



CHRISTIAN HERITAGE COLLEGE

POLICY: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances

Policy Group(s): Group B: Academic – 1: Students (Ref: C3/0105.1-0313)

Related Policy: Academic Integrity
Code of Conduct
Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students –
Non-Academic Grievances
Staff Grievances
Re-crediting of 'HELP' Debts and Review of Decisions
Review of Academic Progress
Review of Enrolment

Commencement Date: January 2005

Review Date: March 2020

POLICY STATEMENT

Intent:

In accordance with its foundation on Christian principles, Christian Heritage College (CHC) is concerned to maintain the highest levels of student confidence in the quality and integrity of CHC's courses and administrative practices. CHC seeks to avoid academic decisions that disadvantage students through unambiguous policy, staff training and professional development and moderation of critical academic decisions such as unit final grades. CHC encourages informal resolution of disputes between students and staff regarding academic decisions, but recognises that there are instances where formal resolution is appropriate.

Because people are important, people's grievances are especially important. Students are entitled to justice in all their interactions with CHC. In addition, unresolved grievances prevent students from gaining the full benefit from the course in their learning and personal growth.

In seeking to resolve people's grievances CHC commits to do so in a timely manner. A grievance is not a part of the regular feedback that is provided to CHC by its stakeholders as part of CHC's commitment to continuous improvement, but is rather a complaint requesting action or some form of response from CHC.

Scope:

This policy applies to all domestic students undertaking a course of study at CHC.

Restrictions: Nil

Exclusions: Overseas Students (please refer to the *Grievance Policy and Procedures for Overseas Students*)

Objectives:

1. To provide clear guidelines concerning the pathway for processing academic grievances for domestic students.

2. To give effect to Christian principles of dispute resolution.
3. To maintain compliance with any relevant legislation, regulations, guidelines or codes.

Policy Provisions:

1. General

- 1.1. The grounds for academic grievances are:
 - 1.1.1. One or more errors in an academic decision sufficient to cause disadvantage to the student;
 - 1.1.2. Injustice in relation to an academic decision sufficient to cause disadvantage to the student;
 - 1.1.3. Failure to adhere to CHC policy in respect of an academic decision sufficient to cause disadvantage to the student
- 1.2. The procedure for academic grievances provides for grievances which relate to student progress (including assessment outcomes, Review of Academic Progress and Review of Enrolment Process), assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study.
- 1.3. All students of CHC can use these procedures to submit a grievance about academic matters regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, their place of residence or the mode in which they study.
- 1.4. CHC will generally not respond to anonymous grievances, however, all complaints, either formal or informal, about the abuse of children or young people must be reported to the President, even when these complaints are made anonymously.
- 1.5. A student has 20 working days from the receipt of a decision to access the CHC *Grievance Policy and Procedure for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances*.
- 1.6. CHC will not victimise or discriminate against any complainant or respondent.
- 1.7. The complainant and/or the respondent may be accompanied and assisted by a third party at any stage throughout the process provided that the third party is not a lawyer. If they wish to do so the complainant or respondent may contact the Academic Registrar's Office for support in preparing their case. The Academic Registrar will appoint the appropriate staff member to assist the complainant or respondent.
- 1.8. CHC will retain confidential records relating to grievances for at least five years, and allow parties to the complaint appropriate access to these records. A register of grievances and any documentation pertaining to each grievance will be maintained and held in the Academic Registrar's office.
- 1.9. A student's enrolment will be maintained throughout the internal review process.
- 1.10. The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other higher education provider policies or under statute or any other law.
- 1.11. This policy and procedures document is publicly available on the CHC website: www.chc.edu.au and is set out in the Student Handbook.

