

# Student Complaints Annual Report

2023



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Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 00113B

## Introduction

Robust student complaints processes, and thorough analysis of complaints data to identify systemic issues, are key requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (Section 2.4: *Student Grievances and Complaints*) and the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*.

Deakin’s [Student Complaints Resolution policy](#) and [procedure](#) adopt an informal approach to complaints handling through local resolution wherever possible. Where not possible, or where the complaint is complex or serious, complaints are handled by the Student Complaints team in the Office of the Dean of Students, where necessary using a more formal, structured approach to investigation and resolution.

## Trends in Student Complaints 2019-2023

**Table 1** shows the number and rate of complaints (per 1000 enrolled students) received annually over the past five years. In the 2023 calendar year, 640 complaints (from 541 students, representing less than 2% of student enrolments) were lodged with the Student Complaints team in the Office of the Dean of Students. This represented fewer complaints compared to the previous four years, as well as a slight decrease in the number of complaints received per 1000 enrolments compared to 2022.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of complaints	905	1085	714	690	640
Complaints/ 1000 enrolments	15	17.8	10.8	11.7	10.9

Table 1: Complaints lodged with Student Complaints in the Office of the Dean of Students 2019-2023

## Categories of Student Complaints in 2023

Student complaints at Deakin are assigned to one of five major categories: academic matters; administrative matters; interpersonal matters; facilities and services; and other matters. **Figure 1** shows the percentages of student complaints in each of the five categories in 2023.

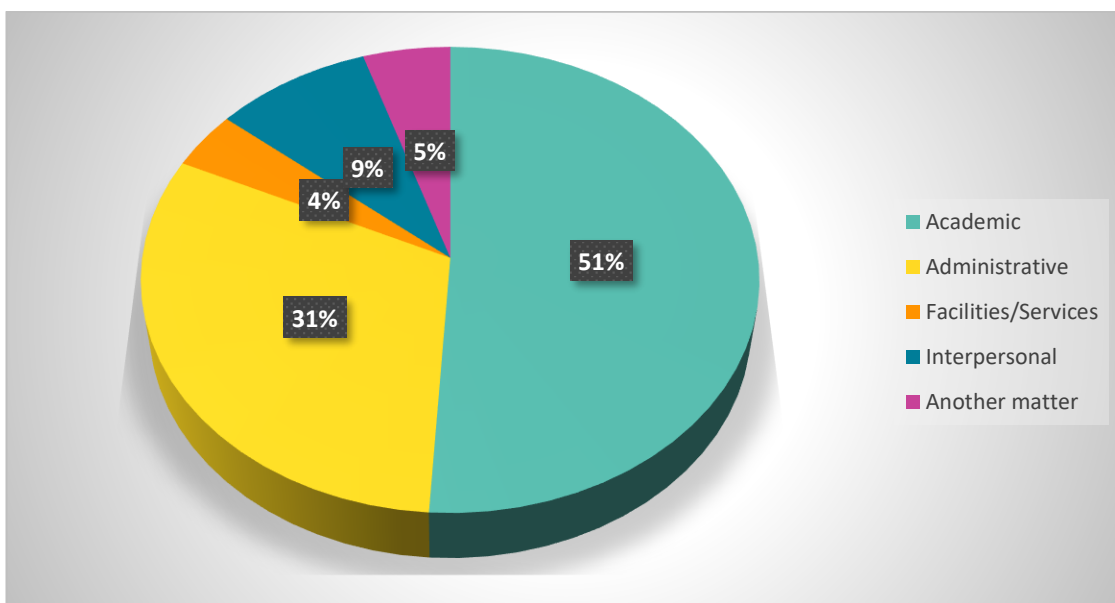


Figure 1: Distribution of student complaints across categories in 2023

### Academic matters (51%, 327 complaints)

This category has routinely constituted the largest percentage of overall complaints historically. In 2023, the largest volume of complaints concerning academic matters related to students' dissatisfaction with the outcomes of *assessment/review of result* (n=128, 39%) and *special consideration* (n= 92, 28%). This is consistent with previous years.

### Administrative decisions and processes (31%, 195 complaints)

The number and proportion of total student complaints in this category are similar to those recorded in 2022 (n= 217, 32%). Complaints about *Enrolment, deferment, intermission* formed the largest sub-category in 2023 (n=48, 25%). Complaints about *fees* (n=44, 22.5%) constituted the second largest sub-category of administration concerns, decreasing slightly from 2022 and 2021.

### Interpersonal matters (9%, 59 complaints)

This category saw a similar number and proportion of complaints to 2022 (8%, n=57). Most complaints in this category (n=34, 5%) were about *staff – other behaviour* (alleged misconduct by a staff member, other than bullying, discrimination and harassment).

### Facilities and services (4%, 24 complaints)

This category decreased in volume and proportion compared to 2022 (n=47, 7%). The largest proportion of complaints in this category were about *IT* (n=5), and *buildings and grounds* (n=5).

## 2023 Student Complaint Outcomes

The majority (81%) of complaints submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students for investigation in 2023 were found to be unsubstantiated, including a small number of enquiries only. Eleven percent of student complaints were substantiated and 8% partially substantiated. Approximately half of substantiated and partially substantiated complaints related to academic matters, including assessment, review of results and special consideration.

Students remaining dissatisfied with their internal complaint outcome may seek external review. In 2023, four student complaints handled by the Office of the Dean of Students were referred by complainants to the Victorian Ombudsman; in each case, the original outcome issued by the University was upheld.

## Priority actions arising from Student Complaints at Deakin in 2023

At Deakin, student complaints data are used to inform recommendations for change via policy review, strategic goal setting and feedback to local areas of the University as needed. Wherever possible, recommendations for changes to processes are referred to areas responsible for immediate action. In alignment with Deakin's strategic plan *Deakin 2030: Ideas to Impact* and Deakin's *Education and Employability Guiding Plan*, activities responding to systemic issues are carried out in partnership with students where possible.

In 2024, priority actions arising from analysis of 2023 student complaints data include work on:

- improving transparency of the process whereby students request an academic review of an assessment mark
- enhancing clarity of examination instructions (including remotely invigilated exams) to students
- strengthening student-centred requirements and decision-making in the Special Consideration process
- Ensuring clear alignment between the Student Placements procedure, Academic Progress policy, and course accreditation requirements around placements in order to improve the student experience and better support student success, particularly when identifying students at risk of failing a placement.