



Integrity and Standards Unit (ISU)

INFORMATION SHEET

No. 3, July 2017



Please refer to the [ISU website](#) for information on the following:

- [Complaint Resolution Process](#) (procedures, guidelines, flowcharts, forms)
- [Conflicts of Interest / Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality](#) (system, procedures, guidance, FAQs)
- [Public Interest Disclosures](#) (what, how, when, links to PSC information)
- [Fraud and Corruption Prevention](#) (plan, policy, risks, case studies, red flags)
- [Reporting Misconduct to external agencies](#) (CCC or Public Sector Commission)

and to access the:

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Online Complaints Portal](#)
- [Online Conflicts of Interest Register](#)
- [External avenues for lodging a complaint](#)

ISU Training Workshops

The ISU presented four training workshops during May 2017 to help build staff knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- *Avoiding Conflicts of Interest*
- *Fraud and Corruption – Prevent, Detect and Respond*
- *Managing Complaints*
- *Fact Finding*



Since then, the ISU has developed two more training workshops on:

- *Blowing the Whistle - the PID Act*
- *Reporting Misconduct - the CCM Act*

The *PID Act* module and the *Managing Complaints* module were presented (in abridged form) for the first time at an internal Compliance Forum on 13 July 2017. While all of these workshops will continue to be delivered on a regular basis, the ISU is happy to present any required module to smaller groups, upon request.

Complaints outside of scope

The ISU oversees the complaint handling framework for complaints made against the University (as defined in the [Complaints Procedures](#)). However, this definition does not include the following, all of which are covered under different regimes in the University:

- Health and Safety incidents or issues
- Appeals by students, in relation to student admission, enrolment, assessment, academic status or credit decisions
- Misconduct by students, involving academic record fraud, academic misconduct or general misconduct
- Complaints involving the Student Guild and its activities
- Protected disclosures under the PID Act.



Where such matters are lodged through the Complaints Portal, they are re-directed by the ISU to the most appropriate area of the University to be dealt with, then closed off in the Complaints system.

Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness describes the steps that must be taken to ensure that any decision made in relation to the resolution of a complaint is fair and proper i.e.

- ✓ **HEARING RULE:** A person whose interests may be adversely affected by a decision is given an opportunity to be heard.
- ✓ **BIAS RULE:** The decision maker is, and is seen to be, impartial about the outcome.
- ✓ **EVIDENCE RULE:** The decision is based upon cogent evidence that supports submissions made.
- ✓ **REASONS RULE:** The decision maker provides written reasons in support of the final decision that is made, after reasonable inquiry has been conducted.



If you are unsure of what these terms mean in relation to complaint resolution, please contact the ISU.

Are your complaint decisions always fair and proper?

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Complaint Data— Quarter 2, 2017

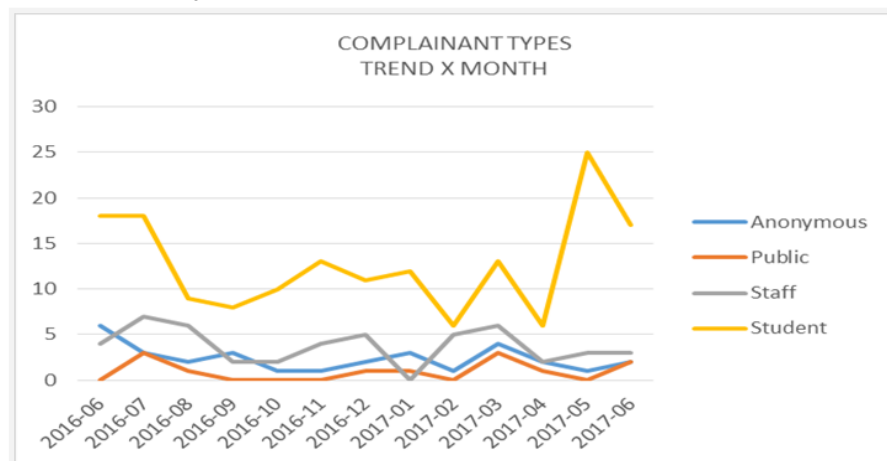
The ISU collects and reports on complaint data on a quarterly, rolling 13 months, and end of financial year (12 months) basis. For the three months and rolling 13 months period ending 30 June 2017:

