student (whether complainant or respondent) may appeal a decision if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome. A number of reasons may be valid grounds for appeal, including:

- New evidence and facts have emerged that could change the decision;
- The penalty imposed or decision reached could be considered unreasonable; and
- A belief that an irregularity in the procedures has occurred.

Academic Grievances/Complaints

The Guild will ensure that student/s receive accurate information about:

- all information relating to the course;
- information about Guild staff;
- personal information that the Guild holds in relation to the student;
- specific units, including assessment procedures and tasks, which must be completed successfully for the degree to be awarded; and
- other academic and administrative information such as policies, fees, resources, student support, lecturer support and private tuition.

All students will be given reasonable and fair notice regarding information or changes to advertised times, venues, tutors and course content, competencies and assessment procedures. The Guild likes to add a personal touch to its business dealings with students, and therefore students are advised that they may make informal complaints (verbal) at any time. If the student does not consider that a verbal complaint will be enough to resolve any complaint/grievance, he/she should put the complaint in writing on a [Grievance/Complaint Form](#).

Informal Procedure for Academic Grievances

For complaints of an academic nature, the complainant may speak to the relevant lecturer in the first instance. This may, for example, be a query regarding an assessment mark or other academic matter. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, he/she may lodge a formal complaint following the Formal Procedure outlined below.

Non Academic Grievances

The procedures for a non-academic grievance are the same as for academic grievances, other than that appeals of non-academic grievance decisions are made to the Committee of Management rather than the Academic Board.

Informal Procedure for Non-Academic Grievances

For complaints of a non-academic nature, the complainant may speak to the person in the first instance, or speak to the person's supervisor. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, he/she may lodge a formal complaint following the Formal Procedure outlined below.

Formal Procedure for all Grievances

A complainant may lodge a formal complaint in relation to any grievance at any time, following the below procedure:

Step 1.

The complainant is to complete a [Grievance/Complaint Form](#) (available from the office, directly from the Grievances Officer or from the Guild's website) and submit it to the Grievances Officer either by email or by hand.

Step 2.

The Grievances Officer will contact the complainant to arrange an interview, within 7 working days of receipt of the Grievance Form, to discuss the specific nature and circumstances of the grievance. Complainant who have enrolled in a course via distance education and cannot attend will be contacted by phone or skype.

The Grievances Officer will take detailed notes of the interview and will conduct any necessary investigations, which includes a meeting with the respondent.

The Grievances Officer is also required to offer support to the complainant including referring him/her to the Student Counsellor, if appropriate.

The Grievances Officer will prepare a report in relation to the grievance which will include any recommendations.

The Grievances Officer must then meet with the complainant's and respondent's (if the respondent is a student) Year Level Co-Ordinator and either the Dean (for academic grievances) or the CEO (for non-academic grievances) to discuss the grievance report. The Grievances Officer, Year Level Co-Ordinator and Dean/CEO will be required to reach a unanimous decision as to the outcome. The outcome must exhibit flexibility, organisational integrity and respect for the individuals involved. All details and meetings will be documented and a separate file will be maintained for each grievance.

The complainant and respondent must be notified of the outcome of the grievance complaint in writing, within 10 business days of a decision being reached.

Except where special circumstances apply (such as illness), all grievances should be resolved within 30 days of receipt of the completed Grievance Form.

Step 3.

If the grievance cannot be resolved at Step 2, or if the complainant or respondent (if the respondent is a student) wishes to appeal the outcome, he/she can request a meeting with the Academic Board (within 14 days of receiving the decision). He/she will have the opportunity to

present his/her case to delegates of the Academic Board and will be given a written statement of the outcome in person within 14 days of the hearing, including reasons for the decision.

For non-academic grievances, the appeal request should be made to the Committee of Management.

Step 4.

If the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome from the Academic Board or Committee of Management, he/she may lodge an external appeal for the matter to be referred to Mr Jack Sullivan (former deputy Dean of the Melbourne University Economics department), the independent external Appeal Officer, or may otherwise take the matter to the Ombudsman.

