INSTITUTE OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

Student Grievance Management Policy and Procedure

Academic Board Approved Policy

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Policy Custodian	Principal
Policy Contact	Principal
Related Documents	Academic Integrity Policy Admissions Policy and Procedure Assessment Policy and Procedure Student Code of Conduct
Related Legislation	HEC Policy Guidelines for Establishment of Student Grievance Redressal Cells (SGRC) in HEIs Federal / Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat Acts (Mohtasib) Institutional Disciplinary & Appeals Committee Statutes
Policy Benchmarking	University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Southern Cross Institute (SCI) University of New England Canterbury Institute of Management

1. Preamble

a. Purpose

Richmond Institute of Higher Education (the 'Institute' or 'RIHE') has an obligation to provide prospective and current students with access to a mechanism that allows for all grievances, complaints and appeals to be made, addressed and resolved consistently, fairly and without reprisal.

b. Background

i. RIHE has established processes that allow prospective and current students to lodge formal grievances against any aspect of their academic or administrative experience with the Institute or its associated service providers. RIHE responds to any complaint or appeal that the students may lodge. This includes complaints and appeals against academic and administrative decisions.

ii. This Policy recognises that effective grievance management contributes to an improved work environment for all members of the Institute community. It also provides an opportunity to improve student and staff experience by identifying areas of risk and improvement.

iii. The management of student grievances at the Institute follows the following values:

- fairness in procedure;
- transparency, consistency and respect for all parties;
- resolution at the informal level, where possible;
- timely and effective grievance management; and
- ethical and equitable practices.

c. Definitions

For definitions, refer to the 'Glossary of Terms'.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all prospective and current students, academic and administrative staff, and authorized representatives or service providers of the Institute.

3. Principles

The core principles of this Policy are:

a. develop a culture that sees grievance as a chance for organisational improvement;

b. establish effective grievance processes that support the Institute in preventing the recurrence of grievances;

c. ensure that all grievances are addressed promptly, objectively, fairly and in good faith;

d. ensure that the views of each student and/or respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against or victimised; and

e. promote a consistent and fair approach to grievance management by embedding the Institute's values of care and fairness in the implementation of this Policy.

4. Procedure

Policies and procedures for the submission of a grievance or appeal are published on the Institute's website and in the Student Handbook, including information about external complaint options. Prospective and current students have access to the Student Support team to obtain further information and guidance on the submission of a grievance or appeal.

a. Informal Grievance Management Procedure

i. Prior to lodging a formal grievance, students (or prospective students) are encouraged to seek resolution of concerns through informal processes where appropriate. Academic staff and the Student Support team are available to assist in resolving issues at this stage.

ii. Students are encouraged, where appropriate and safe to do so, to raise the matter directly with the person(s) involved. A student may be supported or represented by a nominated person when discussing the matter. Where the student is unable or unwilling to approach the individual concerned, they may raise the matter with an appropriate staff member of the Institute.

iii. If the matter is not resolved through informal processes, or where informal resolution is not appropriate, the student may proceed to lodge a formal grievance in accordance with the Formal Grievance Management Procedure outlined below.

b. Formal Grievance Management Procedure

i. A grievance of an academic or non-academic nature may be submitted by students (or prospective students). Academic grievances may include, but are not limited to:

- matters of academic progression;
- assessments, including examinations and other forms of evaluation;
- course curriculum; and
- awards in a course of study.

ii. Non-academic grievances relate to all other matters, including complaints regarding the handling of personal information held by the Institute.

iii. The Institute takes all reasonable steps at all stages of the grievance management process to ensure that:

- there is no victimisation or discrimination against the student or the respondent to the complaint;
- the student (and, where applicable, the respondent) is provided with the opportunity to formally present their case, and each party may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meeting;
- where an internal or external complaint or appeal process results in a decision in favour of the student, RIHE promptly implements any required corrective or preventive action and informs the student of the outcome;
- there are no costs to the student for accessing the Institute's internal grievance and appeal processes;
- the Institute maintains a register of formal complaints and grievances in accordance with the Records Management Policy and Procedure; and

- decisions are provided in writing and include clear reasons for the outcome, reference to relevant policies or evidence, and information about further appeal options.

