

Policy Title: Public Complaints Policy

Policy Owner: Director, Strategic and Governance Services Centre

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- [Intent](#)
- [Organisational Scope](#)
- [Definitions](#)
- [Policy Content](#)
- [Related Documents](#)
- [Contact Information](#)
- [Approval History](#)

1. INTENT

This policy outlines the principles, roles and responsibilities that govern the University’s handling of complaints from members of the public.

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints about ECU staff, Council Members, Contractors and ECU controlled entities.

3. DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Complainant	A person or a representative of an organisation making a complaint.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the University where a response is explicitly or implicitly expected.
SGS	The Strategic and Governance Services Centre.
Manager – Legal and Integrity (Manager L&I)	The person appointed from time to time by the Director, SGS to coordinate the investigation of formal public complaints and to implement this policy.
Public Complaint	A Complaint received from a member of the public.
Formal Complaint	A Public Complaint that has not been resolved at the informal level and which is lodged in the prescribed manner with the Manager L&I.

TERM	DEFINITION
Informal Complaint	A Public Complaint made to a member of staff through the course of the day-to-day operations of the University, received through feedback channels, face-to-face communication, or by email or telephone (commonly resolved at the first point of contact).

4. POLICY CONTENT

4.1 Policy Statement

This policy sets out the processes and procedures the University will follow upon receipt of a Complaint from a member of the public which relates to the conduct of University staff, Council members and ECU contractors whilst performing their University duties, or which relates to other conduct which could seriously impact that person or party's ability to perform their University duties.

4.2 Principles

ECU's management of Public Complaints will be guided by the following:

- 4.2.1 Informal Resolution – Wherever possible the University will endeavour to resolve issues locally at the lowest possible operational level and as quickly as possible.
- 4.2.2 Accessibility - Information on how and where to complain should be readily available to members of the public and the process of making a Complaint should be free of charge, flexible and easy to understand.
- 4.2.3 Responsiveness - Complaints should be acknowledged and acted on promptly and parties to a Complaint should be kept informed about the progress of follow up action relating to the complaint.
- 4.2.4 Procedural Fairness - principles of procedural fairness will be observed appropriate to the circumstances, allowing for:
 - the parties to a Complaint a reasonable opportunity to explain their position in relation to the dispute;
 - objective assessment of the information provided by both parties by a person or persons other than the original decision-maker (formal complaints); and
 - the provision of reasons for any decisions made, or conclusions reached, sufficient to enable a party to decide if they wish to further challenge a decision or conclusion.

- 4.2.5 Confidentiality - Principles of confidentiality will be observed in the course of the handling of a Complaint and associated record keeping will be maintained.

4.3 Complaint Management and Responsibilities

4.3.1 Informal Complaints

- a) Wherever possible the University aims to resolve Complaints at the earliest opportunity and at the most local level thereby reducing the potential for costs, delay or anxiety for all parties.
- b) ECU staff should respond to Informal Complaints as quickly as possible, with Complainants given advice as to when they should expect a response.
- c) Staff should always endeavour to, within reason and the limits of their responsibility, resolve the basis for the Complaint. If that is not possible, staff should provide the Complainant with a pathway to enable the Complainant to progress their Complaint formally.

4.3.2 Formal Complaints

- a) Where a Public Complaint is not able to be resolved through the Informal Complaints process, complainants may lodge a Formal Complaint with the Manager L&I.
- b) Formal Complaints should be lodged in writing using the ECU Complaints portal.
- c) The Manager L&I will be responsible for the administration of Formal Complaints lodged under this policy.
- d) The Manager L&I will register Formal Complaints in the SGS Central Complaints database.
- e) Formal Complaints will be acknowledged by the Manager L&I as soon as practicable, but no later than three business days after the lodgement of a Complaint.
- f) The Manager L&I may initiate an investigation into the Public Complaint or cause an investigation into the Public Complaint to be initiated by the relevant business unit and/or refer the matter to another agency for their investigation where it is deemed appropriate to do so.
- g) The Manager L&I will issue an official response to the Complainant at the conclusion of an investigation. The response issued to a Complainant will provide reasons for any decision made in relation to the Complaint.

- h) Recommendations for improvement that have been agreed to by the investigator and relevant area head responsible for implementing the recommendations, as a result of an investigation into a Complaint, will be entered into the ECU Recommendations Tracking System (ECURTS). All recommendations will be followed up in ECURTS to ensure that the associated actions have been implemented.

4.3.3 Anonymous Complaints

- a) In general the University will not respond to anonymous Public Complaints unless they involve allegations of a serious nature, such as fraud, corruption and other criminal behaviour.
- b) The Manager L&I may initiate an investigation into a Public Complaint or cause an investigation into a Public Complaint to be initiated by the relevant business unit where it is deemed appropriate to do so.

4.3.4 Withdrawal of a Public Complaint

- a) A member of the public may withdraw their Complaint at any stage of the formal or informal process.
- b) If the formal process is underway, any withdrawal request must be in writing.
- c) Notwithstanding the withdrawal of a Public Complaint, the University reserves the right to continue any investigation into the Complaint it has initiated or refer the matter to another agency for investigation.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

5.1 Other documents which are relevant to the operation of this policy are as follows:

- Australian Standard AS3806 – 2006 Compliance Programs
- ECU Code of Conduct ([ECU Code of Conduct](#))
- Fraud and Misconduct Prevention and Management Policy ([Fraud and Misconduct Prevention and Management Policy](#))
- Grievance Resolution Policy – ([Grievance Resolution Policy](#))
- Prevention of Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy ([Prevention of Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy](#))
- Public Interest Disclosure Procedures ([Public Interest Disclosure Procedures](#))
- Student Complaints Policy ([Student Complaints Policy](#))
- University Rules and Statutes ([ECU Rules & Statutes](#))
- Western Australian Freedom of Information Act 1992 – Edith Cowan University Information Statement ([WA Freedom of Information Act - ECU Information Statement](#))

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

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7. APPROVAL HISTORY

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