

## STUDENT FEEDBACK – COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

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### 1 PURPOSE

CQUniversity supports the rights of students to provide feedback on their experiences. The University recognises that feedback is essential to enable continuous improvement of our services to meet student needs. The University is committed to ensuring transparent processes for compliments, complaints, and general feedback, and that they are dealt with fairly, consistently, promptly, and respectfully.

### 2 SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to every CQUniversity student engaged in activities reasonably connected with their role at the University, including field trips, field work and social activities related to the University. Such activities may extend beyond the University's campuses.

Matters which fall under the Crime and Corruption Act 2001, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 or anti-discrimination legislation will be identified from the outset and referred to the appropriate position within CQUniversity delegated to handle such matters, and/or the Police and local community services if required.

This policy and procedure does not manage complaints from the community, customers, staff or other people about the decisions, actions or services of the University.

Where an appeal process exists within a policy or procedure, or the matter falls within the remit of the Academic Appeals Procedure, the relevant appeals process applies if a student is dissatisfied with the outcome.

**3 EFFECTIVE DATE** 10 November 2015

### 4 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

[Central Queensland University Act 1998 Qld](#)

### 5 POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1 Compliments provide valuable indicators of service effectiveness, examples of good practice which can be shared, and an opportunity to recognise the efforts of our staff. The University will ensure that compliments are passed on to the relevant staff members.
- 5.2 Complaints are also valuable indicators of service effectiveness, and identify opportunities for improvement and unmet expectations.
- 5.3 General feedback can be positive or negative and is provided where a student wishes to advise the University of their opinion or about their experience but does not require any action to be taken.
- 5.4 The University is committed to a complaints handling process based on the following principles:
  - a) Equity: Complaints are considered in a transparent, objective and unbiased manner, incorporating the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.
  - b) Accessibility: Information about the complaints handling process and the means to lodge a complaint is readily accessible and available.
  - c) Comprehensiveness: Relevant circumstances and information surround a complaint are investigated to the level warranted by the severity of the complaint

- d) Responsiveness: Timeframes for investigating and resolving complaints are set and monitored.
- e) Accountability: Appropriate monitoring of complaints through regular reporting of complaints received and action taken. Errors and omissions are corrected and business improvement opportunities are identified and implemented.
- f) Confidentiality: Anonymity is preserved where requested. Complainants will be informed where this may limit the extent to which a complaint can be investigated, and will not suffer any form of reprisal for making a complaint.

## 6 PROCEDURE

- 6.1 Compliments, complaints and general feedback can be submitted:
- through the Student Feedback eForm (<https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/new-students/student-feedback>)
  - by email to [studentfeedback@cqu.edu.au](mailto:studentfeedback@cqu.edu.au),
  - in writing to the Director, Governance, CQUniversity Australia, Bruce Highway, North Rockhampton Qld 4701,
  - phoning 13 27 86, or
  - in person at any CQUniversity location.
- 6.2 All complaints, compliments and feedback received will be acknowledged. When a complaint is lodged, the complainant will receive an acknowledgement of their complaint that includes a link to this policy and procedure and gives an outline of the timeframe in which the complaint will be managed.
- 6.3 All complaints, compliments and general feedback received will be entered into the University's Customer Relationship Management system, regardless of the avenue taken to lodge the complaint. The Customer Relationship Management system student feedback queue is only accessible by staff members designated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and Governance).

### Informal Complaint

- 6.4 If a student feels dissatisfied about a CQUniversity-related experience or feels they have been treated unfairly or adversely affected in some way, they are advised to raise the matter directly with the person or area most concerned, or with the appropriate supervisor of that person.
- 6.5 If the student is unsure who to talk to or how to deal directly with a person to resolve a complaint they can seek assistance from any staff member or the Student Ombudsman.
- 6.6 The University expects that in most cases, the discussion of the concern with the relevant staff member will result in a prompt resolution.

### Lodging a Formal Complaint

- 6.7 If a student has attempted to resolve the complaint informally and they are not satisfied with the outcome, or the complaint is of a nature that the student is not able or unwilling to approach the person or area most concerned, then they may pursue a more formal process by lodging a formal complaint.
- 6.8 The student must provide a description of the complaint in detail including relevant information such as names, dates, and course/unit codes (if relevant), as well as any supporting documentation such as emails. They must also indicate what actions they have already taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome they are seeking. If a complaint lacks sufficient information, it may not be possible for the University to pursue the matter.
- 6.9 A complaint should generally be lodged within 12 months of the adverse experience occurring, to ensure the best possible opportunity for resolution.

