

Academic Grievance Investigation Guidelines – Notes for Investigators

The role of the Investigator in an Academic Grievance is to:

- Investigate the issue raised by the student according to the principles of natural justice
- Invite comment from all affected persons
- Provide a written report outlining their findings and their decision to uphold or dismiss the Grievance
- Make any recommendations for resolution or institutional continuous quality improvement
- Complete this process within 10 working days of receiving the Grievance

An Academic Grievance can be raised for any of the following:

1. The final grade awarded for any Course
2. The outcome of a Special Assessment Circumstance (SAC) decision
3. The award of a Qualification
4. A decision about enrolment in or admission to a Programme or Course
5. Progression in a programme
6. Exclusion from any coursework or assessment

Who can act as an Investigator for an Academic Grievance?

An investigator must be a Senior Academic, APM, HoS or Executive Member from outside of the school where the student raising the Grievance is studying.

The Investigator receiving the Grievance must consider if they are sufficiently independent and without bias to investigate it. If they are not, they must delegate the responsibility to another suitable person. They may also choose to delegate the responsibility for other reasons.

Delegation must be decided within 3 working days of receipt and notice of delegation must be emailed to resolutions@unitec.ac.nz

How is the investigator contacted to take part?

Once a Notice of Grievance has been received by the Appeals Administrator within Te Korowai Kahurangi, an email will be sent to the Schools calling for an Investigator to act to investigate the Grievance. The investigator may receive this email directly, or be asked to do this by the Head of School/APM.

As this is a time critical process for students, the Investigator will be contacted within 2 working days of a Notice of Grievance being received by the Appeals Administrator.

The Grievance will be registered on the central Academic Grievances Register by the Appeals Administrator.

Investigating an Academic Grievance

Once the Investigator has agreed to investigate the Grievance they must contact the Appeals Administrator at resolutions@unitec.ac.nz and introduce themselves as the Investigator. The Appeals Administrator is there to support the Investigator and can offer guidance on process.

Within 2 working days of receiving the Notice of Grievance, the Investigator must also introduce themselves via email, to the student, any support persons and any teaching staff who are party to the Grievance, as the investigator for the Grievance and begin the investigation process.

Investigators have 10 working days to investigate the matter and reach a decision. During this time, they need to provide regular email updates to all parties.

Investigation Steps

- a) At the time of introduction via email, the Investigator must provide a copy of the Notice of Grievance to all parties
- b) The Investigator must act in accordance with other relevant policies and liaise with the appropriate people as required
- c) The Investigator should separately interview all parties involved, advising them that they may bring a support person with them to any meetings, and review any relevant documentation

This documentation can include:

- A record of the student's grades
 - Student's enrolment history
 - Emails between the parties to the Grievance
 - Programme Regulations
 - Moodle course/programme pages
 - Assessment instructions
 - Unitec Policies and Procedures
- d) Any person making a statement needs to verify the accuracy of their statement. This may be done by signing and dating the statement in front of a witness
 - e) In reaching a decision the Investigator will refer to the Academic Grievance Resolution - Decision Tree document
 - f) The Investigator's decision should include any recommendations that are felt to be appropriate to remedy the situation (if the Grievance is upheld), or to improve any aspect of Unitec teaching/learning or general operations as part of the cycle of continuous quality improvement. An Academic Grievance Investigation Outcome email template is provided for this purpose and will be supplied by the Appeals Administrator when requested.
 - g) The Investigator will document each step of their investigation, including dates, who was present, what was discussed and what resolution, if any, was reached. They will provide a written report to all parties, including a copy to resolutions@unitec.ac.nz
 - h) The Investigator will endeavor to resolve Grievances within 10 working days of receipt of the Notice of Grievance, and will notify all parties if a longer timeframe is required
 - i) Where a Grievance is upheld, the Appeals Administrator will escalate the matter to proceed to
a formal Appeals Hearing conducted by the Appeals Resolution Committee
 - j) If denied, the student may appeal the investigator's decision. This process is outlined in Unitec's Appeal Procedure.
 - k) Where no response is received from a student lodging a Grievance within 30 calendar days of Unitec sending them any correspondence requiring a response, the Investigator may close the Investigation and advise all parties including resolutions@unitec.ac.nz.