



Policy and Governance Unit, Academic Registrar's Division

ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE POLICY

COURSEWORK AND HONOURS STUDENTS

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Responsible Faculty/ Division & Unit	Policy & Governance Unit, Academic Registrar's Division				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy	Schedule 1: Sample Faculty Academic Grievance Resolution Flowchart Schedule 2: Appeal Against Decision or Action Affecting Academic Experience Schedule 3: Application of Policy to Offshore Campuses				
References & Legislation	Code of Practice – Supervision Grievance Policy Grievance Investigation Procedures Student Academic Consideration Policy Student Conduct Rules Freedom of Information Internal Reviews, Appeals and Corrections Records Management Policy				
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1 Purpose of Policy

1. The University aims to provide a fair, equitable and productive learning environment for all its students. This policy seeks to support the achievement of this goal by providing a transparent and consistent process for resolving student academic grievances.
2. The policy affirms the UOW Guiding Principles, contained in the University Strategic Plan.

2 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
Academic grievance	Complaint by a student concerning a decision, act or omission of a member of UOW staff or committee which affects the student's academic experience.
Conciliation	Where an impartial third party assists in the process of grievance resolution
Due process	Procedural rights under this policy, other policies (including University, Faculty or Unit policies), University rules and codes of practice, and includes the application of the principles of natural justice
Good faith	Honestly and with propriety.
Natural justice	Is the right to be given a fair hearing and the opportunity to present one's case, and the right to have a decision made by an unbiased decision-maker.
Representative student body	The University of Wollongong Students' Association or the Wollongong University Postgraduate Association.
Student	A person registered for a course.

3 Application & Scope

1. This policy sets out the general approach of the University of Wollongong (UOW) in resolving grievances relating to decisions, acts or omissions of UOW staff or committees which affect the academic experience of students. This policy also sets out informal and formal procedures which students should follow in pursuing grievances regarding their academic experience.
2. In the case of students enrolled in a UOW program delivered at an offshore partner institution, the policy applies with the modifications set out in Schedule 3.
3. This policy does not cover any grievances by Higher Degree Research (HDR) students relating to their HDR candidature, their HDR supervision or the examination of HDR theses. The policies covering such grievances include Academic Grievance Policy (Higher Degree Research (HDR) Students, Code of Practice – Supervision, and Appeals against Higher Degree Research (HDR) Thesis Examination Outcomes Policy.

4 Policy Principles

1. The following general principles underpin the UOW approach to the resolution of academic grievances:
 - a. UOW is committed to the early and informal resolution of grievances. Students should therefore attempt to resolve any grievances in an informal way with the person involved before initiating formal grievance resolution processes.
 - b. Parties involved in a grievance must participate in the grievance resolution process in good faith.
 - c. Grievance resolution processes should be applied fairly, flexibly and expeditiously.
 - d. All parties involved in a grievance should be treated with respect and impartiality.
 - e. The principles of natural justice should be observed. To this end the parties involved in a grievance have a right to a fair hearing and to have a decision made by an unbiased decision-maker.
 - f. The confidentiality of parties involved in a grievance should be respected at all times, subject to the need to fully investigate the matter and any legal requirements for disclosure.
2. Examples of the types of complaints that may be covered by academic grievance include:
 - a. failure to assess work in accordance with specified criteria
 - b. bias by marker
 - c. technical marking or collating error
 - d. failure to manage requests for special consideration in accordance with the Special Consideration Policy
 - e. failure of a research project supervisor to fulfil their responsibilities as defined in the Code of Practice – Honours
 - f. failure to adhere to the requirements of the General Course Rules, including the rules governing the award of grades of performance, granting of awards "with Distinction", minimum rate of progress, advanced standing, amendments to academic records
 - g. failure to adhere to the requirements of the Award Rules
 - h. failure to adhere to mandatory requirements of a relevant Code of Practice (e.g. Teaching and Assessment, Honours, Practical Placements), including assessment or examination requirements
 - i. failure to adhere to Faculty assessment or examination requirements, or
 - j. failure to follow due process in handling student requests or complaints.

5 Stages of Resolving Academic Grievances

1. The five stages in the UOW academic grievance resolution process include:
 - a. Stage 1: Informal approach to person directly involved
 - b. Stage 2: Formal grievance resolution by Faculty
 - c. Stage 3: Referral to Dean of Students

- d. Stage 4: Appeal to Academic Review Committee
 - e. Stage 5: Appeal to Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters)
2. Students are encouraged to seek to resolve any issues or concerns informally under [Stage 1](#) before initiating formal grievance resolution procedures under [Stage 2](#).
 3. At each step in the grievance process the person to whom the matter has been referred:
 - a. may exercise their discretion to extend the specific time limit for application or referral; and
 - b. must respond to the student as soon as practicable.
 4. At all stages of resolving academic grievance, students may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meeting.