### Anonymous Complaints

- 6.10 Complaints lodged through the eForm require mandatory information to be provided to identify the complainant within the Customer Relationship Management system. Written, anonymous complaints

received through other means will be accepted by the University. The fact that a complaint is anonymous does not prevent corrective actions or decisions being implemented, however it may be difficult to pursue matters without the cooperation of the individual making the complaint.

## Investigation of Complaints

- 6.11 The complaint, if designated as serious, will be escalated as quickly as possible, and will normally be brought to the attention of a senior member of staff, within the same working day. A serious complaint is one involving a breach of legislation, or potential harm to a student, others or property, or is a matter in which time is of the essence. The standard complaint timeframes will not be applied to a serious complaint.
- 6.12 The University endeavours to address all complaints promptly. Designated University officers in Divisions, Schools, Directorates, and Campuses of the University are responsible for investigating student complaints. Staff involved in a student complaint will be provided with advice to assist them in the process, and feedback on their involvement.
- 6.13 Complaint handlers will make and keep full and accurate records of the informal and formal complaint handling processes. The records for formal complaints must be reported to the Governance Directorate for recording in the Customer Relationship Management system, and should include, but not be limited to:
- the complainant's name
  - meeting notes
  - the issue(s)
  - discussions with relevant stakeholders
  - the investigative process
  - the finding of fact
  - the analysis process
  - the outcome, and
  - whether or not the complaint was resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.
- 6.14 The investigative process will typically involve the following actions:
- identifying the issues
  - identifying the timeframes to decide the matter
  - identifying who is going to be interviewed and the sources of evidence required to sustain or not sustain the allegation
  - discussions and interviews with the complainant, University personnel and third parties (where relevant) and examining relevant laws, policies and procedures
  - analysis of all relevant information obtained
  - formulation of findings and any recommendations for the decision-maker's consideration, and
  - preparation of a report on the results of the investigation or the outcome of the complaint, including if it was resolved during the process or withdrawn by the complainant.
- 6.15 The report should typically address the following matters to the extent each matter is relevant in a particular case:
- the complainant's issue/s
  - a concise summary of the material facts and circumstances of the matter, and relevant legislation, policy or procedures
  - persons interviewed and/or consulted and relevant information obtained
  - results of any relevant research and finding of facts
  - analysis of the complainant's issues to the extent necessary
  - the outcome of the investigation, and
  - if the complaint is sustained, any recommendation/s to the University to redress the complainant's grievance, whether by way of benefit to the complainant and other affected persons (if any) and/or systemic improvements to the University's administrative practice.

- 6.16 The investigation involves confirming the facts indicated by a student on a complaint form, investigating allegations and seeking confirmation of the circumstances from all parties involved. The designated officer will seek responses to any allegations from individuals involved, which is consistent with the principles of procedural fairness.
- 6.17 In circumstances where facilitated discussion between parties to a complaint is considered the most practical and effective form of resolution, the student may be accompanied and assisted by a support person. A support person may be another student or a University staff member. A support person may not be a legal representative.
- 6.18 When University functions are outsourced, the contract or terms of engagement will stipulate how student complaints are to be dealt with by the external organisation/party.
- 6.19 In situations involving students, in which any conduct has interfered with the rights of others on campus, or is in breach of regulations covered by the Student Misconduct Policy, the Student Behavioural Misconduct Procedure or the Academic Misconduct Procedure will also apply.
- 6.20 In situations involving staff members where actions or behaviours are considered to be misconduct or serious misconduct, the University's current Enterprise Agreement, Copied State Agreements and Copied Award outline the procedures for investigation and disciplinary action.

