



POLICY

**RESOLUTION OF UNRESOLVED COMPLAINTS
AGAINST HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

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Relevant legislation	Higher Education Act 2008 Higher Education (Amendment) Act 2017
Related FHEC documents: procedures/guidelines, etc.	7-2-Procedures – Handling unresolved complaints against HEIs 7-2-Form – Complaints 7-1 – Policy: Legal compliance Higher Education Strategy

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1.0 Policy objective

The objective of this policy is to establish a transparent, fair and timely procedure for dealing with unresolved complaints against Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and to encourage the effective operation of HEIs' own complaints resolution systems.

2.0 Policy

2.1 This policy shall apply to all HEIs in instances when a complaint has been made in writing by a person or group regardless of who they are, where:

- 2.1.1 They have provided their name and contact details;
- 2.1.2 They have provided details of the complaint; and
- 2.1.3 The complainant confirms that they have previously taken the complaint up to the HEI concerned, followed the HEI's complaints procedure and the HEI has not resolved the complaint in a timely manner.

Complainants are required to use the standard complaints form and attach evidence as appropriate.

2.2 The FHEC will write to the HEI concerned:

- 2.2.1 Providing a copy of the complaint
- 2.2.2 Seeking to confirm (if necessary) whether the complainant has followed internal processes, and
- 2.2.3 Require a response in a specified time.

2.3 The FHEC will refer complainants back to the HEI if it is established that the complainant has not followed internal HEI complaint procedures.

2.4 Having had a response from the HEI, the FHEC will seek, by the most appropriate means, to mediate a resolution of the complaint and advise parties of the outcome in writing.

2.5 The FHEC will make every effort to protect the interest of students who make complaints. If there is evidence that students are disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint that falls within this policy, the matter may be dealt with as a breach of compliance under Policy 7-1.

2.6 The FHEC will make every reasonable effort to achieve a resolution of complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest level within the organisational structure. They will keep both the complainant and the HEI informed of anticipated time-lines.

2.7 Notwithstanding, section 2.6, the secretariat will, if necessary, escalate a complaint to the Commission or to external authorities where the matter is sufficiently serious and cannot be resolved otherwise.

2.8 All complaints meeting the criteria in 2.1 will be recorded in a formal complaints log and the outcome noted. This information may be taken into consideration in any subsequent review or monitoring of the HEI concerned.

3.0 BACKGROUND

This policy has been drawn up in response to numerous complaints against HEIs received by the FHEC from students and parents that have not been resolved by the HEI concerned. It is designed to safeguard the interests of learners and prompt HEIs to ensure that all students receive the best possible educational opportunities.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Complaint	Any expression of dissatisfaction that a Higher Education Institution's service has either failed to match the standards of service promised or standards that it would be reasonable to expect.
Complainant	Any person or group that lodges a complaint.
Higher Education Institution	An educational institution in or operating in Fiji that provides award-conferring post-secondary education or provides educational support services for students of other higher education institutions including overseas institutions, including but not limited to: a) technical and vocational education and training centres; b) information technology centres; c) secretarial schools; d) language schools; e) hospitality training centres; f) educational agencies; g) caregiving training providers; h) performing arts and sports academies; i) religious educational institutions; j) colleges; and k) universities.
Service provision	Any aspect of the HEIs operation designed to provide an individual with a definable service. This would include an academic provision in terms of quality of teaching, academic support services such as IT and technical support, library services, academic advising / personal tutoring; student administrative and support services, and central services including finance, catering, accommodation and facilities.

5.0 APPROVAL BY THE CHAIRPERSON, FIJI HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION


Dr Milika Sobey
Chairperson
Fiji Higher Education Commission

Date 22/06/17

