



Complaints Management System Development

**Complaints Resolution Unit
University of Western Sydney**

July 2006

Why?

- No University wide system for registering complaints – what was our risk exposure?
- Problems managing complaints
 - Double handling of same matter
 - Inconsistent outcomes for similar matters
 - Unnecessary escalation
 - Matters proceeding to litigation
 - Unknown complaint history and resolution times

Why - continued

- No defined process for the entry point of a complaint
- No way of learning from complaints – ie we fixed the matter, but not the problem

Research Phase

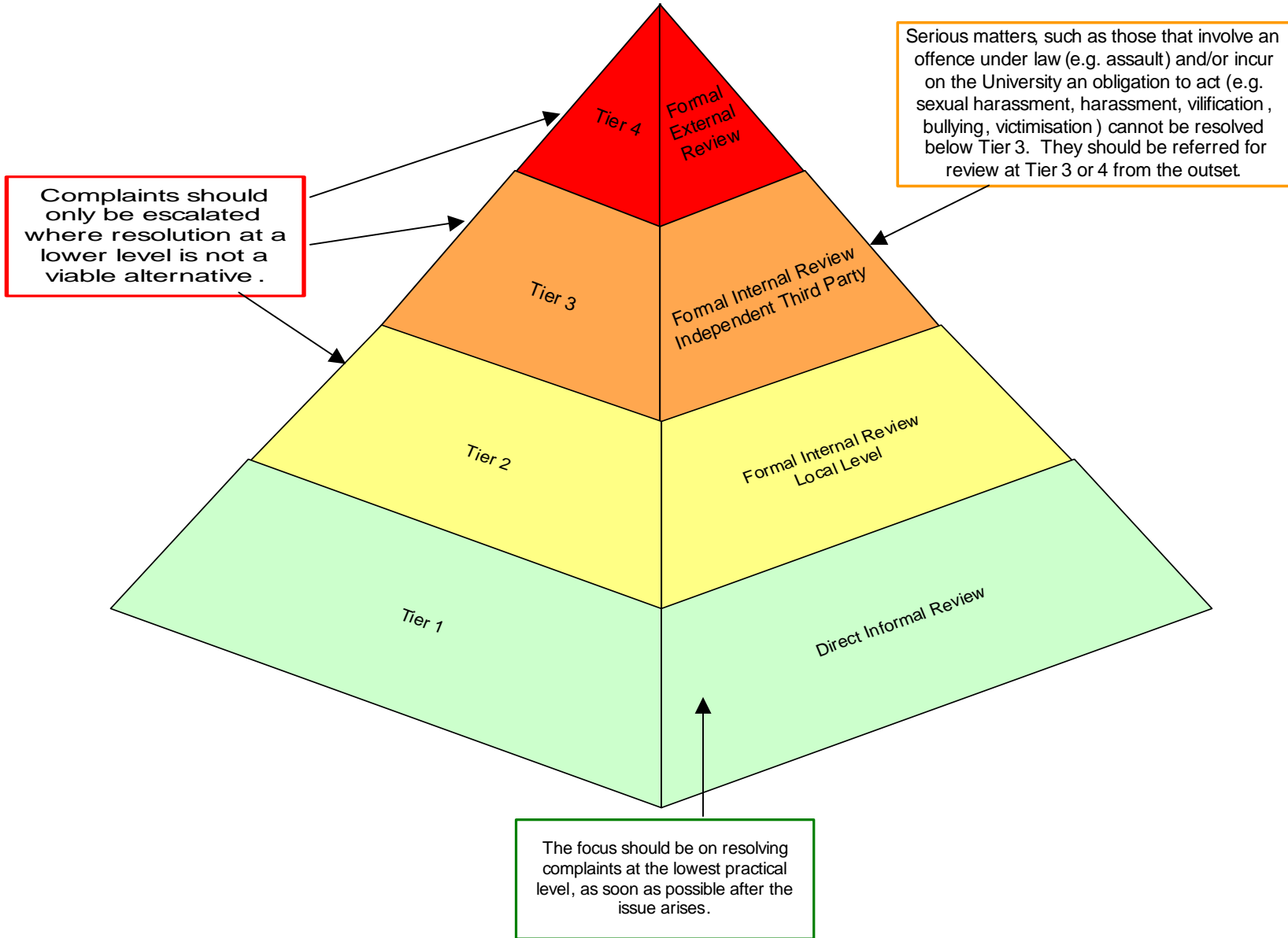
- How to define a complaint?
- Obtained data from Schools, Colleges, Registrar, admin support areas on complaints
- Tracked 160+ complaints over first 12 months
- Found average complaints cost \$7K to manage (including opportunity cost). That is, \$1.2 million for the 160+ tracked.
- Tip of the iceberg – probably about $\frac{1}{4}$ of actual complaints in University.
- Unresolved complaints increase cost disproportionately (higher level staff involved)