Step 5.

The external Appeal Officer will make recommendations in relation to a grievance he/she has reviewed, and forwards those recommendations to the Grievances Officer within 30 days. The Guild will ensure that the recommendations are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the recommendations, and that the student is notified of the outcome.

Student Counsellor

- Appointments can be made through Student Administration.

External Appeal Contact Details

- Mr Jack Sullivan, on phone (03) 9740 8315 or mail, 34 Long Drive, Sunbury VIC 3429
- Ombudsman Victoria, Level 9 North Tower 459 Collins Street, Melbourne
 - Tel. 9613 6222, toll free 1800 806 314 (Regional)
 - Reception 9am – 5pm (Mon – Fri)
 - Email: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au
 - URL: <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/>

The Ombudsman is an independent and impartial entity.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

Reasons for decisions and actions undertaken as part of the investigation and decision making process will be given, if so requested by the complainant and/or respondent.

Records of all grievances and applications for review of decisions will be kept for a period of 5 years. Affected parties (such as the complainant and respondent) may make a request to inspect the relevant file at any time during that 5 year period. Such an inspection will be supervised by the Guild administrative staff. Records of grievances and their outcomes will be kept strictly confidential and filed in a separate file (not kept on the student or staff file), and stored in the office of the Dean.

The procedures set out in this document do not replace, or modify procedures, or any other responsibilities which may arise under other higher education provider policies or under statute or any other law.

All records will be maintained in accordance with the Guild's Information Privacy Policy.

5. Definitions

Appeal - an application made by a student to have a decision reviewed where that decision relates to a matter affecting his or her studies or life as a student.

Appellant – a student (whether complainant or respondent) who appeals a grievance decision to either the Academic Board or Committee of Management.

Complainant - the student who has lodged a grievance.

Grievance- a problem or concern raised by a student about something affecting his or her studies or life as a student, for which the student is seeking resolution. The term complaint is often used interchangeably with grievance.

Representative - another member of staff, a union representative, or another person to provide support, who is not present in the capacity of a legal representative.

Respondent(s) - one or more persons who are alleged to have caused the student's grievance.

6. Related policies and procedures

The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:

- Assessment, Moderation, Progression and Misconduct Policy
- Information and Privacy Policy
- Student Support Policy

7. Review

Three years from commencement.

8. Responsibilities

The Grievances Officer is responsible for:

- managing all grievances and ensuring all grievances are handled in accordance with the Student Grievance Policy;
- educating other staff members in relation to the Student Grievance Policy;
- Ensuring this policy is appropriately implemented;
- ensuring students are given every right and opportunity specified in the Student Grievance Policy;
- ensuring all matters are followed up in a timely manner;
- ensuring complaints remain confidential;
- creating a file for each grievance, and ensuring all correspondence and notes of all conversations remain on that file;
- reporting all cases to the Dean (academic) or CEO (non-academic) and the relevant Year Level Co-Ordinator and arranging a conference to discuss the outcome;

- providing bi-annual updates to the Academic Board and Committee of Management in relation to grievances, including suggestions for policy review.

9. Accountabilities

The Academic Board is responsible for review and approval of this policy.

The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and the Guild's community via the website and other publications.

10. Revision History

Date Created: 9 May 2014

Approval Authority	Contact Person	Revision Due Date	Revision Date	Approved Date	Version No.	Revision Description
Academic Board	Chair	31/5/2017		26/2/14	1	Added further detail for objectives; implementation; definitions; clarified the procedure and defined academic and non-academic grievance steps; transferred to AGME Policy template.
			15/5/14	16/05/14	2	Feedback from Academic Board – minor revisions to formatting.
DRAFTING DETAILS						
	Revised By		Revision Date		Draft No	Revision Description
	NR & CEO		13/08/15		2.1	Minor changes to font to keep consistency through policies and logo added.
	CEO		7/09/15		2.2	Error in Revision History, correction made to table dates and version editions.