### **Normal Timelines for Handling of Complaints**

- 6.21 The timelines will be monitored and managed by the Governance Directorate through the Customer Relationship Management system.
- 6.22 Within three working days from the receiving of the complaint the complaint will be considered by the Governance Directorate and action to progress the complaint or reject the complaint will be determined. The complainant will be advised of what action is being taken, and if the complaint is rejected the complainant will be advised of the reason and other avenues available for resolution.
- 6.23 Within five working days from the lodgement of the complaint the complaint will be referred to the relevant designated University officer/s for investigation and resolution.
- 6.24 Within 10 working days from the lodgement of the complaint the designated University officer will normally have reviewed all relevant materials and/or conducted an investigation.
- 6.25 Within 25 working days from the lodgement of the complaint the designated University officer will normally have resolved the complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and Governance) may:
- review the complaint materials and may reallocate the complaint
  - make a determination on the complaint, or
  - in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and President (or nominee), establish a Complaint Review Committee.
- 6.26 In the above timeframes, the Governance Directorate will monitor the recording of the progress of the complaint in the Customer Relationship Management system, from lodgement through to cessation of the complaint process. The details recorded will be limited to a brief statement indicating that the matter has been investigated or addressed; action has been taken to either rectify the matter or prevent further occurrences; the complainant has been informed; and the matter is closed / ongoing / or being reviewed.
- 6.27 These timeframes are the maximum expected for a complex complaint. It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be dealt with well within these timeframes. Some complaints may be complex or complicated by relevant staff or information being unavailable within a reasonable time, in which case, the resolution of these complaints may extend outside these normal timeframes.

### **Complaint Outcomes**

- 6.28 While it may not always be possible for students to receive the outcome they seek, the University is committed to ensuring that substantiated complaints are upheld and corrective actions and decisions implemented.

- 6.29 The outcome of a substantiated complaint will be commensurate with the severity and complexity of the complaint. Possible outcomes may include:
- an apology
  - change of decision
  - change of policy, procedure or practice, or
  - correction of misleading or incorrect records.
- 6.30 The outcome of the complaint investigation, or notification that the complaint will not be pursued, and the reason/s for the decision made, will be provided to the complainant. The outcome will be recorded in the Customer Relationship Management system. The complainant may receive the investigation outcome in the form of a written statement, if required.
- 6.31 If any complaint results in a decision that supports the complainant, the University will implement the decision and/or corrective and preventative action required, as soon as administratively practicable and will advise the complainant of the outcome.
- 6.32 The outcome notification will also invite feedback on the complaint management process and whether the student is satisfied with the outcome. If a student is not satisfied, they should advise the Governance Directorate within 20 days of the outcome notification. The review mechanism will then apply.

## Internal Review

- 6.33 If the complainant is not be satisfied that the complaint management process has led to a satisfactory resolution, they may request a review the information, processes and outcomes. Possible outcomes may include:
- returning the matter to the relevant area for review
  - upholding the original decision and providing a detailed explanation to the student, or
  - determining, in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and President (or nominee), the most appropriate action including the formation of a Complaint Review Committee.
- 6.34 A request for a review of the decision must be lodged by the student within 20 working days of receiving the initial written outcome of their complaint. If there are exceptional circumstances as to why the review request is not lodged within the stated time, the Review Officer may apply discretion in accepting the request.
- 6.35 The Review Officer shall be the Director, Governance unless the initial investigation was determined by the Director, in which case the Review Officer shall be the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and Governance).
- 6.35 The University's Student Ombudsman has the authority to conduct inquiries relating to specific areas of complaints relating to a failure to follow due process by current or former students against the University and those acting under the authority or auspices of the University, as detailed in the [Student Ombudsman Procedures](#). Students may request the Student Ombudsman review the matter if they reasonably believe that the University has not followed due process or provided procedural fairness in regard to the complaint.

## Unreasonable Conduct

- 6.37 Unreasonable conduct during the submission, investigation or determination of a complaint includes unreasonable persistence, unreasonable demands, unreasonable lack of cooperation, unreasonable arguments, and unreasonable behaviour. The University will not action complaints involving such conduct.

## Further Options

- 6.38 If all internal procedures have been followed, but the student does not feel the problem has been resolved or does not feel they have been dealt with fairly, external options are available. Where the University's internal complaint process upholds a decision to restrict, suspend, cancel or terminate the enrolment of a student, the University will maintain the student's enrolment while the internal appeal process has not yet been exhausted. Upon exhaustion of the internal appeal process, students may lodge an external complaint with the State Ombudsman or other external body. Unless advised by the State Ombudsman that an appeal has been lodged with that office, the University will proceed to take action to uphold a decision to restrict,

suspend, cancel or terminate the enrolment of a student 20 days after the exhaustion of the internal appeal process.

