

2022 COMPLAINTS AND CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT

Purpose

The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 came into effect on 1 January 2022. This legislation sets out requirements on tertiary education providers for public reporting of statistics on the number and nature of student complaints (clause 13(f)(i)), student experiences with the complaints process (clause 13(f)(ii)), and critical incidents (clause 10(3)(g)).

Definitions

Concern: when a student experiences an incident they perceive as negative or unsatisfactory and wish to voice their displeasure. They may do so for the purpose of raising awareness, receiving an apology or acknowledgement, having a decision made or action taken, having a record of the issue, or improving existing services and/or processes. Concerns are considered informal and informal resolution options are sought prior to escalating to a formal complaint.

Critical Incidents: any unplanned or unforeseen traumatic event affecting a student or students that has an impact on the University, its staff, its students and/or the wider community, or any actions of a UC student which, in virtue of their nature, give rise to significant alarm for the safety of other students, staff and/or the wider community. Critical incidents include all student deaths on campus and all off-campus deaths of a student who had been assessed by the University as being a learner at risk. This includes all events or matters where a student has experienced serious physical or mental harm and either planning, managing the event or matter was inadequate, a plan was not followed, or an external review or investigation was carried out.

Formal Complaint: when a student experiences a situation that is considered serious, complex, has multiple aspects, or was unresolved from previously raising a concern. They may lodge a formal complaint after having already attempted to resolve the issue informally or they don't consider informal resolution appropriate. They may wish to lodge a formal complaint to initiate an employment process or behavioural investigation, to effect a change of policy/regulation, or to achieve any other desired outcome that could result during resolution.

Background

During 2022, new procedural guidelines were introduced specific to 'Concerns and Complaints'. The new procedures better align with the Pastoral Care Code with the goal of providing transparency for students going through the process. These procedural guidelines are accessible on the UC Website - [Concerns and complaints For Students | University of Canterbury](#)

The role of the Grievance and Academic Processes Advisor (GAPA) is to be the central contact point to receive concerns and formal complaints. The GAPA ensures all items are channelled in the appropriate direction for resolution, monitors progress and ensures the correct process is followed. Support is also made available for students through the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team.

The current procedures require all intake items to be recorded in writing and evidence provided, when

applicable. The GAPA monitors the email inbox and records incoming items.

Student Complaints

The new Complaints Procedures Guide for 2022 categorises student grievances into ‘concerns’ or ‘formal complaints’. In the first instance, students are encouraged to contact the relevant service area/department/staff member directly with any concerns to determine a resolution before going through with a formal complaint. Any concerns raised by a student through UC Concerns will be referred to the relevant service area/department/staff member to determine an appropriate resolution. The University received 82 concerns from students in 2022 through UC Concerns, the nature of which are reported in the University’s internal report.

In 2022, 15 formal complaints were lodged and classified under the new procedures. Students can lodge complaints individually or on behalf of a group. If a student is acting on behalf of a group, the complaint will count as one intake item. The nature and general outcome of the formal complaints are included in the data represented in the Complaint Classification graph below. Specific details about the complaints and their outcomes have not been provided to protect the privacy of the students. The category ‘other’ encapsulates unique situations or those that contain more than one aspect to the complaint which wouldn’t otherwise fit into the categories used. There were 5 formal complaints that were either resolved informally, where the concerns had previously been addressed, were covered under another policy and/or regulation, or were lodged by someone other than a student.

The University received formal complaints from a wide range of diverse learners. Students who lodged formal complaints ranged from 20-50 years old, identified as ‘male’, ‘female’ or ‘diverse’ and represented a number of different ethnicities. Most of the formal complaints were lodged by NZ Citizens (9 out of 14). This included 53% male, 27% female, 7% on behalf of someone else (i.e.: class representative) and 13% diverse. The information to record demographics was taken from the Student Management System with the information the student had provided at the time of enrolment.

The University implemented a survey that was accessible by all complainants with only 7 responses received. It is unable to be determined if the respondents had gone through a formal complaint process or not. There will be more focus in 2023 to promote the survey link to gain a better overview of complainant feedback and to review the survey approach.

Graph 1: Complaint Classifications – 2022

Nature of Complaint	Assessment	Admission & Enrolment	COVID response	Staff Conduct	Quality of Learning	Other	Total
Withdrawn				2	1		3
Dismissed	1		1	2		1	5
Partially Upheld				1	1	1	3
Upheld	1	1					2
Not upheld				1			1
In progress						1	1
Total 2022	2	1	1	6	2	3	15

Critical Incidents

UC has a duty of care to staff and students, and an obligation to be prepared to deal quickly, effectively and sensitively with critical student incidents. The Student Incident Response Plan (SIRP) is a companion document to the *UC Emergency Management Plan* and provides detailed protocols to be followed when responding to incidents that are reported.

The plan is designed to meet that duty of care by seeking to protect the welfare of staff and students both during and after a student incident. It provides guidance on measures to be taken and establishes the primary lines of responsibility and communication. The plan should be implemented in all of UC's campuses, field stations, halls of residence, or in other settings where staff and students' study and work.

The following critical incidents were recorded in 2022.

Graph 2: Critical Incident Classifications – 2022

Critical Incident	SIRP Coordinated Events
Serious Assault	0
Sudden Death - On Campus	1
Sudden Death - Off Campus	0
Death (medical event/unknown cause) - Off campus	4
Serious Injury/illness - Off campus	1
Arrest	0
Total	6

UC will undertake a review of our complaints processes and procedures in 2023 to ensure compliance against the Code is maintained. This will include the review of capacity, capability and system solutions to ensure continuous quality improvement.