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| **To** | Unitec | **Date:** 27 June 2018 |
| **From:** Verity Jade, GM Student Experience  **Date** | | |
| **Subject:** Student Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedures | | |

##### Purpose

This memo is about the revised policy and procedure documents below listed, and provides supporting information including a summary of the changes made, the consultation process, and next steps.

* Student Complaints Resolution Policy
* Student Complaints Resolution Procedures
* Notice of Formal Complaint
* Student Complaint Decision Report

##### Background

The Policy was due for review as the last review was July 2012. The review supports a simplification strategy that is being rolled out across a number of policy and procedures.

Student Experience, which holds the reporting responsibility to Unitec Council for Formal Student Complaints, has received staff feedback that the current Policy is cumbersome, and time consuming to interpret, which has led to delays in responsiveness to Formal Student Complaints.

##### Review Process

The review took place over April and May 2018. A small working group drafted the initial documents. Feedback from key stakeholders and staff was invited over a 2-week period from 10 May to 23 May, after which the final drafts were prepared to be submitted to Academic Board.

The working group who drafted the documents consisted of:

* Student President – Matalena O’Mara
* Quality Academic Advisor (International) – Jan Roodt
* Coordinator, Student Connections and Engagement – Wilma Pinto
* Policy review co-ordinator – Anna Wheeler

The working group was assisted by Lindsay Olney, Tertiary Education Project Specialist, Arahanga Associates Ltd

The documents were reviewed by the policy owner Verity Jade, GM Student Experience and the policy sponsor Glenn McKay, Executive Director, Student Experience and Tumu Tauwhirowhiro Māori.

Key stakeholders who contributed to the review of this policy:

* Executive Director, People and Safety – Mary Johnston
* Unitec Conciliator – Glenda Grant
* Student Advocate – Julie Watson and Karyn Black
* Manager Student Wellbeing – Erin McGuiness
* Customer Experience Manager (Marketing) – Jenny Wigley

It should be noted that:

* The simplification lens applied to the Policy and Procedure was directly as a result of feedback from Deans and HoPPs as investigators using the old process, who had asked for clarity
* During the consultation of the updated documents, we spoke with a number of our HoPPs and Deans to test the thinking along the way – and they were supportive of the direction being taken*.*

A summary of stakeholder feedback and responses is attached as **Appendix A.**

##### Key changes in revised Policy

Key changes to the Policy arising from the review are as follows:

1. Separation of the Policy from the Procedures, to support simplification
2. Clarity on roles, responsibilities and timelines
3. Students will send complaints to a central complaints email address
4. The central administrator will forward complaints to the relevant senior manager
5. The central administrator will acknowledge receipt of complaint to student and any support people within three days (previously this acknowledgement was done by the relevant senior manager)
6. Both the person investigating the complaint and the person making the decision must now consider if they are free from bias
7. The person investigating the complaint (the investigator) must email the student and cc any support people within three working days of the investigator receiving the complaint to introduce themselves and from then on report weekly to all parties including support people
8. The student and respondent can bring support people with them to meetings with the investigator
9. The investigator no longer has to complete a form but must still report with a recommendation to the relevant senior manager
10. The person making the decision (i.e. the relevant senior manager) must complete a form recording their decision which is sent to the central administrator for recording and reporting purposes.
11. The time recommended for resolving complaints has been extended from 20 working days to 25 working days (Otago Polytechnic complaints process has 28 working days)
12. The following appendices in the current Policy have been removed from the Policy and will instead form part of internal guidance being developed for staff:
    * Appendix B: Potential Resolutions for Formal Complaints
    * Appendix C: Complaints Resolution Process – Flowchart for Staff

**Other Unitec policies impacted**

The following related documents will require updating:

* Notice of Appeal form (need to make it clear which email address to send notice to)
* Student Disciplinary Statute (this document mentions ‘Director of Pou Aroha’ throughout, also footer of document says Doc Owner is Chief Operating Officer – this needs correcting)

##### Risks and mitigation

##### The main risk is the lack of time Deans and HoPPs have to carry out their responsibilities under the Procedures. This may lead to the resolution of complaints being unduly delayed. To mitigate this we will include in the internal guidance suggestions about how the investigation tasks may be delegated or shared with others, and who to get assistance from with the investigation and decision making.

##### Next steps / Implementation

1. Communications to staff will be developed and published on the staff intranet (Pou Tukutuku) by 25 June 2018
2. Internal guidance and training material for Unitec staff will be developed and published on the staff intranet (Pou Tukutuku) by 25 June 2018
3. Guidance for our contracted Student Advocates will be provided to them by 25 June 2018
4. Communications and guidance for students will be developed and published on the Unitec website by Monday 2 July 2018 (the beginning of semester 2)
5. The student complaints tracking and reporting mechanisms will be reviewed and improved by 2 July 2018
6. A policy monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed and implemented by 2 July 2018
7. The documents will be reviewed again in 2021

