

STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Approved by NUS Council on 30 September, 2016 according to the NUS Act 2006, 25 (1) and (2)

1 Purpose

The National University of Samoa is committed to providing a positive learning environment and will ensure that procedures enable student complaints to be dealt with seriously and promptly.

These procedures will encourage good practice by both students and staff and ensure there is consistency across the faculties.

2 Complaints or Grievances

- (a) Grievances include but are not limited to:
 - (i) An error
 - (ii) An unfair assessment of coursework
 - (iii) Unfair treatment
 - (iv) An allegation of unfair treatment by a staff member
 - (v) A penalty that was inappropriate or too harsh
 - (vi) Failure of a staff member to adhere to policies and procedures including availability for consultation
 - (vii) Decisions by a staff member affecting individuals or groups of students
 - (viii) Unreasonable delay in assessment of coursework
 - (ix) Inadequate teaching or course materials
 - (x) Decisions of administrative staff affecting a student or group of students
 - (xi) Standard of service received through the University administration
 - (xii) An allegation of inadequate advice or responses to draft of a thesis
 - (xiii) Disagreement about satisfactory progress of research and/or thesis writing.
- (b) Grievances do not include:
 - (i) Admission to NUS – any query should be directed to the Manager, Student Administration and/or the dean of the relevant faculty.
 - (ii) Discipline/behaviour/harassment/bullying – see Statute on Student Conduct in the Calendar.
 - (iii) Fees – any query should be directed initially to the Director, Financial Services and for further elaboration, the Deputy ViceChancellor (Corporate Services)
 - (iv) Recognition of Prior Learning/ Competency – refer to relevant dean.

3 Staff/University Responsibilities: Student Expectations

By their contractual and professional obligations University staff are expected to:

- (a) Prepare for lectures, classes, tutorials, laboratories or workshops

- (b) Construct assessment items which reflect the learning objectives and outcomes
- (c) Marking will be timely, fair and consistent, and provide constructive comment
- (d) Select appropriate pedagogical methods that help students achieve the learning outcomes
- (e) Encourage student participation in the course
- (f) Speak in an understandable and appropriate manner
- (g) Provide a positive and encouraging, nonthreatening environment that promotes student query and discussion
- (h) Treat sensitive issues or topics factually and impartially
- (i) Provide a learning environment safe from danger and harassment
- (j) Provide information to students about each course no later than the second week of the semester on
 - (i) Course objectives
 - (ii) Workload expectations
 - (iii) Assessment including length required (words) and percentage of total mark for each item. (Any assessment changes must be notified to the students in writing.)
 - (iv) Submission dates
 - (v) Information on any coursework presentation – essays (sources citing method), format, late penalties
 - (vi) Statement on plagiarism and cheating and consequences.
 - (vii) Reading requirements (if appropriate), attendance requirements and involvement.
 - (viii) Consultation hours
 - (ix) Contact details – office location and telephone and/or email address.
- (k) As supervisors of theses, follow the guidelines as stipulated in the Requirements for Higher Degrees Manual.
- (l) Will respect the right of a student to express views and opinions.

4 Student Responsibilities: University/Staff Expectations

Students are expected to:

- (a) Be familiar with the rules and regulations governing the programme of study in which they are enrolled and to ensure that the courses chosen meet the programme requirements for graduation. If necessary seek advice from a Faculty Academic Adviser.
- (b) Be familiar with the regulations for admission and enrolment, course change, assessment and examinations (including cheating and plagiarism), recognition of prior learning, student conduct, and ICT use. (These are in the Calendar)

- (c) Be familiar with each course requirements, attend class as required, participate actively and positively in their learning, be responsible for their course planning and study, submit coursework on time.
- (d) To seek advice from the course's staff and/or the Student Support Services for academic or personal problems.
- (e) Act in a manner that does not interfere with a staff member's responsibilities or a student's learning.
- (f) As a research student, follow the relevant statutes and guidelines as stipulated in the Requirements for Higher Degrees Manual.
- (g) Respect the right of staff to express views and opinions.