2. Academic Grievances

- 2.1. The resolution of academic grievances at CHC involves 3 stages. Each stage and step is free of charge. CHC will provide reasons and full explanation in writing for decisions and actions

taken as part of the procedure if requested by the complainant and/or the respondent at each stage and step of the process. The stages are:

2.1.1.Stage 0: Self-reflection and analysis of feedback

2.1.2.Stage 1: Informal Process;

2.1.3.Stage 2: Formal Internal Process (2 steps);

2.1.4.Stage 3: External Process.

2.2. Stage 0: Self-reflection and analysis of feedback

2.2.1.If a student is concerned about any academic decision, they should first engage in self-reflection on the academic decision, and consider:

2.2.1.1. information provided to them by the in advance of the academic decision (e.g. assessment guidelines);

2.2.1.2. feedback or reasons provided for the academic decision in question;

2.2.1.3. whether, in consideration of the facts, the student can identify genuine grounds for disagreeing with the decision;

2.2.1.4. at this stage the student is encouraged to seek further information from the staff member responsible for the decision and/or to seek advice from other academic staff members such as the relevant Course Coordinator or Dean of their school.

2.3. Stage 1: Informal Process

2.3.1.*Note:* Students are strongly encouraged, in the first instance, to attempt to resolve issues directly through informal discussion with the relevant staff person.

2.3.2.If a student considers that there are one or more grounds for an academic grievance, they have 20 working days from the receipt of a decision to notify the academic staff member responsible for the decision in writing that they wish to discuss their concerns.

2.3.3.The academic staff member has 10 working days to convene a meeting with the student to allow both parties to discuss their points of view and attempt resolution. The student is afforded the option of including a meeting facilitator.

2.3.4.Should the student not be satisfied with the outcome of any such discussion or the time taken to resolve the matter, they may escalate the grievance to Stage 2 by applying for a formal review of the decision concerned.

2.4. Stage 2: Formal Internal Process

2.4.1.*Note:* A student has the right to proceed directly to the formal process. Should the student wish to proceed directly to the formal process, they should make written application within 20 working days of the receipt of the original decision (see paragraph 2.4.2 below).

Step 1

2.4.2.To initiate a Formal Internal Process a student should submit an application in writing to the Learning and Teaching Committee through the Secretary. This should be submitted within 10 working days of the outcome of Stage 1. The student will be notified of the availability of the Student Advocacy Officer to assist them in developing their application, if required.

2.4.3. The application should state clearly the specific grounds (refer to Provision 1.1) upon which the request for a review of the decision is based and include all necessary supporting information and documentation. Upon receipt of an application for a review, the Secretary, Learning and Teaching Committee convene the Academic Grievance Panel to which both the student and the academic staff member or members concerned may make such written and/or oral submissions as they consider appropriate. The Academic Grievance Panel will meet within 20 working days of receipt of the application for a review and its decision will be communicated to the student in writing within a further 10 working days.

Step 2

2.4.4. Should any party not be satisfied with the outcome of the Academic Grievance Panel's decision, they may appeal to the Academic Board within 10 working days of the receipt of the Review Panel's decision for further investigation of the grievance. This must be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Academic Board.

2.4.5. Within 10 working days of the receipt of the application for a further investigation of the grievance, the Secretary, Academic Board will convene the Academic Grievance Review Panel to investigate the decision of the Academic Grievance Panel.

2.4.6. The Academic Grievance Review Panel does not investigate the original grievance but reviews the decision of the Academic Grievance Panel. This will include the consideration of the application of this policy and the processes followed, but it will not hear evidence that was not provided to the Academic Grievance Panel in the original grievance.

2.4.7. All parties to the grievance will be invited to make written and/or oral representation to the Academic Grievance Review Panel. A further extension of time may be mutually agreed by the student and the Academic Grievance Review Panel.

2.4.8. The result of the investigation will be communicated to all parties in writing within 10 working days of the decision of the appointed senior officer(s).

2.4.9. Where a student continues to be aggrieved with the outcome of the formal internal process they may apply for a formal external review.