- 6.39 The student has a right to access the external appeals processes at minimal or no cost. Such external bodies include:
- the Human Rights Commission – [www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)
  - Commonwealth Department of Education and Training – [www.education.gov.au](http://www.education.gov.au)
  - Queensland Ombudsman – [www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au/](http://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au/)
  - Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland – [www.adcq.qld.gov.au/](http://www.adcq.qld.gov.au/)
  - Office of the Information Commissioner – [www.oic.qld.gov.au](http://www.oic.qld.gov.au)
  - Crime and Corruption Commission – [www.ccc.qld.gov.au](http://www.ccc.qld.gov.au).

## **Additional Information for Overseas Students Studying in Australia**

- 6.40 CQUniversity complies with the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 and the Standards contained in the National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (the Code).
- 6.41 Where the University intends to suspend or cancel a student's enrolment, the University will notify the student that they have 20 working days to appeal the decision and access the University's internal complaints and appeals processes. In exceptional circumstances the 20 working days may be extended by the authority of the Director, Governance upon written request from the student, or with the student's authorisation. While the complaints and appeals process is proceeding, the University will maintain the student's enrolment.
- 6.42 Once the University's internal review process has been exhausted, overseas students may lodge an external appeal with the Queensland Ombudsman. While this external process is proceeding, the University will maintain the student's enrolment and the suspensions or cancellation of the student's enrolment will be deferred pending the outcome of the complaint except in cases of misconduct or misbehaviour as per [The National Code 2007, Part D, Standard 13](#).

## **7 RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Compliance, Monitoring and Review**

- 7.1 Responsibility for the effectiveness of the complaint handling process for students resides with the Director, Governance who ensures that the system is planned, designed, maintained and continually improved.
- 7.2 The Director, Governance is responsible for raising awareness and communicating the complaints handling process to staff and students through promotion of the [Student Feedback – Compliments and Complaints](#) webpage.
- 7.3 Designated University officers in Divisions, Directorates, Faculties and Campuses of the University are responsible for being aware of the complaint handling process for students and ensuring that complaints referred to them for resolution are investigated, managed and acted upon appropriately in a timely and sensitive manner. These designated University officers report on investigations, actions and decisions taken with respect to complaint handling to the Director, Governance. The designated University officers will monitor the implementation of any remedial actions. They are also responsible for communicating outcomes of an investigation directly to the student and ensure that relevant information is forwarded to the Governance Directorate for recording in the Customer Relationship Management system.
- 7.4 All staff are required to be familiar with the Student Feedback – Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure. Staff are expected to be able to advise students of the complaints process and refer them to appropriate services within the University, and the ways in which feedback can be provided (as detailed in 6.1).
- 7.5 Any staff member receiving a formal complaint, or written compliments and general feedback must forward a copy to the Governance Officer for recording in the Customer Relationship Management system and inclusion in student feedback reports.

- 7.6 All staff who receive an informal (verbal) complaint should attempt to resolve the issue in an informal manner, however, if this is not possible the complainant should be directed to follow a formal complaint process directing them to the student feedback process or alternatively make an appointment with the appropriate manager.

## Reporting

- 7.7 Twice-yearly reports of student feedback received, including the number and type of compliments, complaints and general feedback received, complaint decisions/outcomes and the timeframe for resolution, are considered by the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee.

## Records Management

- 7.8 All records relating to compliments, complaints and general feedback are to be stored in the Customer Relationship Management system.
- 7.9 Information provided by students is protected under CQUniversity privacy guidelines and is only accessed by those involved in the receipt and resolution of each complaint.

## 8 DEFINITIONS

Refer to the University [glossary](#) for the definition of terms used in this policy and procedure.

