

FACT SHEET

Role of a Supervisor in a University Complaint or Investigation

Division of People and Culture (Fact Sheet reviewed July 2026)

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Role of a Supervisor

This fact sheet provides guidance for supervisors who receive a work-related complaint, concern, dispute, or grievance from a staff member. It outlines key responsibilities, processes, and support options available when the University receives and accepts a complaint.

About complaints

1. The University expects all staff to act respectfully and professionally at all times. Staff with concerns are encouraged to raise them with their supervisor (where appropriate), contact their Human Resources Business Partner in the Division of People and Culture (DPC), or lodge a formal complaint via the University's [complaint management system](#).
2. **Supervisors play a key role in the management of informal complaints locally.** They also assist in the formal complaints process by supporting staff, assisting DPC processes, and managing confidentiality within their area.
3. Terminology used in this document:
 - **Complainant** - the person making the complaint.
 - **Respondent** - the person the complaint is about.

Types of complaints

4. Complaints generally fall into the following categories:
 - **Informal Concerns / Complaints:** Informal resolution is encouraged where appropriate, provided the matter does not involve serious misconduct or a potential breach of the law. Concerns may be resolved directly between staff members or with support from a supervisor. Mediation can also be used to help parties reach a shared understanding or agreement.
 - **Formal Concerns / Complaints:** A formal complaint may be submitted to a supervisor, another manager, or through the University's [complaint management system](#). Formal complaints must be in writing and clearly outline the issue. Supporting documentation / evidence should be included. **Supervisors who receive a formal complaint must notify DPC.** If an informal approach has not yet been attempted, it may be recommended at this stage.
 - **Serious Misconduct:** Allegations involving bullying, discrimination, harassment, or vilification may constitute serious misconduct. These matters are managed under the relevant Enterprise Agreement, University policy, or employment contract, and should be escalated through formal channels.
 - **Public Interest Disclosure:** Concerns relating to corruption, maladministration, fraud or serious waste are addressed under the [Public Interest Disclosure](#) framework.

Supporting a worker who raises concerns

5. Supervisors support staff effectively by:
 - Modelling conduct aligned with the University's Code of Conduct, policies, and procedures.
 - Addressing inappropriate behaviour early or seeking advice from DPC when unsure.
 - Acting promptly and documenting relevant incidents.
 - Communicating reporting options and processes.
 - Maintaining confidentiality and handling information sensitively and on a need-to-know basis.
 - Protecting all parties from victimisation.
 - Encouraging staff to report incidents to management or DPC.
 - Referring staff to support services such as the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP).
 - Understanding relevant legislative requirements and assisting staff through information and training.

6. If an employee discloses potential misconduct to you in confidence, you must report this to DPC. Safety and welfare take precedence over requests for confidentiality. For more information about confidentiality refer to the [Informal Conversations Fact Sheet](#).

How the University manages a complaint

7. Once a complaint is received, DPC conducts an initial assessment. This includes reviewing the concerns raised, any supporting evidence, and other relevant contextual factors. The terms 'alleged', and 'allegation' are used to reflect the University's commitment to the principles of procedural fairness. Complaints remain allegations unless substantiated. Only complaints that fall within the scope of University policies will be managed under the [complaints framework](#).
8. Complaints are assessed based on their nature and severity and managed with objectivity, natural justice, and confidentiality. DPC will proceed in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.
9. Interim measures may be implemented to support safety and workplace continuity. These may include:
 - Temporary changes to reporting lines.
 - Adjustments to work locations.
 - Allocation of an alternative manager (where the complaint involves a supervisor).
 - Other operational adjustments as required.
10. Respondents in serious misconduct matters are generally instructed not to contact the complainant. Likewise, complainants must not contact the respondent. Both parties must maintain confidentiality to avoid compromising the process.
11. Complainants and respondents may have a support person present during discussions. Support persons provide emotional support only. See the [Support Person Fact Sheet](#) for more detail.

Timeframes

12. All complaints are managed in accordance with procedural fairness. This includes interviewing relevant witnesses, gathering evidence, and allowing the respondent to respond to the allegations.
13. DPC aims to complete investigations promptly. However, the timeframe may vary depending on the complexity of the matter. Supervisors will be kept informed throughout the process.
14. If the matter has been reported to the police, the University may pause its internal processes until criminal investigations are complete. This is to avoid interference and to respect legal processes.