5. Formal Grievance Management - Stage One

Formal complaints must be submitted by completing the Student Grievance Application Form and submitting it to the Student Support team through reception or via email.

a. The Student Support team reviews the application to ensure all required information and supporting documentation are provided and refers the complaint to the appropriate staff member or responsible officer for investigation, based on the nature of the grievance.

b. The assigned staff member or responsible officer acknowledges receipt of the complaint, gathers relevant evidence and undertakes an investigation of the matter. Where appropriate, the matter may be escalated to the Principal (or nominee) for further review or determination within five (5) working days.

c. The Principal (or the nominee) takes all reasonable steps to resolve the complaint as soon as practicable.

d. Where necessary, the Principal (or the nominee) may seek clarification from the student regarding the desired outcome. This may occur in writing or through a meeting. The student (and, where applicable, the respondent) may be accompanied by a support person at any such meeting.

e. The Principal (or the nominee) then provides the student with a written outcome within ten (10) working days of receiving all required information, outlining the decision and any actions taken. Where additional time is required, the student will be informed in writing.

f. The student is advised of their right to progress the matter to Stage Two if they are not satisfied with the outcome and of their right to access an external complaint process.

g. Where the outcome supports the student, the Institute will implement any required corrective or preventive actions promptly and notify the student accordingly.

6. Formal Grievance Management - Stage Two

a. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint at Stage One, they may lodge an appeal by completing the Appeal Form within ten (10) working days of receiving the outcome.

b. At Stage Two, the Grievance and Appeals Management Committee considers all applications. The Grievance and Appeals Management Committee consists of the following:

   i. Chair of the Academic Board or nominee;

   ii. Student Counsellor; and

   iii. Academic Staff Representative.

c. Members of the Committee must not have been involved in the original decision.

d. Upon receipt of the appeal, an appropriate officer arranges for the Grievance and Appeals Management Committee to review the matter and, where appropriate, meet with the student and other relevant parties within five (5) working days.

e. The appeal must clearly state the grounds for appeal and include any supporting evidence relevant to those grounds. Grounds for appeal may include, but are not limited to:

   i. new information or evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the original decision;

   ii. a material failure by the Institute to follow its policies or procedures that may have affected the original decision; or

   iii. a material denial of procedural fairness.

f. The Grievance and Appeals Management Committee notifies the student of the date and format of the hearing, and their rights and responsibilities, within ten (10) working days.

g. Following the hearing, the Grievance and Appeals Management Committee provides written notification to the student within ten (10) working days, including:

   i. the decision;

   ii. reason(s) for the decision;

   iii. reference to relevant policies or evidence; and

   iv. (where applicable) actions taken.

h. The student is advised of their right to progress to Stage Three, if they consider the matter unresolved, and their right to access an external complaint process.

7. Formal Grievance Management - Stage Three – External Review

a. A student who remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage Two, or who considers that the Institute has not followed this Policy, may refer the matter to an external body. External review is independent of the Institute and is available to the student at no cost from the Institute.

b. Students are encouraged to complete the internal stages (Stage One and Stage Two) before seeking external review. Nothing in this Policy prevents a student from approaching an external body at any time.

c. A student may escalate the matter to any of the following external channels, as applicable to the nature of the grievance:

   i. the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Student Grievance Redressal Portal, in accordance with the HEC Policy Guidelines for Establishment of Student Grievance Redressal Cells (SGRC) in HEIs;

   ii. the Federal or relevant Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat (Mohtasib); and

   iii. any other competent regulatory or statutory authority.

d. The Institute informs the student in writing, together with the Stage Two outcome, of the right to external review, and publishes the details of the external channels, including the HEC Student Grievance Redressal Portal, on the Institute's website and in the Student Handbook.

e. The student lodges the external grievance directly with the external body, within the timeframe and in the manner required by that body. The Student Support team provides information and guidance on how to lodge the grievance and on the supporting documents to be provided, including copies of the Stage One and Stage Two outcomes.

f. The Institute cooperates fully with the external body, provides the records and information requested within the specified timeframe, and ensures that the student is not victimised or disadvantaged for seeking external review.

g. Where the external body makes a decision or recommendation, the Institute promptly implements any required corrective or preventive action, informs the student in writing of the action taken, and records the outcome in the register of formal complaints and grievances.

h. While the external review is ongoing, the student's enrollment status is maintained in accordance with section 8, and all records are managed in accordance with section 9.

8. Enrollment Status

While the grievance or appeals process is ongoing, the Institute will maintain the student's enrollment and ensure that the student is not disadvantaged because of lodging a grievance or appeal.

