

The information in this document is located at [open.edu.au](https://www.open.edu.au) and <https://www.open.edu.au/student-hub/support/complaints-management>

We take your concerns seriously and we’re here to assist if you’re experiencing any issues with the administration of your enrolment.

Our goal is to ensure you have a positive and supportive study experience, which is why we handle student complaints with the utmost care. Every complaint is treated with respect, and you can be confident that all information will be kept confidential in line with our privacy policy <https://www.open.edu.au/legal/privacy>.

Our formal investigation process

We carefully investigate each complaint. However, there are certain requirements OUA must adhere to on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Education (the Government). Our priority is to ensure outcomes are fair and balanced. We group complaints into two types, and we address each accordingly.

Academic complaints

Academic complaints cover the services of the university that provides your subject or degree.

They can be about the curriculum, tutors, exam results, credits, pre-requisite exemptions or some other issue relevant to your university’s academic policy.

All academic complaints must be addressed directly to your university for resolution as OUA has no authority regarding academic complaints. Your university’s website will have details on their formal procedures.

Non-academic complaints

Non-academic complaints relate to matters that OUA has direct control over – such as enrolments, tuition fees (FEE-HELP), OUA advice and study planning, and other administrative functions. OUA’s 4-tier resolution structure is outlined below.

Level	Response Timeframe	Description	Procedure
Level 1 Informal complaint resolution	14 days	OUA is dedicated to resolving non-academic complaints. Some issues can be complex and may require extra time to fully investigate. In such cases, we will provide you with regular updates throughout the process.	<p>Student Complaints</p> <p>Contact Open Universities Australia on 13 OPEN (13 67 36)</p> <p>Speak to a Student Advisor who will listen to you, provide advice, and may request you to put your complaint in writing by sending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an email to: student.solutions@open.edu.au • or via https://www.open.edu.au/contact-us • or post to: <p>Open Universities Australia Student Solutions Complaints Triage GPO Box 5387 Melbourne Victoria 3001 Australia</p>

Level	Response Timeframe	Description	Procedure
			<p>Non-student complaints</p> <p>Higher Education Providers, affiliates, corporate partners, government agencies, suppliers and third parties:</p> <p>Prepare a written claim and include the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your full name and contact details, • your organisation name, if applicable, • a concise summary of your complaint, including the name of the OUA business unit, if known, and • any supporting documentation. <p>Email to feedback@open.edu.au OR By post to: Open Universities Australia Privacy Officer GPO Box 5387 Melbourne Victoria 3001 Australia</p>
Level 2 Formal complaint resolution	14 days	You have a right to appeal an outcome and upon request will be referred to Level 2. Your case will receive an outcome within 14 days of receipt.	<p>If you contacted us about a non-academic complaint and you're unhappy with the outcome, you can appeal in writing with your supporting documentation via:</p> <p>Email: review.resolutions@open.edu.au OR By post to: Open Universities Australia Student Solutions Complaints Triage GPO Box 5387 Melbourne Victoria 3001 Australia</p> <p>Written appeals will only be considered when your original Level 1 complaint outcome has been issued to you.</p> <p>You <u>must</u> provide all items of evidence that you have collected, including email communications to build and submit your complaint claim to be reviewed at Level 2.</p> <p>Your request for review must be made within 28 days of receiving our written advice from the Level 1 Informal complaint outcome.</p> <p>OUA will review your case and provide you with advice within 14 days of receipt.</p>

Level	Response Timeframe	Description	Procedure
			Outcomes might include referral to OUA’s Outcome Review Panel for FEE-HELP remissions to be considered or re-considered.
Level 3 Internal Review	30 days	If you decide to appeal further our Legal & Regulatory Compliance Team will investigate your case and you will receive an outcome within 30 days.	<p>If you’re unhappy with the outcome provided at Level 2, you may decide to appeal further, escalating your complaint to Level 3 Internal Review. You can appeal in writing with your supporting documentation via</p> <p>Email: internal.review@open.edu.au OR By post to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Open Universities Australia Student Solutions Complaints Triage GPO Box 5387 Melbourne Victoria 3001 Australia</p> <p>OUA’s Internal reviewer acts independently and has no previous knowledge of your complaint case(s) until they reach this level.</p> <p>An Internal review is OUA’s last opportunity to resolve a complaint. The purpose is to consider all the evidence provided, the claims and requests of the student, interrogation of the process followed by OUA staff and reply to the request for review.</p> <p>You <u>must</u> provide all items of evidence that you have collected to build and submit your complaint claim to be reviewed at this level. This review does not gather items from across OUA, it’s an investigation of both your claim, the patterns of behavior saved in your OUA student records, and the actions by OUA staff at Level 1 and Level 2 of the OUA complaints management process.</p> <p>You must appeal in writing via email to internal.review@open.edu.au stating your request be escalated to Level 3 – Internal Review.</p> <p>Outcomes might include override of previous decisions, sanctions removed or added to your OUA student record relating to items defined in the OUA student declaration, or procedural closure with referral to external review at Level 4.</p> <p>Your case might also be referred to OUA’s Outcome Review Panel for FEE-HELP remissions to be considered or re-considered.</p>
Level 4 External Review All FEE-HELP	Per government timeframes	Commonwealth Department of Education. OR	All claims must follow the Non-academic complaints process to its procedural end for referral to external review to be considered (Level 4). External agencies will only triage claims where