Confidentiality

15. Discussions with DPC, whether you are a complainant, respondent, supervisor or witness; are confidential. You should not share the content or existence of these discussions with other staff members (unless they are responsible for investigating the matter or providing counselling and support on behalf of the University). Maintaining confidentiality helps ensure a safe, respectful, and fair process for everyone involved. You may, however, discuss matters with your trusted support people external to the University.
16. The University and DPC have legal obligations, including a duty of care. Personal information will only be disclosed when necessary to manage the complaint, when required by law, or if there is a serious threat to health or safety. You will be informed whenever possible if information needs to be shared.

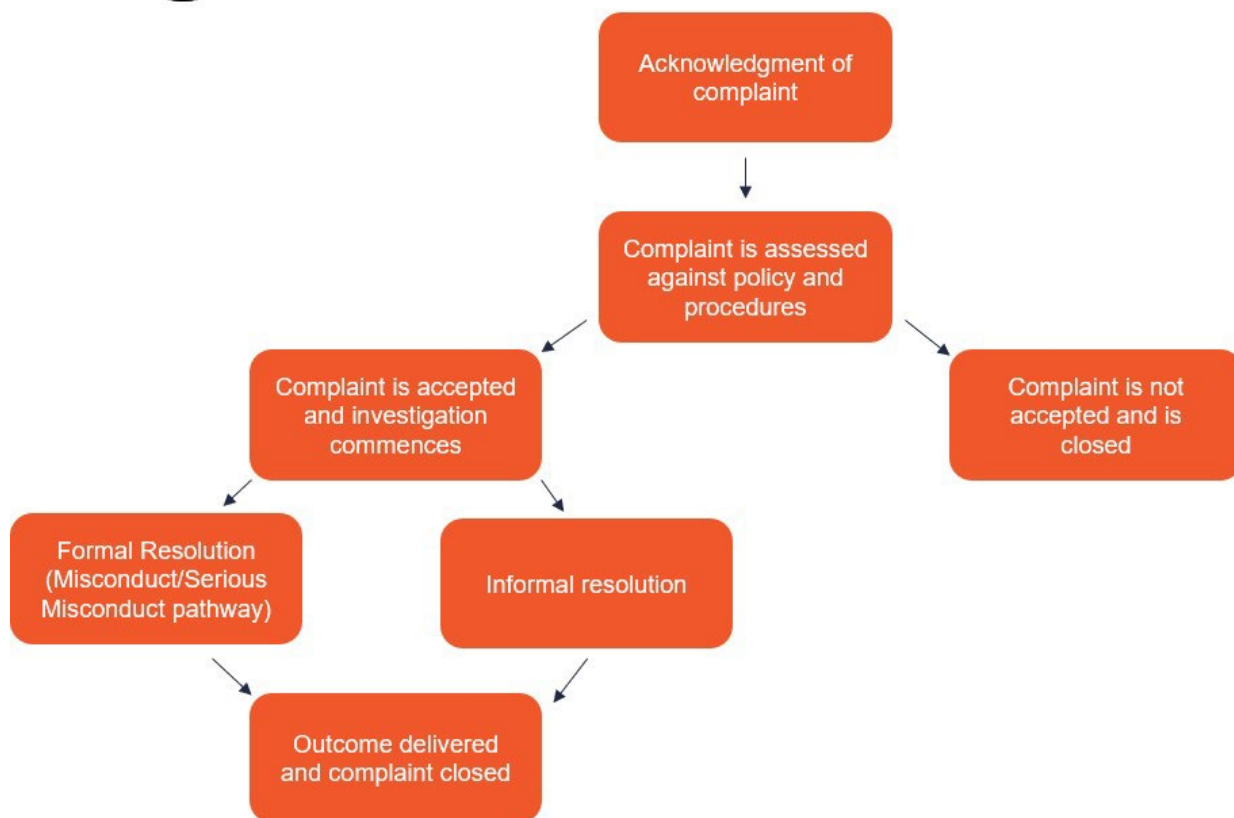
Support available

17. The University recognises that involvement in a complaint process can be challenging. Staff are encouraged to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential support and counselling. Call 1300 687 327 or visit the [Employee Assistance Program](#) page for more information

Complaints process



Charles Sturt
University



Further information

18. Relevant documents include:

- [Charles Sturt University Enterprise Agreement 2023-2025](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Complaints Management Policy](#)
- [Complaints Procedure – Workplace](#)
- [Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy](#)
- [Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Procedure](#)
- [Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy](#)

Questions or assistance

19. For further advice, contact the DPC staff member managing the matter, or your assigned HR Business Partner.