Research Phase - continued

- Complainants had negative view of UWS
- Found 14 points of entry for a complaint
- Complainants used 'scatter-gun' approach, increasing the cost of handling and risk of inconsistent outcome
- Needed a consistent model for answering complaints in external jurisdictions
- One matter tracked extended over three years and spanned the School, College, Social Justice, Vice-Chancellor and University Ombud.

Complaints Model at UWS

- Entry point is most local level (usually Unit Coordinator for academic matters)
- If unresolved, one escalation/review by next most senior officer. Review there is on merit and process
- If still unresolved, one escalation/review by CRU on process only. Ends internal options.



Expectations of the Model

- More complaints resolved at local level
- Decreased cost due to reducing ability to 'shop' between internal jurisdictions
- Decreased cost due to reducing opportunity for continual internal review
- Consistency of outcome
- Complaints resolved and originating problems addressed
- Estimated saving of \$2K on average complaint cost

System Features

- Intranet delivered system coded in ASP.Net
- Corporate look and feel
- Sets threshold for what a complaint is by categorising complaints and identifying actions a person has to take to fix the matter beforehand

System features - continued

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Log Off

Main Menu

Information For
→ Establish if a Complaint

Establish if a Complaint

Please categorise issue

Level 1 Human Resources

Level 2 Staff OnLine

Level 3 Access

Severity Routine

Is this a Complaint?:
Complainant must have already performed the following **Pre-Complaint Actions**

1. Return offer and acceptance (and related documents) to HR.
2. Activate your MyUWSAccount with your employee number.
3. Contact IT helpdesk.
4. Contact Staff OnLine helpdesk for assistance.
5. Refer to online Staff OnLine userguides.

Have the Pre-Complaint Actions been completed?

System features - continued

- If threshold is met, system sets out process for resolution – “best practice”

System features - continued

Best Practice - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Best Practice

Category: Human Resources
Staff OnLine
Access

Severity: Routine

Is this a complaint?:

To be considered a complaint, the complainant must have already done the following:

1. Return offer and acceptance (and related documents) to HR.
2. Activate your MyUWSAccount with your employee number.
3. Contact IT helpdesk.
4. Contact Staff OnLine helpdesk for assistance.
5. Refer to online Staff OnLine userguides.

How to process:

1. Determine that employee is a current employee.
2. Determine that employee is entitled to Staff Online access.
3. Ensure that Staff OnLine access has been created at the appropriate level.
4. Ensure that personal details are correct.
5. Advise outcome.

Time Frame:

? Working Days

Complaint Handling Principles:

1. Test each element of the complaint against available evidence
2. Hear all sides of the story
3. Maintain confidence of the complainant and respondent as far as possible
4. Act in a timely manner and ensure that all communications, decisions, outcomes and undertakings are documented as they occur
5. Keep all parties informed of progress and outcomes
6. Ensure decisions are taken within boundaries of authority
7. Treat all parties equally, with courtesy and avoid any bias in dealings or decisions
8. Focus on resolving the issue, not assigning blame
9. Close the loop and identify areas where process or products can be improved
10. Advise all parties of the outcome and ensure that options for review are known

Close Print

System features - continued

- Reporting ability –
 - By complaint category
 - By school/college/admin area
 - By complaint severity (ie routine, medium, high)
 - By number
 - By resolution timeframe
 - By labour intensity

System features - continued

- ‘Autopsy’ on the complaint itself and the originating product / process
- Stops or minimises perpetuation of similar complaints
- Reduces cost
- Reduces risk exposure
- Complaint file slides across areas as need for escalation arises. ie single complaint file from end to end.