6 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. A student who has a question or concern about a decision, act or omission that affects their academic experience, should first approach the person(s) directly involved to discuss the matter. They may then seek advice informally from other appropriate persons in the Faculty (e.g. Subject or Program Coordinator). For example:
 - a. A student who wishes to obtain an explanation of a mark for assessable work should approach the marker as soon as possible after the distribution of the mark. If the matter remains unresolved, they may informally approach the Subject Coordinator to discuss the matter further.
 - b. A student who has a concern about a mark awarded by a marker external to the Faculty should discuss that concern with the Subject or Honours Coordinator (as appropriate).
 - c. An Honours student who has an issue or concern about their supervision should first discuss the matter with the supervisor. If the matter remains unresolved the student may then informally approach the Honours Coordinator.
 - d. A student who is unhappy with a decision regarding an application for special consideration should first approach the Subject Coordinator.

7 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution by Faculty

Developing and communicating Faculty procedures

1. Each Faculty must develop written procedures for resolving grievances covered by this policy, which:
 - a. comply with the procedural requirements in sections 7.5 to 7.11, and
 - b. stipulate processes for receipt and acknowledgement of applications.
2. The Faculty grievance procedures, and the names and contact details of relevant staff, must be clearly communicated to students. (A sample flowchart that could be adapted and used for this purpose is attached as [Schedule 1](#).)

Application of Faculty procedures

3. Where an issue or concern is not resolved informally under [Stage 1](#), a student may lodge a written application with the relevant Faculty for the grievance to be formally resolved in accordance with that Faculty's grievance procedures.

4. A student who has an issue or concern about a mark awarded for an assessment task or a final mark or grade may only lodge a formal grievance application under section 7.3 on one or more of the following grounds:
 - a. failure to adhere to University or Faculty assessment or examination requirements
 - b. failure to assess work in accordance with specified criteria
 - c. bias by marker; or
 - d. technical marking or collating error.

Procedural requirements

5. Students may lodge a formal grievance application, in writing, to a person (or committee) specified by the Faculty (e.g. Head of School, Program Administrator, Sub Dean, Associate Dean, Dean).
6. The application must:
 - a. be lodged by the student within ten (10) working days of the decision, act or omission giving rise to the grievance or, where the grievance relates to a mark received for an assessment task or a final result or grade awarded for a subject, within ten (10) working days of the distribution of the mark or release of the final grade
 - b. include the student's name, identification number and contact details, and
 - c. state the nature of the grievance, specific issues to be addressed and the form of resolution sought.
7. Faculties may allow a student who is not satisfied with a decision made by the person (or committee) specified under section 7.5 above to refer their grievance, in writing, to a second person (or committee) specified by the Faculty within ten (10) working days of receiving a response from the first specified person (or committee).
8. If a person specified in sections 7.5 to 7.7 has been involved in the grievance process at an earlier stage, there is a conflict of interest and the matter will be referred directly to the next designated person in the grievance resolution process.
9. The last person in the Faculty to deal with a formal grievance under the Faculty procedures must inform the student in writing of the right to refer the matter to the Dean of Students.
10. The student's grievance and the response of each of the people to whom the grievance has been referred must be clearly documented. (A sample form that can be used by Faculties to document the progress of a grievance is attached as [Schedule 2](#)).
11. Faculties must keep a copy of all documentation relating to the grievance in accordance with the UOW Records Management Policy.

8 Stage 3 – Dean of Students

Referral to Dean of Students

1. Where a matter remains unresolved after a student has followed the grievance resolution process of the relevant Faculty, the student may refer the matter, in writing, to the Dean of Students within ten (10) working days of receiving a response from the last person involved at [Stage 2](#) of the process.
2. The Faculty must, upon request, provide the Dean of Students with a copy of all documentation regarding the grievance.

Possible outcomes

3. After examining the relevant documentation and speaking to the student and other relevant parties where appropriate, the Dean of Students may:
 - a. refuse to take the matter further if there are insufficient grounds for the grievance
 - b. conciliate the matter in accordance with sections 8.4 and 8.5, or
 - c. decide whether there has been a failure by the Faculty to observe due process and take appropriate action in accordance with sections 8.6 and 8.7.

