

# Guide to Complaints Resolution

This document is to support students with the Complaint Process at Macquarie University. It should be read in conjunction with the [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) / [Procedure](#).

If you are dissatisfied with the performance of a University activity or the behaviour or actions of a University staff member, you may seek a resolution through the Complaints Resolution Policy.

## COMPLAINT OR FEEDBACK?

The first step is to consider whether you are seeking to resolve your matter as a complaint, or whether you would like to provide feedback to the university about an experience.

A complaint process is most suitable if you have a situation that needs a specific resolution. This allows you to engage with the University directly, and resolve your complaint personally. See below for more information about the Complaint Resolution Process.

Feedback is most suitable if you don't have a specific outcome in mind, but want the University to be aware of your experience and review how they handle particular matters in the future. Feedback is also great if you want to remain anonymous, as you generally would not need to be contacted or engage further after submission. If you would like to provide feedback, you can do this through the [Complaints and Misconduct portal](#) > select "feedback" from the menu.

## COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

The Complaint Resolution process has four levels of escalation:

- Level 1. Informal resolution
- Level 2. Formal Resolution
- Level 3. Internal Review
- Level 4. External Review

Where possible you should commence your complaint at Level 1 Informal resolution. These cases are treated seriously by the university, and if unable to be resolved, can be escalated.

## PREPARING YOUR COMPLAINT

There are no strict rules for writing a complaint, however, below you will find a rough guide for content and structure to help you to draft for your complaint letter or email.

- Briefly describe your complaint.
- Have you taken any action to resolve your complaint?
- Describe your complaint in more detail (who, what, when, where).
- Provide the nature of and basis for the complaint and identify any supporting material (to be attached)
- What impact has this matter had on you?
- What kinds of wellbeing/welfare or other relevant support (if any) have you sought in relation to this?
- Is there any other information you would like to include?
- What outcome/s are you seeking?

If you would like feedback on a draft complaint, complete the [Student CARE MQ Referral form](#) select "Advocacy support" as the reason for referral.

## TIPS FOR YOUR COMPLAINT

In our experience, complaints are most often resolved successfully when the complaint:

- Includes all relevant information and is concise. Make it clear what exactly happened, and what you are seeking as a resolution, and try to keep your letter as short and simple as possible.
- Is supported with evidence. Providing documentation (e.g. email correspondence, screenshots) will strengthen your case.
- Is focused on facts. Complaints can be a difficult, and quite emotional, however that emotion can impact upon how well a complaint is received. Once you have written your complaint letter, consider putting it aside, clearing your head then re-reading the letter to make sure that emotion is not clouding the facts of the case.
- Is reasonable. Is the outcome you are seeking proportionate and reasonable to the situation that occurred?
- Is flexible. It is not always possible for the University to provide the outcome you are seeking. If you are willing to be flexible in the resolution process, you are more likely to resolve the matter satisfactorily.

## SUBMISSION OF YOUR COMPLAINT

### How to submit

An informal complaint should be submitted to the person who is most able to affect change. Generally, this is a staff member who is involved in the area of concern, or their immediate supervisor/manager. If you are unsure who to submit your informal complaint to, please complete the [Student CARE MQ Referral form](#).

There are times when you may feel uncomfortable about approaching a member of staff, for example, if the complaint is serious or involves that person. In such situation you may like to consider speaking with Student Advocacy, or directly escalating your complaint to a formal complaint via the [Complaints and Misconduct portal](#).

### Deadlines

The earlier you raise your concerns the more likely the university is able to take action and reach a resolution. Therefore, you should submit your complaint without delay.

If your case is escalated to a Formal Resolution, you must submit within **12 months** of the issue arising.

## SUPPORT AVAILABLE

### Feedback and support with your complaint

If you would like support through the complaints process or feedback on your complaint, complete the [Student CARE MQ Referral form](#) select "Advocacy support" as the reason for referral. If appropriate, attach your draft complaint (with evidence) to your submission as a word document.

### Health and Wellbeing Support

Engaging in a complaints process can be emotionally strenuous. It is important to acknowledge this, exercise self-care strategies, and to seek support if you need it. If you need support with your overall mental health and wellbeing during this time you may like to get in touch with the [Counselling Services](#).

### Smart Complaining Resource

The New South Wales Ombudsman Service provides a [Fact Sheet about Smart Complaining](#) to help you understand the best way to engage in any complaints process.



*This guide was prepared for you by the  
Student Advocacy & Support Service.*

*The information is correct as of April 2022*



**MACQUARIE**  
University