2.4.10. Where a member of staff is aggrieved with the outcome of the formal internal process they may refer to the CHC Policy: *Staff Grievance*.

2.5. Stage 3: External Process

2.5.1. If dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal internal process, a student may request that the matter be dealt with through an external dispute resolution process. Such a request must be made in writing to the CHC President within 20 working days of receipt of the Academic Grievance Review Panel's decision.

2.5.2. CHC has arranged for an external reviewer to be appointed by the Council of Private Higher Education Inc. (COPHE) www.cophe.edu.au There is no fee for the use of this service.

2.5.3. Upon receipt of a written request for an external review, the CHC President will, within 10 working days, make application in writing to the Executive Officer of COPHE, detailing the complaint, the process applied thus far, the decision to be reviewed and grounds for an external review of the decision. The CHC President must provide contact details for COPHE to the complainant.

- 2.5.4. The cost, if any, for utilising the external grievance appeals process will be borne by CHC.
- 2.5.5. The COPHE appointed reviewer must have appropriate experience in the area of the grievance and be acceptable to both the complainant and CHC.
- 2.5.6. The COPHE appointed reviewer must make a determination and advise the CHC President, the complainant and COPHE within 20 working days of the determination, providing in writing the reasons and rationale for any decisions and/or actions to be taken.
- 2.5.7. CHC will ensure that the decisions of the COPHE appointed reviewer are implemented within a reasonable timeframe commensurate with the nature of any change required by CHC to its processes and/or policies.
- 2.5.8. COPHE will retain all documentation pertaining to the grievance on file for a period of five years.
- 2.5.9. Where the grievance cannot be resolved by these means, the student will be advised of the appropriate legal body from which they can seek further assistance or advice.

3. Further Avenues of Appeal

- 3.1. This policy does not negate the right of any student to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws in the case of financial dispute, or to pursue other legal remedies.
- 3.2. If a student is concerned about the actions of CHC they have the right to apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for a review of the decision. CHC will inform the student of the closest tribunal to their location and will inform them at that time, of the approximate cost of lodging a submission.

Supporting Procedures and Guidelines:

1. Staff Training

- 1.1. Training concerning the *Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic* is provided to CHC staff through scheduled staff meetings with the Deputy Registrar – Academic Quality responsible for training both academic and administrative staff in the application of this policy.
- 1.2. Training for the Academic Grievance Panel and the Academic Grievance Review Panel members will be provided at the time of their appointment by the Academic Registrar and Academic Director.
- 1.3. Whenever the policy is updated or revised and approval has been given by the Department for this revision, staff are advised via email and the staff meeting.
- 1.4. New staff receive training through staff induction processes. The policy is readily available on the CHC website, and in the School Handbooks.

2. Notification of an Academic Grievance

- 2.1. When a student notifies an academic staff member under Provision 2.2, that staff member will notify the Academic Registrar.
- 2.2. The Academic Registrar will record the grievance on the Academic Grievance Register. This is a confidential file and is kept by the Academic Registrar's Office.
- 2.3. The staff member will notify the Academic Registrar of the outcome of each stage of the process. This will be recorded on the Academic Grievance Register.

3. Academic Grievance File

3.1. The Chair of the Academic Grievance Panel or the Chair of the Academic Grievance Review Panel, as appropriate, will maintain an electronic or physical file for each academic grievance until the completion of the process. Upon completion of the process, the file is to be transferred to the Academic Registrar. A *pro forma* for the cover page is appended to this policy.

4. Storing of Files

4.1. The Academic Registrar will securely store files of all academic grievances which will remain accessible to all interested parties for a period of five years.

4.2. Records of academic grievances and their outcomes will be strictly confidential and kept in a separate file (not kept on the student or staff file) and stored in the office of the Academic Registrar for a period of five years.

5. Access to the Files

5.1. Access to files pertaining to academic grievances is made available to parties to a grievance upon written application to the Academic Registrar.