Conciliation

4. The Dean of Students may clarify the issues with the student and suggest possible directions for resolution of the grievance.
5. The Dean of Students may, with the student's consent:
 - a. refer the student to another person, or student representative body, who can provide relevant advice or assistance with the aim of resolving the grievance; and/or
 - b. facilitate negotiation of the grievance between the parties.

Decision regarding due process

6. Where the Dean of Students decides that due process has not been followed by the Faculty, he/she may:
 - a. conciliate the matter in accordance with sections 8.4 and 8.5;
 - b. refer the matter, in writing, back to the Faculty for reconsideration of the matter in accordance with due process, or
 - c. make a decision to resolve the matter.
7. Where the Dean of Students makes a decision under section 8.6(c) he/she must notify the relevant Dean and the last person in the Faculty to deal with the grievance, in writing, of that decision as soon as practicable.

Student to be notified

8. The Dean of Students must notify the student, in writing, of his/her decision regarding the matter and of the student's right to appeal to the Academic Review Committee if they believe that there are grounds for appeal as specified in section 9.1.

9 Stage 4 – Appeal to Academic Review Committee

Lodging an appeal

1. A student who has exhausted all of the grievance resolution processes in Stages 2 and 3 may appeal to the Academic Review Committee on the ground that:
 - a. due process has not been adhered to at either of these stages, or
 - b. relevant new or additional information is now available.
2. An appeal under section 9.1 must:
 - a. be lodged, in writing, with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) within ten (10) working days of receiving written notification of the decision of the Dean of Students

- b. state fully the reasons for the appeal; and
- c. include any relevant documentary evidence to support the appeal.

Referral of matter

3. Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) is satisfied that the appeal is based on the ground of lack of due process, he/she will refer the matter to the Chair of the Academic Review Committee.
4. Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) is satisfied that the student has presented relevant new or additional information that was not available to the Faculty or Dean of Students under Stages 2 or 3, he/she will refer the matter back to the Faculty or Dean of Students (as appropriate) for reconsideration.
5. Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) is not satisfied that the appeal is based on the ground of lack of due process or that relevant new or additional information has been presented by the student, he/she will refuse to refer the matter to the Chair of the Academic Review Committee. The student must be notified, in writing, of such a decision as soon as practicable.

Academic Review Committee procedures

6. The membership of the [Academic Review Committee](#) is set out in its terms of reference. In its review of a case the Committee shall:
 - a. give the student concerned an opportunity to be heard and advise him/her of Committee procedures and time requirements
 - b. invite any staff member or student, whom it considers may assist the review, to attend the meeting and advise such persons of Committee procedures and time requirements
 - c. provide both the student and the Dean of the Faculty or the Dean of Students (as appropriate) with copies of all papers circulated to the Committee
 - d. permit the student to nominate staff or students to be invited to appear in support of his/her case
 - e. allow the student to be accompanied by a person who may lend support but who shall not be permitted to address the Committee, and
 - f. hold all its proceedings in camera and keep an adequate record of the evidence and its decision.

Outcome of appeal

7. Where the Committee decides that due process has not been adhered to it may:
 - a. refer the matter back to the Faculty or Dean of Students (as appropriate) for reconsideration of the matter in accordance with due process, or
 - b. in exceptional circumstances, set up an independent process of review.
8. Where the matter is referred back to the Faculty or Dean of Students, the Faculty or Dean of Students must report back to the Chair of the Committee within a designated time limit.
9. The Committee must notify the student, the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Students of the outcome of the appeal within ten (10) working days of the meeting. Where the appeal was unsuccessful, the student must also be informed of their right to apply to the Vice-Principal (Administration) to appeal to the Council Committee of Appeal.

10 Stage 5 – Appeal to Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters)

Lodging and referral of appeal

1. A student who claims lack of due process in the proceedings of the Academic Review Committee may lodge an appeal, in writing, to the Vice-Principal (Administration) within ten (10) working days of notification of the Committee's decision.
2. If the Vice-Principal (Administration) is satisfied that the appeal is based on grounds of lack of due process, he/she shall refer it to the Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters).

Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters)

3. The membership and powers of the [Council Committee of Appeal \(Student Matters\)](#) are set out in its terms of reference.

External Appeals

4. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome or conduct of an appeal within the University may appeal to an external agency. Students have the right to make a complaint to the NSW Ombudsman when there is evidence of maladministration or misconduct by the University of Wollongong.

