
Academic Grievances Policy

Academic Policy Group

1 Purpose

The University seeks to provide a learning environment designed to help students achieve their fullest academic potential. To that end, it is important that procedures exist to ensure decisions affecting student learning and progress are fair. This policy sets out the means by which a student may seek to resolve an academic grievance they may have with the University.

2 Organisational Scope

This is a University-wide policy.

3 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Student:	Any person enrolled in a personal course of study at the University within three years from the date on which the academic grievance is submitted, or a person who is currently studying at the University under an exchange agreement with another institution.
Respondent	Member of University staff responsible for taking the action which has resulted in the grievance.

4 Policy Content and Guidelines

4.1 Academic Disadvantage

Academic disadvantage means an unexpected or atypical matter adversely affecting the academic performance of, or requirements for, a student including but not limited to:

- An amendment to regulations or statutes involving a change in a course of study or in examination requirements that has caused a student undue hardship.
- A situation in which official advice has been given and acted upon, as a result of which a student's personal course of study is not in accordance with the regulations and statutes and undue hardship would be caused if the student were compelled to comply with the full requirements of the regulations and statutes.
- Exceptional unforeseeable circumstances, including circumstances arising from decisions taken under University regulations and statutes, with consequential academic disadvantage to the student.

Note: Reconsideration of examination scripts or items of assessment are dealt with under the [Assessment Statute](#).

4.2 Resolving Academic Grievances Informally

- (a) It is the University's expectation that informal procedures will be used in the first instance other than as stipulated in clause 4.3.1 (a).
- (b) The University has a well-developed academic grievance procedure to assist students who feel aggrieved on academic grounds. In general students should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned, or if they are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Course Co-ordinator, Head of the School or the relevant Associate Dean in their Faculty.
- (c) Students who, for whatever reason, prefer not to talk directly with the lecturer, or feel the problem is not being solved, can contact other people to discuss the problem. These include VUWSA class and faculty representatives, the VUWSA Student Advocate, relevant staff in Student Services, and the University's Academic Policy Advisers.

4.3 Resolving Academic Grievances Formally

4.3.1 The Procedures

- (a) Where a student considers that academic disadvantage has occurred with respect to a statute, and provision for an appeal exists in that statute, a student must use that provision.
- (b) Where no other appeal provision exists, and where informal methods of resolution have not resolved the grievance, the student shall have the right to bring their grievance to the Academic Board Grievance Committee.
- (c) The Convener of the Academic Board Grievance Committee is the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or his/her nominee. The Committee shall comprise the Convener, another academic staff member of the Board and a student member of the Board, or of a Committee of the Board.
- (d) The Committee shall follow a procedure which is appropriate to the subject matter of the grievance, which protects the rights of the student and any affected staff member or other student, and which ensures so far as possible that the Committee is fully informed about matters relevant to the grievance.
- (e) Where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Committee that academic disadvantage has occurred, the Committee may give such direction or make such provision as is thought fit.
- (f) Where appropriate the Committee shall give consideration to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, particularly to the principle of Redress, and ensure that procedures are implemented in a culturally appropriate way.

4.3.2 Rights of the Complainant

- (a) The student shall have the right to make submissions in writing and to appear in person before the persons making decisions on the grievance, accompanied by a supporter or supporters if so desired.
- (b) The student shall have the right to information about progress and the decisions of any academic grievances without undue delay.
- (c) The student shall have the right to translation services provided at the University's expense if these are necessary to ensure adequate comprehension of the language.

Note: The student, upon lodging a grievance, should be informed of the support mechanisms available to him/her, including the availability of the VUWSA Student Advocate.

4.4 Appeals of Formal Academic Grievance Resolutions

4.4.1 Process

- (a) The complainant or the respondent may appeal to the Grievance Appeal Committee against the decision of the Academic Board Grievance Committee in accordance with this clause 4.4.
- (b) The Convener of the Grievance Appeal Committee is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The Committee shall comprise the Convener and a member of Council, who is not a student or University staff member.
- (c) The Convener of the Grievance Appeal Committee must be advised in writing of the appeal within four weeks from the date of the decision of the Committee, provided that the period may be extended by the Convener if he or she is satisfied that there are good and exceptional reasons why the notice was not given within that period.
- (d) In determining an appeal, the Grievance Appeal Committee may at its discretion rehear any or all of the evidence before the Academic Board Grievance Committee, and may receive any further evidence orally or in writing that is relevant.
- (e) The student and the respondent are entitled to make submissions in writing and appear in person (or through counsel) before the Grievance Appeal Committee, accompanied by a representative or support person if so desired.
- (f) The Grievance Appeal Committee must not allow an appeal unless satisfied that the decision of the Academic Board Grievance Committee:
 - (i) was unsound because of some material defect in the procedures followed by the Academic Board Grievance Committee; or
 - (ii) was wrong on the basis of the information before the Academic Board Grievance Committee; or
 - (iii) has been shown to be plainly wrong in the light of additional information which, for good reasons, the party appealing was unable to have considered by the Academic Board Grievance Committee.
- (g) The decision of the Grievance Appeal Committee on an appeal will be final and binding.

Note: section 4.4.1(g) does not prevent a student pursuing the matter through an external agency such as the Office of Ombudsmen.

5 Legislative Compliance

Though the University is required to manage its policy documentation within a legislative framework; there is no specific legislation directing this policy.

6 References

[Assessment Statute](#)

[Personal Courses of Study Statute \(Victoria University of Wellington Calendar, Section C\)](#)

Previous Version: [archived_AcademicGrievancePolicy_20070430.pdf](#)

7 Appendices

None

8 Approval Agency

Academic Board

9 Approval Dates

This policy was originally approved (as a Statute) on: 22 December 2001

This version was approved on: 19 April 2007

This version takes effect from: 1 May 2007

This policy will be reviewed by: 01 May 2010

10 Policy Sponsor

Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic)

11 Contact Person

The following person may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this policy:

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