5.2. Parties to an academic grievance will be provided with supervised access to the files within 48 hours of providing the Academic Registrar with written notification of such a request.

6. Reporting of Academic Grievances

6.1. Summary data on the type, number and outcome of academic grievances will be reported in the relevant School's Annual Report.

POLICY FURTHER INFORMATION

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| Relevant Commonwealth/State Legislation | HESA Section 19-45 (1) HEP Guidelines Higher Education Standards Framework (2015) |
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ACCOUNTABILITIES

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Implementation: | Academic Registrar |
| Compliance: | Academic Registrar |
| Monitoring and Evaluation: | Academic Registrar |
| Development/Review: | Academic Registrar, Academic Board |
| Approval Authority: | Academic Board |
| Interpretation and Advice: | Academic Registrar's Office |

WHO SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY?

All CHC students and staff.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS POLICY

Performance Indicators:

- Number of grievances which are lodged
- The most number of grievances resolved at Stage 1 or 2.

Other

Nil

Definitions and Acronyms:

CHC – Christian Heritage College

Dean – the head of the school administering a course, includes the Executive Director, Millis Institute.

The Department – The Department of Education

Academic Grievance – an academic grievance is any formal statement of concern about an academic decision or a breach of CHC academic policy sufficient to cause disadvantage to the student that is reported to a staff member at CHC that requires a response from CHC. It is not a part of the regular feedback that is provided to CHC by its stakeholders as part of CHC's commitment to continuous improvement, but is rather a formal complaint requesting action or some form of formal response.

Examples of academic decisions include: decisions on assessment outcomes, including unit grades; decisions on articulation or transfer to a course, enrolment in a unit, transfers of credit, and current competence; decisions on deferred examinations, extensions on assignments; decisions on academic progress including *Review of Academic Progress* and *Review of Enrolment Process*; and decisions concerning application of course rules.

Examples of breaches of policy include: late return of marked assignments, failure to assess on the basis of specified criteria, failure to adhere to the relevant unit outline, and failure of a CHC to make arrangements to service student needs during staff absences from campus.

HESA – Higher Education Support Act 2003

HEP Guidelines – Higher Education Provider Guidelines

HESF (2015) – Higher Education Standards Framework

School – the academic organisational units of CHC, includes the Millis Institute.

APPROVAL – section maintained by the Deputy Registrar – Academic Quality

| Reference No. | Approved | Date | Committee/Board | Resolution No. / Minute Ref. |
|---------------|----------|------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| C3/0105.1 | Yes | 05/05/2004 | Council | 11 |

REVISION HISTORY – section maintained by the Deputy Registrar – Academic Quality

| Revision Reference No. | Approved / Rescinded | Date | Committee/Board | Resolution No. / Minute Ref. |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 0407 | Approved | 16/04/2007 | Council | 16 |

| | | | | |
|------|----------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| 0907 | Approved | 24/09/2007 | Council | 16 |
| 1107 | Approved | 15/11/2007 | Council | Flying Minute |
| 0313 | Approved | 26/03/2013 | Council | Flying Minute |
| 0115 | Approved | 28/01/2015 | Council | Flying Minute |
| 1216 | Approved | 08/12/2016 | Academic Board | 4.1 |

Appendix

Pro forma Cover Page for Academic Grievance files

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|---|----------------------------|
| Student name: | Student number: |
| School: | |
| Course: | |
| Unit title: | Unit code: |
| Stage 1 initiated (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Stage 2, Step 1 initiated (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Staff concerned notified (date): | |
| Student documentation received (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Staff documentation received (date): | |
| Learning and Teaching Grievance Panel meeting (date): | Grievance upheld: Yes / No |
| Student notified of outcome (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Staff notified of outcome (date): | |
| Stage 2, Step 2 initiated (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Staff concerned notified (date): | |
| Student documentation received (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Staff documentation received (date): | |
| Academic Board Review Panel meeting (date): | Grievance upheld: Yes / No |
| Student notified of outcome (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Staff notified of outcome (date): | |
| Stage 3 initiated (date): | Meets policy: Yes / No |
| Notes: | |

Terms of Reference and Standing Orders for the Academic Grievance Panel

Introduction

The Academic Grievance Panel is established by the Learning and Teaching Committee of Academic Board to hear academic grievances as defined in, and in accordance with, CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances.

