



University
of Otago

ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA

2023 Complaints and Critical Incidents

Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice

University of Otago, Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka

Complaints and Critical Incidents

The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 (the Code) requires signatories to the Code to prepare and publish annual reports on the complaints received by our taura (students) and on critical incidents involving our taura.

In the self-reviews of our compliance with the Code, the University of Otago Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka has acknowledged gaps in the recording and reporting of complaints and critical incidents. We are actively working towards closing these gaps through procurement of software expressly designed for tertiary education pastoral care delivery.

At present, taura have access to [general information about making complaints](#), and the complaints themselves are generally lodged with the area of concern. These are predominantly: the Proctor's Office for behavioural matters; Campus and Collegiate Life Services (CaCLS) Divisional Office for student accommodation concerns; the International Office for complaints from international taura; Student Services for concerns about taura support areas; and the Registrar's Office for academic grievances and appeals. Undoubtedly, complaints will also be received at other locations of the University, such as academic departments, AskOtago (University's information service), and Student Experience (i.e., administration, timetables and student development services). While there is no evidence that the University is not satisfactorily handling complaints from students, we are conscious that this distributed approach does not align with the Code's expectations for a clear accessible complaints process that includes recording, reporting and complainant feedback. For this reason, the University is actively pursuing the procurement of a recording and reporting system for pastoral care matters, which will specifically include management of critical incidents and complaints.

With respect to critical incidents, all information associated with these cases is held securely by the Director Student Services, as the overall manager of critical incidents involving taura. Critical incidents are reported to key stakeholders at the time of the incident and in accordance with the Student Critical Incident Policy. Incidents are reported to the Health and Safety Committee (Council). This committee is a committee of Council and meets bi-monthly. Priority is always given to taura wellbeing and matters of privacy in managing this process.

Despite the challenges we have outlined, we present below data on critical incidents from 2023, and what we consider to be representative data on complaints received. In accordance with Statistics New Zealand protocols, fewer than five cases are represented as <5, as stating the number could lead to identification of individuals.

Complaints

The complaints reported here are those that were lodged formally, that is, in writing and in accordance with the relevant area's complaints procedures, after initial informal means of resolution did not reach a satisfactory outcome. Not included here are concerns that could be considered 'business as usual' for areas such as the Proctor's Office and Student Accommodation. By its very nature, the Proctor's Office manages concerns raised by students (e.g., disruptive noise, property theft, inappropriate behaviour) and the majority of these are resolved directly with those involved and invoking the Code of Conduct when needed. Similarly, College and Uniflats wardens routinely receive and resolve concerns from residents, such as personality challenges amongst flatmates and broken fittings. For the purposes of this report, the complaints listed below are those that were not, in the view of the complainant, satisfactorily resolved in that first response.

| | Subject of complaint | Number received | Number investigated | Resolved after investigation | | Partially resolved, ongoing |
|--|--|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| Complaints | <i>Student behaviour/ Code of Conduct</i> | <5 | 100% | 100% | | |
| | <i>Staff member</i> | <5 | 75% ¹ | 100% | | |
| | <i>Quality of information</i> | <5 | 100% | 75% | | 25% |
| | <i>University process</i> | 5 | 100% | 100% | | |
| | <i>University decision</i> | <5 | 100% | 50% | | 50% |
| | Nature of appeal | Number received | Number investigated | Upheld | Not upheld | Ongoing |
| Appeals | <i>Provost Appeals (Student behaviour)</i> | <5 | 100% | | 100% | |
| | <i>Council Appeals (University decision)</i> | <5 | 100% | 33% | 66% | |
| Total number complaints + appeals | | 21 | 19 | 16 | | <5 |
| Level of study* | <i>Undergraduate</i> | 16 | | | | |
| | <i>Postgraduate</i> | 5 | | | | |
| Gender* | <i>Female</i> | 4 | | | | |
| | <i>Male</i> | 12 | | | | |
| | <i>Diverse</i> | 0 | | | | |
| Ethnicity* | <i>NZ European</i> | 3 | | | | |
| | <i>Māori</i> | 0 | | | | |
| | <i>Pacific Islands</i> | 0 | | | | |
| | <i>Asian</i> | 2 | | | | |
| Recorded Disability* | | 0 | | | | |

¹ In one case, priority provision of mental health support for the complainant was the appropriate action. The case is not officially closed, so can be investigated should the complainant wish to pursue it.

*Note, because there is currently a mix of approaches to management of complaints data across the University, demographic information is not consistently recorded across all areas. Some information is not available, so totals do not align. This further highlights the importance of the proposed centralised complaints process.

No complaints were referred to the Tertiary Education Dispute Resolution (TEDR) Service in 2023.

Critical incidents

At the University of Otago Ōtākou Whakaihū Waka, tauria critical incidents are managed in accordance with our [Student Critical Incident Policy](#). We define critical incidents to be “a traumatic event which causes serious distress or harm to a student or group of students at the University.” The distress or harm could be directly where a tauria is an immediate victim of a traumatic event, or indirectly where tauria are affected by but not directly involved in an event. Critical incidents are managed by Director Student Services, who will convene as necessary a Critical Incident Response Team, comprising permanent members and others with roles specific to the incident. Aspects affecting whether a response is required include the degree to which Otago tauria are directly involved in the traumatic event, whether the event occurred in the context of operations or activities associated with the University, the number of tauria involved, and the extent of potential distress to tauria.

In addition to Otago-enrolled tauria who are on one of our campuses, we will also be involved in critical incidents affecting tauria who have commenced enrolment at Otago but have not yet come to campus, those on a break from study (either non-semester time or on officially withdrawn periods), and recent graduates. This is because tauria at any stage of their studies have connections to the people and the place, which will need to be taken into account when managing the University’s response to the incident. We also do not distinguish between critical incidents that occurred on our campuses (we treat our colleges and Uniflats as ‘on campus’) and those off-campus, and incidents that occurred during University activities and private activities. In all cases, we want to be sure all tauria and whānau impacted are given appropriate support and care. The numbers reported below therefore include tauria from those broad parameters.

| Type of Critical Incident | Total number | Gender | | | Enrolment status | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| | | Female | Male | Diverse | Domestic | International |
| Cause of death unknown | <5 | <5 | <5 | 0 | <5 | 0 |
| Accidental death | <5 | <5 | <5 | 0 | 0 | <5 |
| Suspected suicide | <5 | <5 | <5 | <5 | <5 | 0 |
| Total Critical Incidents | 8 | <5 | <5 | <5 | <5 | <5 |

For any further information about any matters covered in this report, please contact the [Director Student Services](#).