
To	Te Poari Mātauranga Academic Board	From	Sue Crossan, Academic Quality & Capability Partner, Te Korowai Kahurangi
Title	Review of Appeals Procedure	Date	2019/11/26

Recommendations:

1. That Te Poari Mātauranga | Academic Board approve the changes to the Student Appeals Procedure.
2. That Te Poari Mātauranga | Academic Board receive the associated documents and the following related documentation (AC2.6) (see appendices):
 1. Policy proposal review rationale
 2. Academic Complaint Procedure
 3. Appendix A Academic Complaint Process
 4. Appendix B Academic Complaint Decision Tree
 5. Steps for Investigators of an Academic Complaint
 6. Academic Complaint Investigation Outcome Template
 7. Student facing information re Academic Complaint
 8. Academic Complaint
 9. Student Appeals Procedure
 10. Appendix A Student Appeals Process Chart
 11. Notice of Appeal
 12. Student facing information re Academic Appeal
 13. Unitec webpage information
3. That Te Poari Mātauranga | Academic Board note the remaining work to be done in 'Next Steps' below.

Purpose

1. Unitec needs a Student Appeals Procedure to cover academic complaints, academic appeals, complaints appeals and appeals of the Postgraduate Research and Scholarship Committee as well as appeals relating to decisions on a Student Disciplinary matter. The current appeals procedure is quite limited and doesn't do this; it is not fit for purpose because it only covers formal appeals for a small range of academic issues. In addition, the opportunity to resolve issues informally within the School and consult with Student Support are not addressed in current procedures.
2. The current Appeals Procedure does not align to similar procedures for student Complaints and Disciplinary Appeals to ensure a continuity for staff and students across the three processes.
3. To formally convene the Academic Resolutions Committee to have oversight of academic appeals, student complaint appeals and appeals against decisions made by the

Postgraduate Research and Scholarships Committee. The current Appeals Procedure makes reference to an Academic Resolutions Committee which has never been formally established despite being approved by Academic Board in March 2017.

4. Resources have been developed to guide Investigators and the Academic Resolutions Committee in decision making, a range of possible solutions, and actions to take following appeal outcomes - to close the loop with academic teams and ensure continuous improvement from appeals (attached drafts of these resources in appendices).

Background

This review was initiated within Te Korowai Kahurangi due to issues which were uncovered in the process of managing Appeals. The review covered the current Student Appeals Procedure and related documents, the Unitec Academic, Disciplinary and Complaints Processes. As part of the review, an Appeal process was closely monitored from start to finish, with a live Appeal. Te Korowai Kahurangi also consulted with key stakeholders (Manager - Student Success, Student Advocate, Director - Ako, Interim Lead Category One, Student Support, Manager Te Korowai Kahurangi, Manager Operations, Academic Quality and Capability partner – TKK, Student Connections and Engagement).

Issues which arose included:

1. The Appeals process was not very student friendly; the information on the Unitec website was very limited and not helpful as evidenced by the number of mistakes made in applications and the frequent misinterpretation of the Appeals process
2. Notices of Appeal were being lodged by students without evidence that they had initially sought an informal resolution within their School, as recommended on the Unitec website; the Appeal application form did not request confirmation that an informal resolution had already been sought, this led to an escalation of Appeals
3. Students were not seeking support for Appeals from Student Advocates and/or Student Support Services, as recommended on the Unitec website, resulting in errors in submissions and submissions for inappropriate reasons; the grounds for Appeal section of the Notice of Appeal form were not ticked, or the grounds selected were not relevant to the issue expressed, or the evidence provided did not match the grounds selected, indicating a lack of understanding of the criteria for a formal Appeal
4. It has been time consuming and hard to find senior academic staff to investigate Appeals and sit on an Appeals Hearing Committee, sometimes resulting in long delays in their resolution despite the 10 working days commitment to students to provide a resolution. It has become increasingly difficult to find academic staff who will agree to investigate an Appeal as it is always at short notice within a strict time limit
5. Because Investigators and Appeals Committees were formed using a variety of different senior staff, there was no assurance of consistency of outcomes for students; this was exacerbated by the lack of support materials to guide the process (see 6);

6. There were no explicit criteria to guide Investigators and Appeal Hearing Committees on decisions on Appeals. The current Appeals procedure was extracted from the Student Disciplinary Statute without any supporting materials to guide the process

Following this review, recommendations for changes were proposed and feedback was gathered via the Nest & by email to Academic Leaders, Heads of School & Working Party. In addition, the Director Ako, Student Success and Student Services has been consulted with a view to aligning processes. A revised draft of the Appeals process is now complete (appendices attached).

These matters also arose during the review:

1. There is no current satisfactory mechanism for reporting of systemic issues identified across complaints and appeals, to ensure those issues are appropriately addressed by staff.
2. There is a lack of surety that specific, individual issues arising from complaints and Appeals affecting academic quality and delivery and student success, are being addressed via the new 'Improvements' tracker which reveals a gap in the continuous improvement cycle.

Next Steps

Following approval by Te Poari Mātauranga:

1. Roll out of new procedure to staff including communication about new processes and clear guidelines, exemplars, etc (see appendices)
2. Call for nominations for the Academic Resolutions Committee as per the Terms of Reference and membership recommended to Academic Board (March 2017)
3. Establish a 'pool' of Investigators to train and call on as required, in order to ensure ongoing capability and consistency in investigation processes
4. Resources be created to better inform students of the process, timeframes and resources available including reviewing and updating Unitec website with clear guidance for students (Te Korowai Kahurangi consulting with Director Student Success & preparing resources –see appendices)
5. Ensure a robust process to close the loop for continuous improvement purposes with feedback from Appeals being reported back to Schools and individuals as appropriate
6. Review the coordination, location and responsibilities for academic complaints and appeals, to ensure a joined-up process with other student complaints and between Te Korowai Kahurangi and student-facing services such as advocacy and support.

Contributors

- Trude Cameron – Lead Quality Systems, Te Korowai Kahurangi
- Sue Crossan – Academic Quality & Capability Partner, Te Korowai Kahurangi

- Director – Ako
- Manager – Student Success
- Student Advocate
- Interim Lead Category One
- Student Support,
- Manager Te Korowai Kahurangi
- Manager Operations
- Student Success and Student Services
- Student President
- Senior Legal Counsel

Attachments

1. Policy proposal review rationale
2. 1.0 Academic Complaint Procedure
3. Appendix A Academic Complaint Process
4. Appendix B Academic Complaint Decision Tree
5. 1.1 Steps for Investigators of an Academic Complaint
6. 1.2 Academic Complaint Investigation Outcome Template
7. 1.3 Student facing information re Academic Complaint
8. 1.4 Academic Complaint
9. 2.0 Student Appeals Procedure
10. Appendix A Student Appeals Process Chart
11. 2.1 Notice of Appeal
12. 2.2 Student facing information re Academic Appeal
13. 3.0 Unitec webpage information

Links to current documents

- Student Appeals Procedure - <https://thenest.unitec.ac.nz/TheNestWP/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AC-2.6-Student-Appeal-Procedure-20180731.pdf>
- Notice of Appeal Form - <https://www.unitec.ac.nz/sites/default/files/public/documents/notice-of-appeal.pdf>
- How to make a Grade Appeal – Unitec Website – <https://www.unitec.ac.nz/current-students/study-support/how-to-make-a-grade-appeal>