Membership

Membership of the Academic Grievance Panel shall comprise at least six (6) members, drawn from current staff and enrolled students at CHC:

- at least two (2) of whom are academic staff at Level C or above; and
- at least two (2) of whom are currently enrolled students.

A non-voting Secretary may be nominated by Learning and Teaching Committee to manage meeting processes.

Terms of Reference

The Academic Grievance Panel shall be responsible for:

- Hearing academic grievances brought by domestic students in relation to Stage 2, Step 1 of CHC: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students;
- Determining outcomes of such grievances, including consequential corrective and preventative action in accordance with CHC policies;
- Communicating outcomes of hearings to students and staff concerned; and
- Making recommendations to Learning and Teaching Committee regarding review of CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances and related policies.

Standing Orders

The Standing Orders of the Academic Grievance Panel are:

- The Academic Grievance Panel will appoint a chair from among its academic staff members;
- Meetings will be held on an ‘as needs’ basis according to the deadlines prescribed in CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances;
- A quorum shall be three (3) members including the Chair and at least one student member;
- If a quorum is not present within fifteen (15) minutes of the advertised starting time, the meeting shall be postponed to a date and time consistent with CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances, unless the student who lodged the grievance agrees to a different date and time;
- Where a member of the Academic Grievance Panel believes they have a conflict of interest with respect to an academic grievance, she/he must declare that conflict and disqualify themselves from the relevant proceedings;

- Agenda items shall include:
 - Starting time
 - Members present
 - Apologies
 - Others in attendance
 - Grievances for consideration
 - Closing time
- Minutes shall include brief details under each agenda item including, under Grievances for discussion, a succinct summary of the discussion, specification of the outcome, and reasons for the outcome.

Terms of Reference for the Academic Grievance Review Panel

Introduction

The Academic Grievance Review Panel is established by Academic Board to review decisions by the Academic Grievance Panel in accordance with, CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances.

Membership

Membership of the Academic Grievance Panel shall comprise members of the Academic Board Executive and include at least one student member of Academic Board or at least one currently enrolled student nominated by the Student Representative Council.

A non-voting Secretary may be nominated by Learning and Teaching Committee to manage meeting processes.

Terms of Reference

The Academic Grievance Review Panel shall be responsible for:

- Reviewing decisions by the Academic Grievance Panel in accordance with CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances;
- Communicating outcomes of reviews to students and staff concerned; and
- Making recommendations to Academic Board regarding review of CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances and related policies.

Standing Orders

The Standing Orders of the Academic Grievance Panel are:

- The Chair of the Academic Grievance Review Panel will be the Chair of Academic Board Executive;
- Meetings will be held on an ‘as needs’ basis according to the deadlines prescribed in CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances;
- A quorum shall be three (3) members including the Chair and at least one student member;

- If a quorum is not present within fifteen (15) minutes of the advertised starting time, the meeting shall be postponed to a date and time consistent with CHC Policy: Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances, unless the student who lodged the grievance agrees to a different date and time;
- Where a member of the Academic Grievance Review Panel believes they have a conflict of interest with respect to an academic grievance, she/he must declare that conflict and disqualify themselves from the relevant proceedings;
- Agenda items shall include:
 - Starting time
 - Members present
 - Apologies
 - Others in attendance
 - Reviews for consideration
 - Closing time
- Minutes shall include brief details under each agenda item including, under Reviews for discussion, a succinct summary of the discussion, specification of the outcome, and reasons for the outcome.