

Making a complaint

Different types of complaints are dealt with by different areas of the University, and some complaints may be taken to authorities outside of the University.

Sexual misconduct

If you have been sexually assaulted or harassed, remember that it is not your fault. There are options available to file a report or lodge a complaint. [SUPRA caseworkers can give you confidential advice and support](#). What you decide to do is always your choice.

Related article:

- [Sexual assault and domestic violence](#).

Discrimination, harassment and bullying

Complaints regarding discrimination, harassment and bullying can be lodged with the University, or with the [NSW Ombudsman](#), [NSW Anti-Discrimination Board](#), or the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#).

Read the following articles for information about how to make these types of complaints:

- [Harassment, discrimination and bullying](#)
- [Disability rights and support](#).

Academic appeals versus complaints

The university has two separate processes through which students can raise concerns: academic appeals, and complaints.

Academic appeals

An academic appeal allows you to raise concerns over, or request a review of, a specific academic decision, or a breach in due process in making an academic decision. **There are shorter timeframes for an appeal than a complaint.** Academic decisions include:

- assessment marks

- grades for a unit of study
- allegations of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.

Serious issues with the course content, exam conditions or format can be included in an appeal only when you can clearly show how these issues impacted on your mark for an assessment.

Related articles:

- [Academic appeals for coursework students](#)
- [Stage 1 appeals – frequently asked questions.](#)

If you lodge both a complaint and appeal in the same unit of study at the same time, your appeal will not be considered until the complaint is resolved. **This means a complaint can delay the release of your results or ability to graduate.**

Complaints

A complaint is a way to raise an issue with the faculty or the University over matters such as **discrimination, harassment and bullying, or against the quality of teaching or assessment**. Making a complaint is not the appropriate process to change your mark. If you do not want to challenge your mark but you want to raise other issues, it is your right to make a complaint to the faculty or to the University via the Student Affairs Unit (SAU). Complaints could also be made about:

- timetable scheduling
- learning and teaching concerns
- the conduct of another student
- unprofessional staff behaviour.

Students are encouraged to try to resolve issues informally. You may contact your unit coordinator or the Associate Dean of Education in your faculty as a starting point. If this is not appropriate in your situation, or if the response from your faculty is not satisfactory, you can lodge a complaint with the SAU. **You can make a complaint verbally or in writing.**

- If you make a **verbal complaint** and an investigation is required, you will be asked to submit a written complaint. In most cases complaints can't be anonymous, but the University assures strict confidentiality.
- You can make a **written complaint** by writing a detailed summary of the incident(s). Where possible, provide dates, times, and locations. If

you have any witnesses who can verify your account of what happened, ask them to provide their names and contact details, or make a note in your complaint that there were witnesses.

The University is committed to resolving complaints in a fair and timely manner. **If you make a complaint to the SAU, they should notify you of the next relevant steps within 5 working days.** At the preliminary stage, the SAU may decide that the complaint is not able to be handled by the University and will notify you with reasons. If the SAU decides that the complaint can be handled by the University, you will be assigned a case manager who will start a preliminary assessment to determine appropriate action.

A complaint that could constitute an act of misconduct, or could involve criminal behaviour, will be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar).

Read more information about complaints, procedures for lodging a complaint, investigations, and timeframes on the [University website](#).

Complaints to do with [intellectual property](#) are also considered by the University. [Contact us](#) for advice on intellectual property from our [legal service](#).

Group work complaints

If you are doing a group work assessment and experience conflict with your group members, **try to discuss your issues directly with your unit coordinator**, or [contact us](#) for advice. Try to resolve group work issues as they come up and document your efforts. **Keep emails or messages sent between your group members or with your unit coordinator, record a clear timeline of incidents**, and always keep a copy of relevant documentation.

Group work complaints are different from making an academic appeal if you receive a low mark for your group work assessment. [Contact us](#) if you need assistance.

Timeframes to lodge a complaint

In most cases, **you have 12 months from the time of the incident to make a complaint** to the SAU. You can submit a complaint later than this date, but the SAU may decide not to act if no further incidents have occurred in the past 12 months.

Appealing a complaint outcome

When you receive your written report on the outcome of the investigation into your complaint, the SAU will advise you if you have the right to appeal the decision. **If eligible for an appeal, you will need to contact the SAU within 10 days of being notified of the outcome.**

Other ways to make a complaint

Depending on the nature of the complaint, you may also choose to contact external bodies such as the [NSW Ombudsman](#), [NSW Anti-Discrimination Board](#), or the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#). [Contact us](#) for advice on these options.

If a complaint is made about you

If you receive notice that a complaint has been made about you, **we strongly recommend** that you [contact us](#) for advice. We can help you understand the complaint and what your options are.

Support

University helplines

The University has two free helplines to assist students with any questions or concerns.

- **For general questions**, phone 1800 SYD UNI (1800 793 864). This is the first point of contact for all student needs.
- **To raise other concerns**, phone 1800 SYD HLP (1800 793 457), select option 2, then option 1.

The University's Student Counselling Service

Taking the first step to lodge a complaint can be hard. It is reasonable to feel stressed, overwhelmed, or anxious. If you need someone to talk to, the [University's Student Counselling Service](#) may be helpful.

Contact us

You can always [contact us](#) for support and guidance from our [professional caseworkers](#).

Policies

- All policies are available on the University Policy Register:
- [Resolution of Complaints Policy 2015](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedures 2015](#)
- [Student Sexual Misconduct Policy 2018](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#) (for staff and affiliates)
- [Student Charter 2020.](#)

Last updated February 2022