11 Roles & Responsibilities

1. All persons involved in investigations of academic grievance have a responsibility to conduct themselves in accordance with this Policy and its procedures.
2. The University has a responsibility to:
 - a. ensure that this Policy and its procedures are accessible and communicated to all staff and students
 - b. ensure that this Policy and its procedures are implemented and applied consistently across all faculties and academic units
 - c. promote best practice in resolving academic grievance, and
 - d. ensure that the process for resolving academic grievances allows for:
 - i. timeliness of response;
 - ii. fairness of consideration
 - iii. respect for privacy; and
 - iv. keeping all parties informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to academic grievances.
3. Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in accordance with the Code of Practice - Students and follow the requirements of this Policy and other policies.
4. Faculties have a responsibility to develop written procedures for resolving grievances covered by this Policy which:
 - a. comply with the procedural requirements in sections 7.5 to 7.11 and
 - b. stipulate processes for receipt and acknowledgement of applications

12 Version Control and Change History

Version	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
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Control			
1	1 January 2004	Academic Senate	New Policy
2.	10 November 2004	Academic Senate	Amendments to Policy and change of name from Student Academic Grievance Policy to Academic Grievance Policy (Coursework and Honours Students),
3	15 April 2005	University Council	Modified Policy to make it applicable to offshore partner institutions
4	6 July 2007	University Council	Modified Policy to comply with National Code 2007
5	17 August 2007	University Council	Minor Amendment to wording of Section 11.1 re External Appeals
6	5 February 2009	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Migrated to UOW Procedure Template as per Policy Directory Refresh

Schedule 1 - Sample Faculty academic grievance resolution flowchart

Who to approach with a problem or concern concerning your academic experience

1. A student who has a question or concern about a decision, act or omission of a member of a member of staff of the Faculty of [name] that affects their academic experience should follow the steps set out below. You should take careful note of the deadlines for following up your grievance at each step.

Stage 1 – Informal discussion with person(s) directly involved

2. You should first approach the person(s) directly involved as soon as possible to discuss any question or concern. For example, you might approach your:
 - a. marker for an explanation of a mark awarded for an assessment task;
 - b. Subject Coordinator or Honours Coordinator (as appropriate) to discuss a mark awarded by an external marker, or a final mark or grade;
 - c. Honours supervisor where there is an issue or concern about supervision;
 - d. Subject Coordinator where you are unhappy about their decision regarding a special consideration application.

You might then seek advice informally from other appropriate persons in the Faculty (e.g. Subject or Program Coordinator).

Stage 2 – Formal grievance resolution by Faculty

3. Where an issue or concern is not resolved informally by directly approaching appropriate Faculty staff under Stage 1, you may take the following steps to have the matter formally resolved by the Faculty. Step 1 You may refer matter, in writing [or specify relevant application form], to [name of first person designated in Faculty procedures and contact details]. Your application must:
 - a. include your name, identification number and contact details;
 - b. set out the nature of your grievance, any specific issues involved and the form of resolution that you are seeking;
 - c. be lodged with [name of relevant staff member] within ten (10) working days of the decision, act or omission about which you are complaining or of receiving your mark for an assessment task or a final result or grade awarded for a subject.

If unresolved, you may refer the matter, in writing, to [name of second person designated in Faculty procedures and contact details] within ten (10) working days of receiving a response from [name of first person as specified in Step 2].

4. Note: If a person specified in one of these steps is involved in the grievance, the matter will be referred directly to the next specified person.

Stage 3 – Referral to Dean of Students

5. If the matter is not resolved by the Faculty under Stage 2, you may refer the matter, in writing to the Dean of Students for consideration within ten (10) working days of receiving your final response from the Faculty. The Dean of Students may:
 - a. refuse to take the matter further if there are insufficient grounds for the grievance;

- b. conciliate the matter; or
 - c. decide whether the Faculty has failed to observe “due process” in dealing with the grievance.
- 6. “Due process” means your procedural rights under this or other policies, your right to be given a fair hearing and your right to have your case decided by someone who is not biased.
- 7. Where the Dean of Students decides that the Faculty has not followed due process, she may decide to refer the matter back to the Faculty for reconsideration of the matter or make a decision regarding the matter.

