

Version	1.0 This policy outlines Avondale’s approach to managing complaints submitted by students, prospective students, alumni and external stakeholders.
Relevant to	All Higher Education and Vocational Education & Training (VET) students, higher degree research (HDR) candidates, prospective students, alumni, and external stakeholders. Staff about whom a complaint is made, or who have responsibility for the object of a complaint, and staff involved in the resolution and administration of the complaint process.
Authority	Executive Committee
Policy owner	Manager, Academic Quality & Standards
Responsible office	Office of the Provost
Date approved	14 November 2022
Date effective	29 November 2022
Review due	November 2027
Related Avondale documents	Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination Policy (Staff & Students) Student General Conduct & Discipline Policy Privacy Policy Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures - Students
Related legislation	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015
Key words	bullying, complaint, conduct, discrimination, grievance, harassment, misconduct, student, work health safety

PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy reflects the principles, expectations and responsibilities of Avondale University (Avondale), its students and other complainants in the resolution of complaints.
- 1.2 Avondale recognises that effective complaint resolution processes contribute to a positive and supportive environment and provide opportunity for continuous improvement. Avondale aims to ensure that complaints are welcomed and that complainants are confident that their issues will be dealt with respectfully, with procedural fairness and without any adverse repercussions.
- 1.3 Details regarding the process, usual timeline, staff and student responsibilities, authority for investigation and review, data management and record-keeping are available in the Complaint Resolution Procedure.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
 - a) higher education and VET students and HDR candidates. This includes students and candidates on intermission (leave) and discontinued students;
 - b) prospective students;
 - c) alumni;
 - d) external stakeholders; and
 - e) academic and professional staff involved in the resolution and administration of complaints.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Alumni:** graduates of an Avondale course of study.
- 3.2 **Appeal:** a request for a decision to be reviewed and reversed or adjusted.
- 3.3 **Complainant:** the person reporting a complaint.
- 3.4 **Complaint:** an expression of dissatisfaction requiring formal resolution.
- 3.5 **Investigator:** an Avondale staff member or external consultant who has the responsibility for resolving the complaint.
- 3.6 **Resolution:** a formal decision or agreement. Resolutions do not necessarily require the complete satisfaction of all parties to a complaint, but rather an agreement that the complaint or issue has been reasonably investigated and/or resolved or has provided a reasonable outcome given the available evidence.
- 3.7 **Respondent:** the person or organisation or unit about whom the complaint is made.
- 3.8 **Support person:** a person selected by the complainant and/or respondent to provide moral and practical support to them, but not to act as their advocate. Such a support person may not be a person who was, or may be perceived to be involved in, or associated with the complaint. They must not be a legal practitioner unless permitted in writing by the University.
- 3.9 **Student:** for the purpose of this Policy, includes current students and HDR candidates enrolled in a course or unit of study at Avondale University, discontinued students, students on intermission, and prospective students who have applied for enrolment.

- 3.10 **Unreasonable complainant conduct:** any behaviour by a complainant which because of its nature or frequency raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the University, staff, other student(s), or the complainant themselves.

4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 All actions under this policy will be consistent with Avondale's Purpose and Values and will be underpinned by principles of mutual respect and procedural fairness for and by all students, staff and others who may be involved.
- 4.2 Avondale aims to maintain a complaint resolution process that:
- a) is accessible, impartial, fair and equitable;
 - b) is transparent and consistent;
 - c) is undertaken in a timely and responsive manner;
 - d) ensures that the complainant is not adversely affected;
 - e) is free to the complainant;
 - f) encourages the maintenance of harmonious relationships;
 - g) where possible, encourages informal resolution of concerns;
 - h) ensures as far as possible, privacy and confidentiality for the complainant.

5. COMPLAINANT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 Avondale will manage all complaints to ensure procedural fairness. All parties have the right to be heard, and decisions will be based on evidence and made in an objective and unbiased manner.
- 5.2 All parties involved in a complaint are expected to be courteous and respectful, acting in a professional manner and in good faith to seek a reasonable resolution.
- 5.3 In making a complaint or requesting a review, students may access any of Avondale's assistance, advocacy and advisory services. Students are also welcome to speak to any staff member to seek advice regarding complaints.
- 5.4 Complainants can involve a support person at any stage of the complaints process.
- 5.5 All parties can seek advice from the Manager, Academic Quality and Standards regarding complaint resolution processes.
- 5.6 All complainants have the right to submit a complaint or a request for review in accordance with this policy and the relevant procedure, without fear of reprisal or disadvantage.
- 5.7 Students will act in accordance with the Student General Conduct & Discipline Policy.
- 5.8 Complainants will not submit a complaint or seek a review for frivolous or vexatious reasons. Avondale will not consider appeals where it is determined that the behaviour of a complainant is unreasonable.

6. EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF

- 6.1 All staff involved in managing or responding to a complaint must always:

- a) act fairly, reasonably and without bias;
 - b) disclose promptly any actual or potential conflict of interest and manage that conflict in accordance with the Code of Conduct (Staff);
 - c) treat all information associated with this complaint resolution process as strictly confidential and only discuss it with another person to the extent that this is necessary for the purposes of applying this policy or to seek legal or other professional advice;
 - d) deal with the matter as expeditiously as possible, consistent with the need to act fairly.
- 6.2 All staff will be fully trained in those aspects of the policy and procedure which are relevant to their role.

7. PROCEDURE

- 7.1 The complaint resolution procedure includes three steps within the University:
- a) informal resolution where individuals discuss their concern directly with the person or area whose actions have led to the concern;
 - b) formal resolution of a complaint by Avondale;
 - c) independent internal review
- 7.2 Individuals may also refer complaints or other matters to external organisations.
- 7.3 Complainants are encouraged in the first instance to attempt to resolve their matter informally, however, may proceed directly to the lodgement of a formal complaint.

8. DISCLOSURES

- 8.1 Complaints of a serious nature may qualify as being disclosures to which legislative protections apply, including those under Avondale's Fraud Policy and Whistleblower Protection Policy. For complaints relating to fraud and corruption, maladministration, serious and substantial waste, or criminal conduct refer to these policies in the first instance.

9. LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

- 9.1 While students are encouraged to resolve any concerns or complaints they may have as a student, nothing in this policy detracts from the right of a student to access any other appeal or complaint mechanism available to the student as legislated in the relevant State or Territory.
- 9.2 Avondale will alter this policy immediately and without notice where any conflict arises with relevant legislation and in such cases the requirements of the legislation will take precedence.

10. UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT CONDUCT

- 10.1 Avondale will not consider complaints where it is determined that the behaviour of a complainant is having a disproportionate and unreasonable impact on the University, its staff, services, time and/or resources.

Table of amendments

Version Number	1.0	Replaces Version	NEW
Date Published	29 November 2022	Scheduled Review Date	November 2027
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Short description of amendment			