

POLICY: Non-Academic Grievances – Domestic Students

Policy Group(s): Group C: Administration – 3: Students (Ref: C3/0105.3-0420)

Related Policy: Academic Grievances – Domestic Students
Re-crediting of 'HELP' Balance and Review of Decisions
Staff Grievances
Student Code of Conduct

Commencement Date: January 2005

Scheduled Review Date: August 2025

POLICY STATEMENT

Intent:

In accordance with its foundation on Christian principles, Christian Heritage College (CHC) is concerned to maintain the highest levels of confidence in the quality and integrity of its courses and administrative practices.

CHC seeks to avoid non-academic decisions that disadvantage students and applicants to CHC through unambiguous policy, staff training and professional development. CHC encourages the informal resolution of disputes regarding non-academic decisions but recognises that there are instances where formal resolution is appropriate.

Scope:

This policy applies to all domestic students who are undertaking a course of study at CHC and to all domestic applicants who are seeking admission to a course of study at CHC.

Objectives:

1. To provide clear guidelines for processing non-academic grievances for domestic students and applicants to CHC courses.
2. To give effect to Christian principles of dispute resolution.
3. To maintain compliance with relevant legislation, regulations, guidelines or codes.

Policy Provisions:

1. General

- 1.1. Non-academic grievances are grievances that relate to matters such as application processes and outcomes, institutional practices, financial issues, resources, marketing and information, technology and access for students and applicants with disabilities to facilities and services.
- 1.2. The grounds for non-academic grievances are:
 - 1.2.1. Error in relation to a non-academic decision that is sufficient to cause disadvantage to a student or applicant.
 - 1.2.2. Injustice in relation to a non-academic decision that is sufficient to cause disadvantage to a student or applicant.
 - 1.2.3. Failure of CHC to adhere to policy in respect of a non-academic decision that is sufficient to cause disadvantage to a student or applicant.
- 1.3. All students and applicants are entitled to access the procedures set out in this policy regardless of the CHC campus at which they are enrolled or applied to enrol, their place of residence or the mode of delivery of a unit of 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. CHC will not victimise or discriminate against any student or applicant who engages in this process.
- 1.6. Students and applicants may be accompanied by a third party at any stage during the process provided that the third party is not a lawyer.
- 1.7. CHC Student Services is available to assist students and applicants to understand this policy and to engage in this process.
- 1.8. All communication between students and CHC staff members as referenced in this policy is to occur via their CHC email accounts.
- 1.9. CHC will retain confidential records relating to non-academic grievances for a period of five years and allow parties to the grievance supervised access to these records.
- 1.10. A student's enrolment will be maintained throughout the internal review process.
- 1.11. The process for addressing complaints relating to non-academic matters consists of five stages. Each stage is free of charge.
- 1.12. CHC will provide full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken at each stage of the procedure if so, requested by a student or applicant.
- 1.13. Extensions to the timeframes described in this policy as applying to the stages of the process may be mutually agreed by the parties to a particular stage of the process.
- 1.14. The procedures set out in this policy 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.

2. Stages of the Process

- 2.1. The stages of the process for addressing grievances relating to non-academic matters are:
 - 2.1.1. Self-reflection and Analysis of Feedback.
 - 2.1.2. Informal Process.
 - 2.1.3. Formal Internal Process.
 - 2.1.4. External Process.
- 2.2 The complaint may be settled at any of these stages, or progress to the next stage should a student or applicant not be satisfied with the outcome of a previous stage.

3. Self-Reflection and Analysis of Feedback

- 3.1. If a student or applicant is concerned about a non-academic decision, they should first engage in self-reflection on the decision, and consider:
 - 3.1.1. Information provided in advance of the decision (e.g. *Student Handbook*, CHC website).
 - 3.1.2. Feedback or reasons provided for the decision.
 - 3.1.3. Whether, in consideration of the facts, genuine grounds for disagreeing with the decision can be identified (see Provision 1.2).
- 3.2. If, following self-reflection and analysis of feedback, a student considers there to be grounds for a non-academic grievance, they have 20 working days from the receipt of the original decision to provide written notification to the staff member responsible for the decision that they wish to discuss their concerns.