Stage 4 – Appeal to Academic Grievance Committee

- 8. After you have gone through the processes explained above, you may appeal to the Academic Review Committee if you believe that there has been a failure to follow due process in Stages 2 or 3, or relevant new or additional information is available to you.
- 9. You must lodge your appeal in writing with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) within ten (10) working days of receiving written notification of the decision of the Dean of Students. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will either:
 - a. refer the matter to the Academic Review Committee where the appeal is based on lack of due process;
 - b. refer the matter back to the Faculty or Dean of Students where the appeal is based on relevant new or additional information;
 - c. or refuse to take the matter further where the appeal is not based on lack of due process.
- 10. Where the Academic Grievance Committee hears the matter and decides that the Faculty or Dean of Students has not followed due process, it will generally refer the matter back to the Faculty or Dean of Students for reconsideration. The Committee will not reconsider the matter itself.

Stage 5 – Appeal to Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters)

- 11. Where you believe that there has been lack of due process in the proceedings of the Academic Review Committee, you can apply, in writing, to the Vice-Principal (Administration) to refer the matter to the Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters). The application must be lodged within ten (10) working days of being notified of the decision of the Academic Review Committee.
- 12. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal within the University, may appeal to the NSW Ombudsman or other external agencies.

Schedule 2 - Appeal against Decision or Action affecting Academic Experience

- 1. If you have a grievance concerning a decision or action of a member of the academic staff of this Faculty that you believe has affected your academic experience and that you are unable to resolve informally, you may lodge a formal grievance with the Faculty by:
 - a. completing the front page of the Schedule 2 form; and
 - b. submitting the form to the Faculty of [name] Administration Office [room number] where it will be date stamped and delivered to the relevant person.
- 2. Do not complete this document if you are seeking student academic consideration.

3. There are potentially two steps of the grievance process. If you are not satisfied with the response of one person in the process, you may submit this form to the Administration Office for consideration by the next person.
4. Important Note: You must lodge your formal grievance within ten (10) working days of the decision, act or omission about which you are complaining. After you receive a response from [first person in process] you have ten (10) working days to refer the matter to [second person in process] if you wish to take the matter further.
5. Retain a copy of the document for your records
6. Reasons for appeal should include
 - a. details of the grievance, any issues that you would like addressed and the outcome that you are seeking.
 - b. any supporting documents, including the original of the marked assessment (where applicable).
7. If you are not satisfied with the response of the [title of last person in the process], you may refer the matter, in writing, to the Dean of Students within ten (10) working days of receiving the [title]'s response.
8. The Schedule 2 form is available [here](#)

Schedule 3 - Application of Policy to offshore campuses

Definition of “offshore partner institution”

1. Offshore partner institution - an overseas institution (other than the University of Wollongong Dubai - UOWD) with which UOW has an agreement for the delivery of UOW courses at or in conjunction with that institution.

Application

2. Where a student is enrolled in a UOW program delivered offshore at a partner institution, the Academic Grievance Policy (Coursework and Honours Students) (“this Policy”) applies with the modifications to Stages 4 and 5 of the procedures as set out in sections 5 to 10 of this Schedule.
3. Where a student is enrolled in a WUC program delivered offshore, this Policy applies with the modifications to procedures as set out in section 9 and 10 of this Schedule.
4. Academic grievances by students enrolled in programs delivered at UOWD are dealt with in accordance with the UOWD Student Academic Grievance Policy.

Academic Review Committee

5. The Academic Review Committee will comprise:
 - a. Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Chair of Academic Senate or nominee as Chair;
 - b. senior member of staff of UOW appointed by the Chair; and
 - c. student appointed by the Vice-Chancellor.

Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters)

6. Council will determine the size and membership of the Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters) in each individual case.

Procedural Matters

7. An appeal by a student to the Academic Review Committee or Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters) must be lodged in accordance with section 9 or 10 respectively with either:
 - a. the Academic Registrar (or equivalent) of the offshore partner institution;
 - b. the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International), for appeals to the Academic Review Committee; or
 - c. the Vice-Principal (Administration), for appeals to the Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters).
8. An appeal lodged with the Academic Registrar (or equivalent) of the offshore partner institution must be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) or Vice-Principal (Administration) as appropriate.
9. The time limit for a student to:
 - a. lodge a formal grievance application under section 7.6(a)
 - b. refer a matter to the Dean of Students under section 8.1; or
 - c. lodge an appeal to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) under section 9.2,is twenty 20 working days.
10. An appeal meeting (at Stages 4 to 5) may be conducted by tele- or video-conference. In such a case, a member of staff of UOW, WUC or the offshore partner institution may be present to assist the student at the offshore partner institution. This does not preclude the right of the student to nominate their own support person in accordance with section 9.6(e) of this Policy.