## 9 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

### Related Legislation and Supporting Documents

[Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)

[Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)

[Equal Employment Opportunity \(Commonwealth Authorities\) Act 1987](#)

[Human Rights \(Sexual Conduct\) Act 1994](#)

[Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986](#)

[Racial Discrimination Act 1975](#)

[Racial Hatred Act 1995](#)

[Sex Discrimination Act 1984](#)

[Age Discrimination Act 2004](#)

[Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991](#)

[Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#)

[National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007](#)

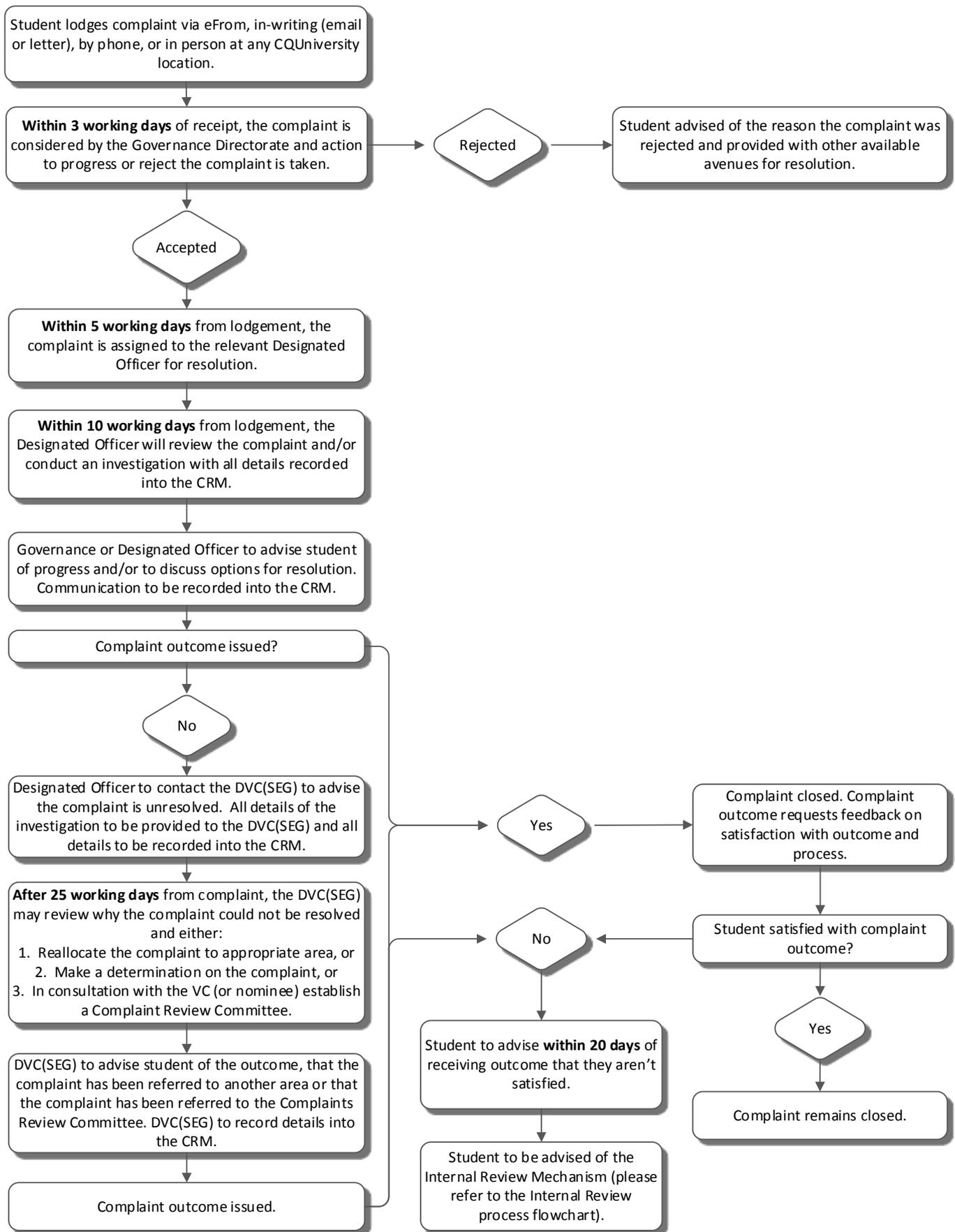
[Crime and Corruption Act 2001](#)

[Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010](#)

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Administrator	Director, Governance
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## WORKFLOW – LODGING A FORMAL COMPLAINT



## WORKFLOW – INTERNAL REVIEW