4. Informal Process

- 4.1. Upon receiving written notification from a student, the staff member has 10 working days in which to contact the student to schedule a mutually convenient time during which both parties can discuss their points of view and attempt to resolve the matter.
- 4.2. Following the meeting between the staff member and the student, the staff member has 10 working days in which to provide the student with a written record of the meeting, including a record of discussion and the outcome of the discussion.
- 4.3. The staff member is to report the informal process to the Student Administration Officer for the purpose of entering onto the Non-Academic Grievance Register.
- 4.4. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, they may proceed to the Formal Internal Process.

5. Formal Internal Process – Step 1

- 5.1. Students who engage in the Informal Process and who then wish to proceed to the Formal Internal Process must submit an application in writing to the Vice President – Operations within 10 working days of receiving notification of the outcome of the Informal Process.
- 5.2. The application is to state clearly the specific grounds upon which the request for a review of the outcome of the Informal Process is based and include all necessary supporting information and documentation.
- 5.3. The Vice President – Operations will inform the staff member concerned of the receipt of the application.

- 5.4. Upon receipt of an application, the Vice President – Operations has 10 working days in which to make arrangements for a meeting of a review panel at which the application will be considered. The review panel is to be chaired by the Vice President – Operations and consist of at least three other academic or non-academic CHC staff who are not associated with the student or applicant and staff member concerned.
- 5.5. The student or applicant and staff member concerned will be invited to make such written and/or oral submissions to the review panel as they consider appropriate.
- 5.6. Following the meeting of the review panel, the Vice President – Operations has 10 working days in which to provide written communication regarding the decision of the panel to the student or applicant and the staff member.
- 5.7. If the student or applicant or the staff member is not satisfied with the decision of the review panel, they may proceed to Step 2 of the Formal Internal Process.

6. Formal Internal Process – Step 2

- 6.1. Students or applicants and staff who engage in Step 1 of the Formal Internal Process and who then wish to proceed to Step 2 of the Formal Internal Process must submit a written application to the Office of the President within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of Step 1 of the Informal Internal Process.
- 6.2. The application is to state clearly the specific grounds upon which the request for a review of the decision is based and include all necessary supporting information and documentation.
- 6.3. The Office of the President will inform the student or applicant and staff member concerned (as applicable) of the receipt of the application.
- 6.4. Upon receipt of an application, the Office of the President has 10 working days in which to appoint a Senior Review Officer to review the application. The Senior Review Officer will be a Dean of a CHC School that is not associated with the student or applicant.
- 6.5. The role of the Senior Review Officer is to review the decision of the review panel. This will include consideration of the application of this policy and of the processes followed, but it will not investigate the original grievance and will not hear evidence that was not provided to the review panel under Step 1 of the Formal Internal Process.
- 6.6. Upon their appointment, the Senior Review Officer has 10 working days in which to make arrangements for a meeting with the student or applicant and staff member concerned at which the student or applicant and the staff member concerned will be invited to make such written and/or oral submissions as they consider appropriate.
- 6.7. Following the meeting, the Senior Review Officer has 10 working days in which to provide written communication regarding their decision to the student or applicant and the staff member concerned.
- 6.8. If the student or applicant is not satisfied with the decision of the Senior Review Officer, they may proceed to External Process.
- 6.9. If the staff member is not satisfied with the decision of the Senior Review Officer, they may refer to CHC Policy: *Staff Grievances*.

7. External Process

- 7.1. Students who engage in Step 2 of the Formal Internal Process and who then wish to proceed to the External Process must submit a written application to the CHC President within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of Step 2 of the Formal Internal Process.
- 7.2. CHC has arranged for an external reviewer to be appointed by Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA). The cost, if any, for utilising the external grievance appeals process will be borne by CHC.
- 7.3. Upon receipt of a written request for an external review, the CHC President (or their delegate) has 10 working days in which to write to the Executive Officer of IHEA, detailing the complaint, the process applied thus far, the decision to be reviewed and the grounds claimed by the student for an external review of the decision.
- 7.4. CHC must provide contact details for IHEA to the complainant.
- 7.5. The Executive Officer of IHEA will appoint an external reviewer within 10 working days of receiving the application. The IHEA-appointed reviewer must have appropriate experience in the area of the grievance and be acceptable to both the complainant and CHC.
- 7.6. The IHEA-appointed reviewer must review the application and make a determination within 20 working days of receiving the application.
- 7.7. The IHEA-appointed reviewer must advise the CHC President, the complainant and IHEA within 10 working days of the determination, providing in writing the reasons and rationale for any decisions and/or actions to be taken.
- 7.8. CHC will ensure that the decisions of the IHEA-appointed reviewer are implemented within a reasonable timeframe commensurate with the nature of any change required by CHC to its processes and/or policies.
- 7.9. IHEA will retain all documentation pertaining to the grievance for a period of five years.
- 7.10. Where the grievance cannot be resolved by these means, the student or applicant will be advised of the appropriate legal body from which they can seek further assistance or advice.