Level	Response Timeframe	Description	Procedure
related complaints		Administrative Review Tribunal (ART)..	OUA has procedurally closed the non-academic complaint at Level 3

How to make a complaint

Prepare your claim before you send to OUA.

The more information you submit in your initial claim *may* support a decision in your favour within the anticipated timeframes. Gather all the items of evidence you will need to submit your complaint claim.

At any time, during communications with OUA, you may be asked to confirm your identity, so have your OUA_ID and USI on hand.

Claims must relate to enrolments within the past 12 months. If your complaint relates to enrolments older than 12 months, you must provide compelling items of evidence to support your claim.

It is a compliance requirement that OUA staff follow a defined procedure to triage your complaint claim. If a checklist item cannot be identified, your claim will be dismissed, and you will be required to submit a new complaint claim.

You must supply adequate items of evidence to support your complaint. This might include copies of all emails, statements of enrolment, and records of results, and all HELP Loan receipts and loan statements including eCAFs and eCANs relevant to every subject cited in your complaint claim. OUA cannot copy attachments from a previous case.

Carefully construct your written complaint. Complaints deemed to be frivolous or vexatious will be referred directly to OUA's legal team and summarily dismissed.

You may be required to provide additional supporting documentation. You will be given 30 days to provide additional evidence. If you cannot provide all required documentation, your compliant case will be dismissed, and you will be required to submit a new complaint claim. OUA cannot copy attachments from a previous case.

A record of every complaint is stored in the OUA student record, including the claim, and investigation decision for complaints investigated by OUA at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

What to put in your written complaint:

- your name and contact details
- your OUA student ID
- a concise summary of your complaint
- supporting documentation. Note: you **must supply** all supporting documentation attached to your written complaint. Upon arrival, we will triage your complaint and try to help resolve your issue within 14 days.

A student may not demand, expect or call upon Open Universities Australia to process a refund with immediate demand for any reason. If your complaint refers to study fees that were deferred to a Commonwealth FEE-HELP Loan, a remission may be considered. You may be required to provide evidence of the fees attributed by OUA to your myHELPPbalance. The portal is accessible via <https://myhelpbalance.gov.au/>.

Remember:

If your **FEE-HELP** remission is approved, OUA will process it through the Australian Government's mandatory reporting system. After this, the Commonwealth Department of Finance and the ATO will handle the remission. The entire process can take up to 8 weeks to complete, and you can view the remitted balance in your myHELPPbalance portal. Please note that OUA cannot influence or expedite the remission process for the FEE-HELP loan you took out with the Government.

OUA has no authority or visibility of **HECS-HELP** remission information. If a **HECS-HELP** remission is approved for you, it is process by your university (not OUA) via the Australian Government mandatory reporting system and your remission

administered by the Commonwealth Department of Finance and the ATO. The process can take up to 8 weeks to finalise with the remitted balance available to view in your myHELPbalance portal. Refer to your university for more information.

OUA will provide a notice stating the complaint has reached its procedural end and include contact points to external agencies as required by the Higher Education Support Act (2003).

The notice will be required by external agencies to commence triage of any complaint. These include the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) and the Commonwealth Department of Education.

If you represent a third party making a complaint on behalf of a current or former OUA student, you will also be required to provide a Third-Party Authority form.

No communications will be considered by a third-party on behalf of an OUA student without their authority to do so.

A third-party authority must be in place at the time a case is received by Open Universities Australia.

Open Universities Australia
Attention: **Student Solutions Complaints Triage**
GPO Box 5387
Melbourne
Victoria 3001
Australia

Outcomes, appeals and reviews

Your OUA compliant case must be procedurally closed by OUA before you consider the next steps.