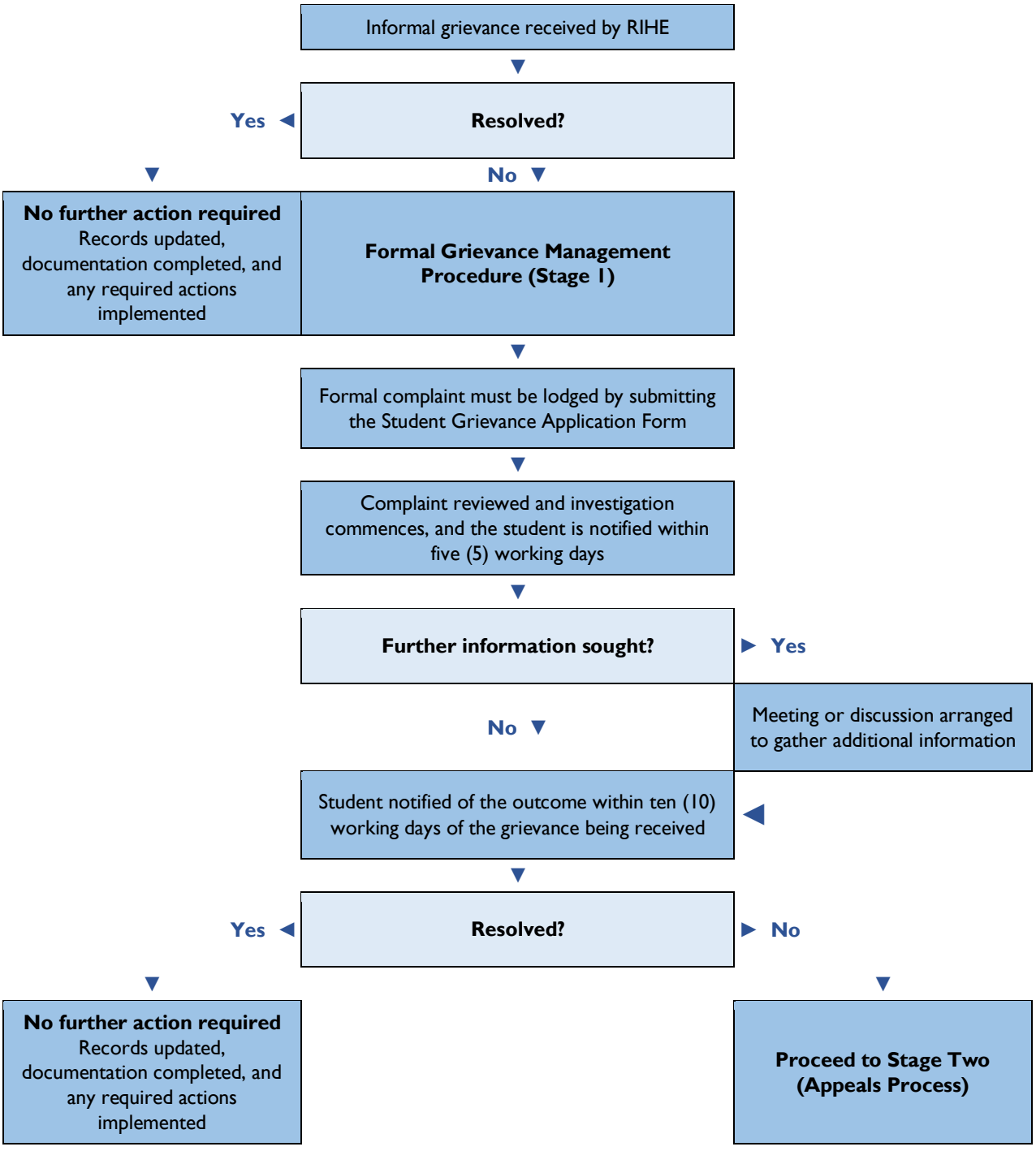
9. Record Management and Privacy

The Institute is committed to maintaining written records of all grievances and appeals handled under this procedure, including their outcomes, for a minimum period of five (5) years, in accordance with the Institute's Records Management Policy and Procedure.

All records relating to complaints and appeals are treated as confidential and managed in accordance with applicable privacy laws and the Institute's policies. Access to such records is restricted to authorised personnel on a need-to-know basis.

Appendix 1: Flow Chart

Stage One – Informal and Formal Grievance Management



Stage Two and Stage Three – Appeals and External Review

