2023 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 wishes 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, to have a record of the issue, 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 if they do not consider informal resolution appropriate. They may wish to lodge a formal complaint to initiate an employment process or behavioural investigation, to raise awareness of an issue and if applicable effect a change of policy/regulation, to seek financial compensation, to seek an apology, or to seek any other desired outcome that could result from resolution.

Background

The University observed the processes laid out in the University of Canterbury Student Complaint Procedures Guide for handling student complaints. These procedures were introduced in 2022 to better align with the Pastoral Care Code, with the goal of being to provide transparency for students going through the process. These procedure 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 from students and to keep them informed of progress in managing the concern/complaint. The GAPA ensures all items are channelled in the appropriate direction for resolution, monitors progress and ensures the correct process is followed. Advocacy support is available for

students through the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team, and pastoral support is available via UC's Student Care team.

The current procedures require formal complaints to be submitted in writing via email and evidence provided, when applicable. The GAPA monitors the email inbox and records incoming items in an Excel spreadsheet. The University is looking to implement an online system which would allow for a more a simplified process for students to lodge a complaint, self-identify under specified diverse groups, and track the progress of the complaint.

UC also operates a health and safety reporting system, Assura, for the implementation of our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and maintaining our compliance against the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. In addition, UC operates an informal anonymous reporting system 'Report It' that provides a further option of reporting concerns and is overseen by the Student Critical Incident Group.

Student Complaints
The Student Complaints Procedures Guide 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 (with the student's consent). A student who is unable to resolve their issue or concern informally, or considers informal resolution inappropriate or unsatisfactory, can lodge a formal complaint through the UC Grievance and Academic Processes Advisor. A student can withdraw their complaint at any time by writing to the UC Grievance and Academic Processes Advisor and the matter will be considered resolved. The University may continue to investigate a complaint if we believe it would be helpful to do so, including to ensure that we provide a safe and supportive learning environment or where we are required to do so to satisfy legal requirements.

The University received 82 concerns from students in 2023 through UC Concerns. The nature of which is reported in the University's internal report. 10 formal complaints were lodged in 2023 as classified under the University's 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 table 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 contain more than one aspect to the complaint which wouldn't otherwise fit into the other categories used. There were 2 formal complaints referred to People & Culture to investigate under their own process. These outcomes are not recorded in the table for privacy reasons.

The University receives formal complaints from students that lodged formal complaints ranged from 19 years old to mid-50s, and self-identified as either 'male' or 'female'. This included 38% male, 50% female, and 12% on behalf of someone else (i.e.: class representative) and nil from diverse. Most of the formal complaints were lodged by NZ Citizens and listed their ethnicity as NZ European/Pakeha. The information used to record demographics was taken from the Student Management System with information the student had provided at the time of enrolment.

The University provided a survey to complainants with the results reported in Appendix 1. There were significantly more responses to the survey in 2023 compared to 2022 after work was done to promote the link more actively. This allowed for a better overall sense of the process from the student perspective, however there were still answers that reflected whether or not the complaint was upheld, and the desired outcome was achieved. It is unknown whether the survey respondents had undergone an informal or formal

complaint resolution. The University is planning the implementation of a centralised online system to better facilitate the complaints process for both students and staff.

Graph 1: Complaint Classifications – 2023

Nature of Complaint	Assessment	Advice	Admission & Enrolment	Quality of Learning	Other	Total
Withdrawn						
Dismissed				1		1
Partially Upheld		1				1
Upheld	2			1	1	4
Not upheld			1			1
In progress				1		1
Total 2023	**2**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**8**

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 following critical incidents were recorded in 2023.

Graph 2: Critical Incident Classifications – 2023

Critical Incident	SIRP Coordinated Event
Serious Assault	2
Sudden Death - On Campus	0
Sudden Death - Off Campus	3
Death (medical event/unknown cause) - Off campus	3
Serious Injury/illness - Off campus	3
Arrest	1
Total	**12**