Only the OUA Investigative Review Officer can procedurally close complaints at the conclusion of Level 3.

The outcome of the review will be provided to you in a summary report and include information stating your case has reached its procedural end as required by the Higher Education Support Act (2003).

A **Procedurally Closed** statement may be used as a starting point for you to consider pursuing external review and third-party appeals who will triage your case and perform an external review of OUAs decision. The Procedurally Closed statement will be required by external agencies to commence triage of any complaint.

In some instances, claims are referred directly to Investigative Review from the Commonwealth Department of Education to re-join the OUA Complaints process. At the Department's request, OUA is required to re-commence the investigation of a complaint case at the Investigative Review stage (Level 3), irrespective of the stage a student previously abandoned their in-progress complaint.

Why can some Level 3 reviews take more time than usual?

We take student complaints very seriously.

We treat all complaints with respect, plus you can rest assured that all details will remain private according to our privacy policy <https://www.open.edu.au/legal/privacy>

During the course of an investigation, it may be necessary for OUA to access archive systems and information to cross-check previous enrolment and case history which may be pertinent to your current complaint. For example, if you have made a complaint previously that is older than 12-months, OUAs systems trigger notifications which prevent students and OUA staff from applying decisions to duplicate complaints.

OUA is obliged to protect student data and has a rigid process in place requiring OUA staff to apply for and obtain approval to access requested archived information. That's why it can take time to access and assess your complaint compared to the data available before a review outcome and this aligns with OUAs data retention policy.

Still not satisfied?

If you're not satisfied with OUA's decision following the appeals process, you can ask for a final review of the decision.

Level 4 External Review (external to OUA)

You will need your Procedurally Closed Level 3 complaint outcome to refer your complaint to Level 4 (and there are two distinct referral points for Level 4)

1. Commonwealth Department of Education

You may decide to self-refer your case to the Commonwealth Department of Education who will triage your case and ask for all supporting documentation – including the summary report from the Investigative review.

However, Commonwealth Department of Education will only review your case if it involves Open Access Single Subject Enrolments using FEE-HELP as the form of deferred payment via Open Universities Australia.

Complaints can be made via email to HEenquiries@education.gov.au and marked attention to: Department of Education, Student Information and Services Team, HELP, Students and Provider Integrity Branch, Higher Education Group.

Items emailed to this address will be acknowledged within 14 days of receipt. It is usual that investigations can take up to 60 days thereafter.

If you are not satisfied with the assessment of your case by the Commonwealth Department of Education, you may refer your case to the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART).

2. Administrative Review Tribunal (ART)

In the summary report from the Level 3 Investigative review by OUA, you will be provided with contact details of the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) applicable to the state you are located. The ART can review decisions made under Commonwealth Laws about Higher Education Regulation. ART cannot review decisions made under state or territory laws, or decisions made by local governments.

You must apply for a review of your OUA within 28 days after you receive the decision from OUA. You can apply to ART to extend the time limit to lodge your application. You must apply in writing and include reasons why the application is late. You can do this when you lodge your application for review.

At the triage of your case with the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART), you will be required to submit all items of evidence to support your claim including the procedurally closed statement issued to you at the conclusion of your Level 3 complaint.

A decision letter will tell you if the Administrative Review Tribunal can review your claim or not, and they're not always the first step in having a decision reviewed. In some cases, the ART cannot review a decision until there has been an internal review of the primary decision or the decision has been reviewed by someone else, this is why you need your claim procedurally closed by OUA before approaching the ART.

If you apply to the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) for review of a decision, you will usually need to pay an application fee of \$1,121. You should pay the fee when you lodge the application.

The ART will not start the review until you pay the fee.

If the fee isn't paid within 6 weeks after the application is lodged, it may be dismissed.

After you submit an application, the Administrative Review Tribunal will send you a confirmation letter explaining what will happen next.

Please visit <https://www.art.gov.au/applying-review/other-decisions> for further information.

Further Advice

Contact 13 OPEN (13 67 36) and ask for a call-back from the OUA Review & Resolutions Officer.

Or email the OUA Review & Resolutions Officer at review.resolutions@open.edu.au.

Written appeals will only be considered when your original Level 1 complaint assessment has been issued to you.

You must provide all items of evidence that you have collected, including email communications to build and submit your complaint claim to be reviewed by OUA Review & Resolutions Officer.