##### Attachments

See Appendix A attached

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| Logo | **Appendix A: Consultation and Feedback Record for review of Student Complaints Resolution Policy & Procedures**  For information about this record’s purpose – [READ UNITEC’S POLICY FRAMEWORK](http://thenest.unitec.ac.nz/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=036A24C7-09D0-474F-B148-592AE4F55D9D&amp;siteName=unitecintranet) [POLICY AND PROCEDURES AND OTHER ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS](http://thenest.unitec.ac.nz/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=036A24C7-09D0-474F-B148-592AE4F55D9D&amp;siteName=unitecintranet) | | | | |
| *Once completed send this record, and the final draft version of the document to the Policy Sponsor with the memo required to seek approval from Academic Board/ELT/Council.* | | | | |
| **Document Titles:** Refer to Memo | | | | **Draft No:** Refer to memo | **Date:** 28/5/18 |
| **Document Owner:** Verity Jade, GM Student Experience | | | | **Document Sponsor:** Glenn McKay,Executive Director, Student Experience | |
| **Summary of New Document/Changes Proposed:**  Refer to memo | | | | | |
| **Groups / Positions Potentially Affected by Proposed New Document/Changes:** *(these should be the persons from whom feedback on changes are sought)*  Students  Student Advocates  Unitec staff | | | | | |
| **Record of Consultation**  (attach any relevant correspondence) | | | | | |
| **Position Title** (or group) | | **Feedback Received?** | **Summary of Feedback Received and How Used to Shape Policy** | | |
| Student President – Matalena O’Mara | | April/ May | **Feedback:** Matalena gave feedback about: - the key role of the Student Advocates in the procedure - the importance of the investigator and decision maker being without bias - making it clear that the student could bring a support person with them to meetings, and that support people should be kept updated throughout the process **Our response** We drafted the Policy and Procedure to reflect these concerns | | |
| Lindsay Olney, Tertiary Education Project Specialist, Arahanga Associates Ltd | | 19 and 24 April | **Feedback:** Lindsay also mentioned the importance of ensuring the process was procedurally fair and upheld the principles of natural justice including the decision maker is without bias  **Our response** We used words Lindsay provided to help draft the Policy statement to emphasise the importance of fairness and equity | | |
| Coordinator - Student Connections and Engagement – Wilma Pinto (currently carrying out the complaints administrator role) | | April/ May | **Feedback:** Wilma was keen to have a procedure that was simpler and for it to be easier to co-ordinate and track complaints **Our response** All formal complaints now start by being emailed to an inbox that Wilma manages so she can more easily track them | | |
| GM Student Experience – Verity Jade | | 8th , 16th May | **Feedback** Verity was very keen to make the process as clear and simple as possible. She wanted to create one-point of entry into the process for students, to support faster resolution of complaints. She flagged that most informal complaints channeled via Student Advocates, using this same channel would enable better oversight of problems across the organisation which will enable more comprehensive reporting, and a more systematic approach to assessing student needs **Our response:**  We drafted the Procedure to emphasise the role of the student advocates to encourage students to use this channel | | |
| Manager Student Wellbeing – Erin McGuiness | | 18 May | **Feedback #1** Erin asked that that the time limit of 30 days for raising the complaint be removed (see section 2c of the Policy).  **Our response** We removed the time Limit  **Feedback #2**  Erin also suggested wording to give context to why we would encourage students to resolve complaints informally – which often enables faster resolution  **Our response**  We added the wording Erin suggested  **Feedback #3** Erin felt the complaint being shared with the respondent was a barrier to the Complainant (see section 3e of the Policy and section 7a of the Procedure). She suggested wording to help the Complainant understand how they could seek support from the Student Advocates if they were concerned about the complaint being shared with the Respondent.  **Our response**  We added the wording Erin suggested to the Policy, Procedure and Notice of Complaint form. However, we left section 3e of the Policy and section 7a of the Procedure as they were because in the interests of procedural fairness the Respondent has the right to see the complaint and be able to respond to it. | | |
| Student Advocate - Julie | | 18 May | **Feedback**  Julie understood that the Respondent has rights too so they supported us leaving section 3e of the Policy and section 7a of the Procedure as it is. Julie was concerned if the 3 working day limits were realistic also the weekly email updates. Julie like Erin asked that that the time limit of 30 days for raising the complaint be removed  **Our response** It is realistic for the complaints administrator to respond within 3 working day. The Investigator may find it quite a tight timeline but we think it’s important to show the student that we are take their complaint seriously. However, we did extend the overall timeline from 20 working days to 25 working days as this was more in line with Otago Polytechnic’s policy which we used for benchmarking. We removed the word ‘email’ from ‘weekly updates’ to allow for updates to be given via any means. As stated above we removed the 30 day time limit in section 2c of the Policy | | |
| Unitec Conciliator – Glenda Grant | | 15 May | **Feedback:** Glenda was concerned that her role was no longer explicitly mentioned in the Procedures because we had shortened the support and advocacy section (s.4) to put the main focus on our Student Advocates but still with link to other avenues of support.  **Our response:** On the 16 May we added the other avenues of support back into section 4b of the Procedures, in a simpler way than they are currently listed so as to keep the Procedures as simple and clear as possible. | | |
| Executive Director, People and Safety – Mary Johnston | | 23 May | **Feedback** Mary liked the way the new documents are much clearer and simpler.  Mary raised a concern about continuity of service of advocates and questioned if streamlining the initial contact point is the best approach  **Our response** List all other avenues of support in section 4b. **Mary also suggested**  “Unitec contracts a student advocacy service…” be changed to “Unitec provides” **We replied** that TEC requires Student Advocates to be independent. The wording around contracted advocates supports this approach | | |
| Executive Director, Student Experience – Glenn McKay | | 7 May | **Feedback:** Glenn pointed out two aspects in the flowchart for staff which were not clear  **Our response:** We modified the flowchart so the numbered steps clearly referred the section of the Policy or Procedure they related to and acronyms were spelt out | | |
| Customer Experience (CX) Manager (Marketing) – Jenny Wigley | | 18 May | **Feedback:** Jenny explained the process Marketing have for managing informal complaints they receive via surveys, website, online chat etc.  **Our response:** We need to add a step to the Marketing process - if a student is not happy with the informal outcome then next step for CX team should be to advise student about the formal complaints process and direct them to the Notice of Formal Complaint form, complaints web page & Student Advocates | | |