Quarterly data

- 64 complaint matters were registered (compared to 54 in the first quarter). However, this was a 17% drop on that reported in the second quarter 2016.
- 48 complaints came from students (compared to 31 in the first quarter), eight from staff (compared to 11 in the first quarter) and the rest were anonymous or from the public.
- Faculties dealt with 44 of the matters (compared to 30 in the previous quarter).
- Ratio of *Not Upheld* to *Upheld* complaints was around 1:1.
- Only two matters remain unresolved from 2015 and five from 2016, at time of reporting.

Rolling 13 months data

- Though there had been a general overall reduction in complaint numbers in the last six months of 2016, this did not carry through into the first and second quarters of 2017. However, increases in complaints are to be expected when the semester is in full swing.
- Complaints from students and staff tend to move in alignment with the academic cycle, however, staff complaint numbers overall have tended to drop over the longer period.
- Evidence suggests that the ratio of not upheld to upheld complaints overall is starting to move in favour of not upheld outcomes.



Conflict of Interest System - data take-up

The (fabulous) new [Conflict of Interest / Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality system](#) became available to Curtin staff on Monday 4 April 2017, via the ISU website.

As part of the data take-up exercise, the ISU then extracted all old conflict of interest notifications (out of the old system, from April 2013 onwards) and emailed them to disclosers (where available) requesting that they be validated and manually re-input to the new system.

Over 520 emails were sent (each titled as *PLEASE REVIEW YOUR DISCLOSURES*), but not all staff have responded to-date. If you received this email, please take the time, when you have a moment and you have not done so already, to action it by re-inputting your old disclosures to the new system where you believe there is a need to do so.

Respect. Now. Always Campaign

Respect. Now. Always. is a national campaign to prevent sexual assault and harassment across the higher education sector. The campaign highlights the determination of Australia's universities to ensure that our students and staff are safe from sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Please click [here](#) to go to the Universities Australia website for more information on how it affects all universities, including Curtin. Participating universities in Australia are also showing their support for the campaign through their own websites — see [Curtin's web page](#).



10 things you may not know about complaint handling¹

1. Never tell a complainant that you cannot or will not address their concerns until / unless they have registered it through the ISU Complaints portal!
2. If a complainant brings something to your attention which, once known to you creates a duty of care for you to act, then you need to act regardless of whether the complainant wishes to proceed or not. e.g. a criminal matter.
3. A complaint that is raised by person A against person B, in what appears to be a response to an earlier complaint made by person B against person A, does not in any way lessen the need to properly address both matters separately with due process.
4. When you make a decision, you need to take responsibility for it. Do NOT make reference to any other person or adviser as being the reason that you made the decision.
5. If a complainant disagrees with your decision, state clearly that the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the University, after following due process.
6. A complaint about an alleged event or behaviour that is not upheld after investigation does not imply that it did not occur or was not made in "good faith". You should aim to make the best decision possible with the evidence obtained!
7. When you have come to a decision and need to communicate it to the parties concerned, remember to do it in writing and provide reasons for your decision.
8. If staff misconduct is involved and you are communicating your decision to the complainant, don't provide any information concerning disciplinary action involving the respondent. This is confidential between the employee and Curtin.
9. Don't forget to keep proper records! If you have to interview parties to the complaint, take notes or signed statements.
10. Recognise and accept that you may be required to deal with a range of different issues in your job as a line manager, including complaints, conflict, staff performance matters and policy issues. As such, it is your duty to manage a complaint that is assigned to you or staff conflict that comes to your attention in a prompt, efficient and correct manner – it is unacceptable to just leave it.



¹ extracted from *Managing Complaints* training workshop

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