



RESOLUTION OF UNRESOLVED COMPLAINTS AGAINST HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Procedures

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Related FHEC documents: policy / procedures / guidelines, etc.	Policy -7-2: Resolution of unresolved complaints against Higher Education Institutions 7-2-Form: Complaints
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1.0 Acknowledgement letter to complainant

- 1.1 When the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) receives a complaint, an acknowledgement letter or e-mail must be sent to the complainant within 3 business days.
- 1.2 ~~Complaints should be encouraged to use the complaints form to ensure that details of the complaint are complete.~~
- 1.3 The letter of acknowledgement should include the following elements:
 - 1.3.1 Name of the person responsible for handling the complaint;
 - 1.3.2 Key elements of FHEC's complaints policy;
 - 1.3.3 Request for any details of when the complaint was made to the HEI concerned and how it was handled, if not included in the original complaint (refer Section 2, below); and
 - 1.3.4 Expected timing of next correspondence from the FHEC.

2.0 Confirmation of whether the complaint has been handled internally by the HEI concerned

- 2.1 Confirm whether the complainant had followed the HEI's complaints procedure and taken the issue up with the HEI in the first instance. This may be self-evident from the documentation supplied by the complainant. If not, ask for confirmation in the first response to the complainant, pointing out that the FHEC will not consider complaints unless the complainant has already taken it up with the HEI involved.

3.0 Recording unresolved complaints in the complaints log

- 3.1 Once it has been confirmed that the complainant asserts they have followed the HEI's complaints procedure and the complaint is still unresolved, it must be logged in the complaints log.
- 3.2 The Complaint log must at least include the following information:
- 3.2.1 Date of complaint;
 - 3.2.2 Complainant's name;
 - 3.2.3 Nature of the complaint and circumstances;
 - 3.2.4 Name of the department/person who is the subject of the complaint; and
 - 3.2.5 The date and conclusions of the decision rendered in connection with the complaint.
- 3.3 All complaints in the complaints log need to be updated with actions in progress and details of final resolution when it is achieved.

4.0 Process to be followed to resolve complaints

- 4.1 Advise the institution concerned by e-mail or letter, requesting an explanation/response to the issue(s) raised within ten days. A copy of the complaint should be attached to this correspondence.
- 4.2 Follow up with the institution if the reply has not been received within ten days.
- 4.3 Once a reply is received, assess the explanation given, consult as appropriate within the FHEC and consider what further action needs to be taken.
- 4.4 If the explanation provided to the FHEC is satisfactory, it may be appropriate to request the HEI to write directly to the complainant, copy to FHEC, to explain their response.
- 4.5 If the explanation is not satisfactory, it may be appropriate to request or require the HEI to take appropriate remedial action, or for the FHEC to undertake its own investigation or arrange a mediation meeting.

- 4.6 If the HEI does not respond, the matter should be escalated within the FHEC, to the Team Leader Quality Assurance and, if necessary, the Director.
- 4.7 The complainant should be kept advised of the decisions and actions the FHEC are taking (or the actions the HEI have agreed to undertake).
- 4.8 The officer handling the complaint needs to be alert to the need to ensure that complainants are not being disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint. This may need specific follow-up with the complainant and informal (or, as necessary, formal) advice to the HEI.
- 4.9 Once a complaint has been fully resolved, the FHEC should write formally to both the complainant and the HEI concerned confirming that the matter has been logged and closed.

5.0 APPROVED BY THE DIRECTOR, FIJI HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION



Linda Aumua
Director
Fiji Higher Education Commission

22:08:17.

Date

