



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

Student Formal Complaints

Public-facing Annual Report

2025

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the formal complaints the University received in 2025, as required by the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 (Pastoral Care Code).

This report is made publicly available to support transparency and openness regarding the University's complaints procedures.

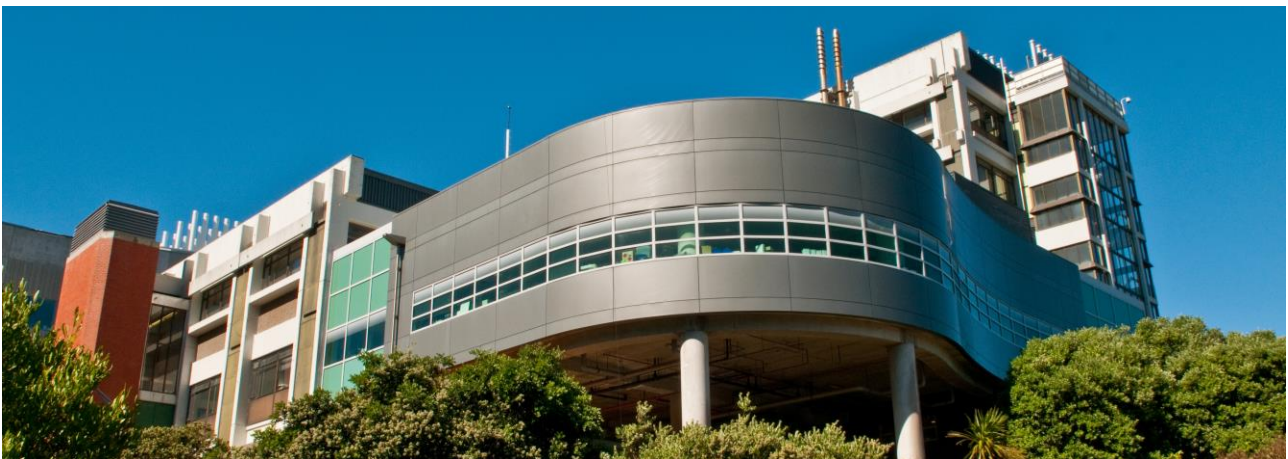
Definition of a formal complaint

1. 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. For the purposes of this report, 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, a director, or a member of Te Hiwa—Senior Leadership Team for resolution (or Accommodation Services for halls-based complaints)¹, and
2. Must relate to the Pastoral Care Code, and
3. Must be against the institution (including complaints about staff); this does not include complaints against students; and
4. Must be significant and material.

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

A student may raise a concern as a 'formal complaint'; however, where it is successfully resolved through informal/alternative resolution processes at the University, it is not considered as a part of this definition.

Currently, the University does not have a centralised method to report on any complaints that are addressed and resolved by Faculty 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 below.



¹ 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 below.

Overview of Te Herenga Waka Complaints Process

The University aims to take a restorative approach to all its complaints and will endeavour to work with the students to resolve the matter at the lowest level possible.

Students can find information about the complaints process and support options from a specific section of the Tauria—Student Interest and Conflict Resolution webpage.

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

If students are unsatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, it can then be escalated to the relevant director, dean, or Te Hiwa—Senior Leadership Team member.

If students are still not satisfied, students can raise their concern with the relevant external agency. For most complaints relating to the Pastoral Care Code, 'Study Complaints' is the most appropriate external service.

Tauria—Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team

Once a complaint from a student has been received, it will be reviewed by the Tauria—Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team. The person who receives the complaint will action it in line with the regulations or procedures it relates to.

They will consider the following things:

- whether there are risks or safety concerns that need addressing to make sure everyone involved is safe
- what the student's support (including cultural support) needs might be, how they have been impacted, and how to work alongside the student to ensure the University can minimise the impact of the situation on their wellbeing, 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 will be communicated to the student and any other relevant parties who have been involved (subject to the University's privacy obligations).



Formal complaints 2025

Internal University Formal Complaint Processes				
Complaint type	Total number	Upheld / partly upheld	Not upheld	Unresolved
Staff conduct ²	4	1	1	2
Provision of service	-			
Academic issue	-			
Accommodation	1	1	-	-

Analysis of 2025 numbers

This data shows that the prominent area of complaints from 2025 relate to staff conduct. These complaint processes can often be more challenging for students as there are employment law obligations that govern these processes and specify what information can be shared with the complainant. The Tauria—Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team plays an important role by setting realistic expectations for students to understand the procedural obligations and privacy implications when students engage in a formal complaint process involving a staff member.

It is also important to note that these relatively low formal complaint numbers do not indicate students are not forthcoming with their concerns. Rather, it highlights the University's approach to resolve concerns at the lowest level and use restorative approaches where appropriate. Anecdotal feedback from students will often highlight frustrations around the length of time that formal processes take and consequently informal/alternative resolution pathways will often better meet the needs of students, if a positive resolution can be achieved.



² Some of these complaints may include multiple complaints about the same staff member.

2025 overview

New website content created

A new standalone, complaints webpage was created on the website in 2025. The previous information on the website was complex for students to navigate, whereas now all information about complaints is simply divided into academic, conduct, or service complaints.

Changes to the Academic Grievance policy

The Academic Grievance Regulations have been reviewed and restorative principles have been incorporated. The intention is for the University to use restorative and informal approaches where appropriate to resolve academic complaints. The regulations went through university-wide consultation in March 2026.

Areas of priority for 2026

Improve resources available to decision makers

In response to feedback from managers and heads of schools, who often need to respond to student complaints, the Tauria—Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team will work with colleagues and experts to improve resources that can support leaders on how (and when) to best respond to student complaints restoratively.

Create student-focused resources about complaints

To build on the work done in 2025, a focus for 2026 will be further enhancing the website content to make it more interactive and engaging to students. Creating content that can be shared on the University's social media platforms will hopefully further encourage and support students to speak about any complaints or concerns they may have.