8. Further Avenues of Appeal

- 8.1. This policy does not negate the right of any student or applicant to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws in the case of financial dispute, or to pursue other legal remedies.
- 8.2. If a student or applicant 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 or applicant of the closest tribunal to their location and the approximate cost of lodging a submission.

SUPPORTING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

1. Staff Training

- 1.1. Training concerning this policy is provided to CHC staff through scheduled staff meetings.
- 1.2. New staff receive training through staff induction processes.

2. Recording of a Grievance

- 2.1. The Student Administration Officer will keep records of grievances that occur under the Informal Process Stage.
- 2.2. The Vice President – Operations will keep records of grievances that occur under the Formal Internal Process – Step 1 stage.
- 2.3. The Office of the President will keep records of grievances that occur under the Formal Internal Process – Step 2 stage.
- 2.4. The Office of the President will keep records of grievances that occur under the External Process Stage.
- 2.5. Records of grievances are to consist of:
 - 2.5.1. Name of the student.
 - 2.5.2. Name of the staff member.
 - 2.5.3. Unit code and title to which the grievance applies.
 - 2.5.4. Grounds of the grievance (as per Provision 1.2).
 - 2.5.5. Written applications submitted by parties to the grievance (as applicable).
 - 2.5.6. Documentation provided by parties to the grievance (as applicable).
 - 2.5.7. Dates of and attendees at any meetings held in association with the grievance, as appropriate to the stage of the grievance.
 - 2.5.8. Salient points of discussion.
 - 2.5.9. Outcomes of the meetings and reasons for the decisions reached.
 - 2.5.10. Notification to parties of the grievance (as applicable) of the outcome of the process.

3. Non-Academic Grievance Files

- 3.1. Upon completion of each stage of the process, the relevant CHC staff member will transfer the record of the grievance to the Academic Registrar.

4. Storing of Files

- 4.1. Records of non-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.
- 4.2. Records of non-academic grievances will be kept for a period of five years.

5. Access to the Files

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

5.2. Parties to a non-academic grievance will be provided with supervised access to the files within a reasonable period of providing the Academic Registrar with written notification of such a request.

5.3. During this supervised access, parties to a grievance may read and make notes regarding the contents of the file but may not copy, record or remove items from the file.

6. Reporting of Academic Grievances

6.1. Summary data on the type, number and outcome of academic grievances will be reported in the Academic Board Annual Report.

RELEVANT COMMONWEALTH/STATE LEGISLATION

HESA 2003

HEP Guidelines

Higher Education Standards Framework (2015)

WHO SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY?

All CHC students and staff.

DEFINITIONS

Dean

The head of the School administering a course, includes the Executive director, Millis Institute.

The Department

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment of the Commonwealth government.

Grievance

A 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 a formal complaint requesting action or some form of formal response.

School

The academic organisational units of CHC, includes the Millis Institute.

ACRONYMS

CHC

Christian Heritage College.

HESA

The Higher Education Support Act 2003.

HEP Guidelines

The Higher Education Provider Guidelines.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Implementation:	Vice President – Operations
Compliance:	Vice President - Operations
Monitoring & Evaluations:	Director of Quality and Standards
Development/Review:	Director of Quality and Standards
Approval Authority:	Council
Interpretation & Advice:	Vice President - Operations

APPROVAL – section maintained by the Director of Quality and Standards

Reference No.	Approved	Date	Committee/Board	Resolution No./ Minute Ref.
C3/0105.2	Yes	05/05/2004	Council	11

REVISION HISTORY – section maintained by the Director of Quality and Standards

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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
0820	Approved	31/08/2020	Council	8.1

ADDITIONAL CHANGES – section maintained by the Director of Quality and Standards

<i>Nature of change</i>	Change of title
<i>Former title</i>	Grievance Policy and Procedures for Domestic Students – Academic Grievances
<i>Revised title</i>	Non-Academic Grievances – Domestic Students
<i>Approved</i>	