



# Guidelines for resolving complaints informally

## 1) Support and Advocacy

- a) The following support services are available to assist students with providing advice and support during the informal complaints process:
- [Student Support Advisors](#)
  - [International Student Support Services](#)
  - [Student Advocate](#)
  - [Student Council](#)
  - [Pae Arahi](#)
  - [Marae team](#)
  - [The Pacific Centre](#)
  - [Unitec Pathways College](#)
  - External support e.g. [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)

## 2) Resolving a complaint informally

In many circumstances using informal channels instead of a formal complaint, may lead to a satisfactory outcome sooner. Note that choosing self-help or informal resolution does not preclude Students from lodging a formal complaint should their earlier efforts to deal with the problem be unsuccessful.

The following are five recommended approaches to informal resolution:

### a) Self-Help

Students are encouraged to immediately deal with the problem themselves by directly contacting the other relevant party such as a Lecturer, Academic Leader, Head of School (HOS), Department Manager or Director. The Student should respectfully explain their concerns and what their expected outcome is. This information can be conveyed verbally or in writing.

Benefits of Self-help:

- it can be personally empowering for the Student;
- it gives the other relevant party an opportunity to correct any issues without a formal complaint being made;
- it is the most confidential option for both parties; and
- it can be quick.

### b) Staff member intervention

The Student asks a Staff member they know and trust to informally raise their concerns with the other relevant part on the Student's behalf. The staff member may inform the other relevant party of the student's concerns, advise them of the impact on the student and what the expectations are going forward. This process will only proceed if the staff member is confident doing so, and is able to remain unbiased and professional. Otherwise, the Staff member should refer the matter to their line manager.

**c) Facilitated Discussion**

The Student asks a Staff member they know and trust to facilitate a discussion without prejudice, where appropriate, between the Student and the other relevant party to resolve the situation. This process will only proceed if agreed to by the Staff member, the Student and the other relevant party. The Staff member should refer the matter to their line manager if they do not feel confident proceeding as a facilitator.

This is a voluntary process which will only proceed with the agreement of the Student, the other relevant party and Staff member requested to be the facilitator. The facilitator will try to reach a resolution between the Student and the other relevant party by acting as a 'go-between'.

The Student and the other relevant party must treat each other with Ngākau Mahaki (Respect). The Student and the Respondent must abide by the meeting rules set by the facilitator, in any meetings. The facilitator may end the meeting at any point, if they deem it necessary. This facilitated discussion may result in a written agreement that could include behavioural expectations, participation in educative sessions, agreement to non-contact, or an apology.

**d) Te Hohourongo**

The Student seeks Te Hohourongo (ancestral conflict resolution) by contacting Unitec's Pae Arahi, Marae team or Kaiāwhina. This is a tikanga Māori approach with an open exchange of views aimed at seeking consensus from all parties as to the resolution. This process will only proceed if agreed to by the Student and the other relevant party.

**e) External Mediation**

The Student seeks external mediation. This option is particularly useful for serious allegations of bullying, harassment or discrimination. The Director of Student Success will assist in organising mediation with an external agency. Mediation will only proceed if agreed to by the Student, the other relevant party and the Director of Student Success. It is expected that all parties will abide by any agreement reached in mediation.

## Definitions and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Line Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support to their direct reporting staff member if they have been requested by a Student to intervene or facilitate.</li> <li>• Support can include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Help the staff member identify whether it is appropriate for them to intervene or facilitate.</li> <li>○ Take the Staff member's place and proceed with the intervention or facilitation, with the agreement from the Student.</li> <li>○ Recommend and organise another Staff member to proceed with the intervention or facilitation, with the agreement from the Student.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Other relevant party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person or department subject to the complaint.</li> <li>• Treat Staff and Students with Ngākau Mahaki (Respect).</li> </ul>
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If requested by the Student, support the Student with the informal resolution process e.g., intervention or facilitation.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Notify Line Manager if they are not confident in raising the Student's concerns with the other relevant party or being a facilitator.</li> <li>○ Inform the Student, if they decide it is not appropriate for them to intervene or be a facilitator. Direct the Student back to the guidelines to consider other resolution options.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Treat Staff and Students with Ngākau Mahaki (Respect).</li> </ul>
Student with complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in the process in good faith.</li> <li>• Seek support from Staff for advice and information on the resolution process.</li> <li>• Treat Staff and Students with Ngākau Mahaki (Respect).</li> </ul>

## Reference Documents

### Policies

- a) [Student Complaints Resolution Policy](#)
- b) [Whakatika Whanonga | Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#)

### Procedures

- a) [Academic Complaints Procedure](#)
- b) [Student Complaints Resolution Procedures](#)

Appendix

