



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF  
**WELLINGTON**  
TE HERENGA WAKA

# FORMAL COMPLAINTS

## 2023 OVERVIEW

Te Herenga Waka—  
Victoria University of Wellington

May 2024



# FORMAL COMPLAINTS 2023 OVERVIEW

## DEFINITION

As agreed with VUWSA, complaints are defined for this report as:

- accepted under a formal complaints process, either within the University or to an external agency (this does not include informal or alternative resolution processes)
  - a 'formal complaint process' is defined as any complaints against the University that follow either a formal staff conduct process (as per the staff conduct statute) or are complaints that cannot be initially resolved with the service manager and are escalated to Tauria—Student Interest and Conflict Resolution (SICR), a director, or a member of Te Hiwa for resolution (or Te Kopanga—University Accommodation Wellington for halls-based complaints)\*
- must relate to the Pastoral Care Code
- must be against the institution (including complaints about staff); this does not include complaints against tauria
- must be significant and material.

This definition was informed by NZQA guidance to support tertiary institutions to uphold the obligations of the Code. VUWSA was consulted in the development of this definition.

It is important to note that some tauria may raise a concern as a 'formal complaint'; however, when the complaint is successfully resolved through informal/alternative resolution processes at the University, it is not considered as a part of this definition.

## TE HERENGA WAKA FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Tauria can find information about the complaints process and support options from a specific section of the Tauria—SICR section of the University's website.

In most cases, complaints relating to issues concerning tauria will be referred to the Tauria—SICR team. Complaints by tauria that relate to the University, its systems, or its staff, are referred to the most appropriate operational area's manager. Tauria can also make a complaint directly to the manager of a service.

The University aims to take a restorative approach to its complaints and endeavours to work with tauria to resolve the matter at the lowest level possible. If tauria are unsatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, it can then be escalated to the relevant director or Te Hiwa member for review. If tauria are not satisfied with this outcome, tauria can raise their concern with the relevant external agency. For most complaints relating to the Code, Study Complaints/ Ngā Amuamu Tauria 'Study Complaints' is the most appropriate service.



\*Currently, the University does not have a centralised method to report on any complaints that are addressed and resolved by deans. These are often academic concerns and if they are not resolved, they are escalated to an 'Academic Grievance', which is a formal university process and is recorded in the table on the following page.

## ROLE OF THE TAURIA—SICR TEAM

Once a complaint from tauria is received, it is reviewed by the Tauria—SICR team. The adviser who receives the complaint will action it in line with the regulations, policies, or procedures it relates to.

They consider the following things:

- risks or safety concerns that need addressing to make sure everyone involved is safe
- what tauria support (including cultural support) needs might be, how they have been impacted, and how to work alongside the tauria to ensure

the University can minimise the impact of the situation on their hauora, studies, and other areas of their life

- the most appropriate person or operational area of the University to refer the complaint to for any further action.

Once investigated, the outcome is communicated to the tauria and any other relevant parties who have been involved.

Staff conduct processes can often be difficult for tauria as there are several employment law regulations that govern these processes and specify what information can be shared.

## FORMAL COMPLAINTS 2023

	Internal university process				
Complaint type	Total	Partly upheld/upheld	Not upheld	Unresolved	Withdrawn
Staff conduct	4	1	2	-	1
Service provision	1	-	-	1	-
Academic issue	2	1	1	-	-
Accommodation	1	1	-	-	-

	External process				
Complaint type	Raised to an external agency	Upheld	Dismissed	Withdrawn	Still under investigation (as at April 2024)
Staff conduct	-	-	-	-	-
Service provision	3	1	-	1	1
Academic issue	2	-	-	1	1
Accommodation	-	-	-	-	-

It is also important to note that these relatively low formal complaint numbers do not indicate tauria are not forthcoming with their concerns. Rather, it highlights the University's approach to resolve all concerns at the lowest level and use restorative approaches where possible.

## AREAS OF FOCUS FOR 2024

Based on feedback received as a part of the University's anti-racism initiative, the University aims to continue to better meet the needs of taurira Māori who want to share a concern or make a complaint. While the University does have a tikanga Māori process embedded into its staff and taurira conduct statutes, feedback from taurira Māori is that the current options do not meet their needs and further work and resourcing is required in this space.

In 2024, the University plans to improve website content so it is simplified, more accessible to learners from diverse backgrounds, and easier to navigate. This also includes modifying the complaints form so that it clearly outlines the range of options available for taurira when they make a complaint.

After the launch of a bespoke case-management system for the Taurira—SICR team, the University now has enhanced capability to identify trends related to taurira concerns and complaints. A focus for 2024 will be using this aggregated data to identify areas of priority and opportunities for growth relating to taurira complaints.

The University currently has no central way to record and report on any complaints that are addressed at the deans' level. This will be an area to review, so accurate data from across the institution is represented in these reports.