5 Timing of Complaints or Grievances

A student (or several students) must raise complaints or grievances within one week after the event, decision or action. NUS may not be able to investigate a complaint if more than six months has elapsed since the event, decision or action as there may be insufficient information available to investigate.

6 Anonymous Complaints or Grievances

The University will investigate anonymous complaints at the discretion of the Director, Governance, Planning and Policy, depending on

- (a) the nature and seriousness of the complaint and
- (b) sufficient information and evidence to conduct an investigation.

Students may ask a Student Counsellor or the NUS Student Association to act on their behalf. Certain grievances however will require personal details to be provided for a resolution to be achieved.

7 PROCEDURES

7.1 Informal resolution

- (a) For course related issues, students should normally approach the relevant staff member or course convenor about any complaint or grievance.
 - (i) If the student is not satisfied with the result, the student should approach the relevant head of department, or where this is inappropriate, the relevant dean. The student may also seek advice from a counsellor.
- (b) For student administrative matters (enrolment, examinations, graduation) refer to Manager, Student Administration
- (c) For library matters refer to University Librarian
- (d) For IT matters, refer to Director, ICT
- (e) For issues relating to security, cleaning and grounds staff, refer to the Manager, Property Maintenance

- (f) For Student Support Services matters, refer to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Services)
- (g) If the student is not satisfied with the result, the student should refer to the Deputy ViceChancellor (Corporate Services)
- (h) The head of department/dean/manager/director/dvc must record the grievance or complaint and any resolution made (including dates) – any documentation should be retained.

It is expected that most complaints or grievances will be resolved by mediation.

7.2 Formal resolution

- (a) If the student(s) does not consider the matter has been resolved, the student may lodge a formal complaint in writing to the Director, Governance, Planning & Policy.
 - (i) The complaint should state the complainant's name, address, telephone numbers, and ID number
 - (ii) The title and code number of the course, the name of the staff member, department and faculty
 - (iii) state clearly and precisely the grounds upon which the complaint or grievance is claimed and include sufficient, relevant information (dates and times if necessary). Any written material from the faculty should be attached
 - (iv) state a desired outcome
- (b) The Director or delegated person will forward the grievance or complaint to the staff member with a copy to the relevant Dean, and request a written response within five working days. The respondent's reply will be provided to the complainant.
- (c) In addition to the Director, Governance, Policy and Planning as Convenor, the ViceChancellor's Committee will annually appoint four academic or teaching staff and four comparable/general Staff to join the President of NUSSA to form the University Grievance Committee of five. The Director will be responsible for the formation of the committee bearing in mind that no staff member from the faculty or sector from which **the complaint originated may be a member.**
- (d) (iv) The Director will be responsible for holding the inquiry as soon as possible and notifying all participants of the date, time and place of the hearing, one week in advance. Both parties may have a support person who is not a legal practitioner at the hearing, who may speak on their behalf when the University Grievance Committee meets.
- (e) The University Grievance Committee
 - (i) may seek further information or meet with any other persons considered able to assist the process
 - (ii) will conduct the inquiry impartially, without bias, without conflict of interest and confidentially
 - (iii) will meet with the complainant and respondent separately

- (iv) abandon the meeting if any abusive behaviour occurs
 - (v) will meet alone to consider its decision
 - (vi) will provide a copy of its decision to both parties
 - (vii) will recommend appropriate action if it decides a disadvantage has occurred (e.g a written or verbal apology, a second opinion on disputed coursework mark, a remark, opportunity to resubmit)
 - (viii) may recommend alterations to University statutes or policies and procedures
 - (ix) may dismiss a grievance that is deemed to be frivolous or lacking in substance, and stating the reasons.
- (f) The decision of the University Grievance Committee shall be sent to all interested parties. The Committee's decision is final and binding. There will be no right of further appeal or review.
- (g) The Director will ensure that all documentation is retained for seven years before it is destroyed.