

Student Critical Incidents and Complaints 2024



Introduction

The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice sets out requirements on tertiary education providers for public reporting of statistics on the number and nature of critical incidents, the number and nature of student complaints, and student experiences with the complaints process.¹ This report details UC's critical incidents and complaints for 2024 in line with these requirements.

Student Critical Incidents

UC defines a critical incident as any unplanned or unforeseen traumatic event affecting a student or students that has an impact on the University, its staff, its students and/or the wider community, or any actions of a UC student which, in virtue of their nature, give rise to significant alarm for the safety of other students, staff and/or the wider community.

Critical incidents include all student deaths on campus, and all off-campus deaths of students who had been assessed by the University as a learner at risk. It also includes all events or matters where a student has experienced serious physical or mental harm and either planning and/or managing the event or matter was inadequate, a plan was not followed, or an external review or investigation was carried out.

Table 1: Summary of 2024 Critical Incidents

Critical Incident Type	2024
Serious Assault	0
Sudden Death - On Campus	0
Sudden Death - Off Campus	2
Death (medical event/unknown cause) - Off campus	6
Serious Injury/illness - Off campus	2
Arrest	0
Total	10

¹ Refer to clauses 10(3)(g), 13(f)(i), and 13(f)(ii) in the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice.

Student Complaints

The UC Complaints Procedures Guide categorises student grievances into “Concerns” and “Formal Complaints”. Each term is defined as follows:

Concern: A complaint sent to the GAPA which is able to be informally resolved, and the submitter is either satisfied with the response or does not want a formal investigation carried out into the matter.

Formal Complaint: A complaint sent to the GAPA which requires formal investigation by the University and follows the UC Student Complaints Procedures accessible on the [UC website](#).

Procedure

Processes for making a complaint are laid out in the UC Student Complaint Procedures guide. The purpose of the Student Complaints Procedures guide is to provide transparency for students who either wish to, or have, made a complaint.

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing with evidence provided as applicable to the UC Grievance and Academic Processes Advisor (GAPA). The GAPA is the central point of contact to receive concerns and formal complaints from students and to keep them informed of progress in managing the concern or complaint. The GAPA ensures all items and information are channelled in the appropriate direction for resolution, monitors progress and ensures the correct process is followed. Advocacy support is available for students through the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team in close liaison with the GAPA, and pastoral support is available via UC’s Student Care team. The GAPA provides an annual report of complaint data and highlights any rising trends to the UC Senior Leadership Team and the Risk Advisory Committee, both of which are chaired by the Vice Chancellor.

The University of Canterbury Student Complaint Procedures Guide was reviewed by external legal counsel in 2024, with recommendations implemented for Semester Two 2024. Amendments included bolstering transparent fairness by inserting an additional principles regarding management of complaints by independent unbiased people who will ensure that all relevant parties are given the opportunity to be heard; redrafting sections regarding leave to appeal to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic); and general editorial changes. Further information was created for staff to guide them through the complaints procedure providing them with a clear outline for the consideration and resolution of complaints.

Thirty formal complaints were lodged in 2024 as classified under the University’s procedures. This includes seven formal complaints that were passed onto People and Culture to investigate through their own processes. Students can lodge complaints individually or on behalf of a group. If a student is acting on behalf of a group, the complaint will count as one intake item. The nature and general outcome of the formal complaints are included in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of 2024 Formal Complaints

Formal Complaint Outcome	Nature of Complaint						Total
	Assessment	Customer Service & Advice	Fees	Quality of Learning	Staff Conduct	Other	
Withdrawn					1		1
Dismissed							
Partially Upheld	1			1	2	1	5
Upheld		1	2	3	2	5	13
Not upheld	1	2	1	2	2	3	11
Total 2024	2	3	3	6	7	9	30

The University received formal complaints from a diverse range of students as detailed below in Table 3. All information used to analyse demographics is drawn from the Student Management System with information voluntarily provided by students at the time of enrolment.

Table 3: Demographic details of student complaints

Demographic Breakdown	Percentage	Number
Female	60%	18
Male	40%	12
Diverse	0%	0
Age		
Under 20	17%	5
20-29	33%	10
30-39	30%	9
40+	20%	6
Ethnicity		
NZ Māori	10%	3
NZ European/Pakeha	60%	18
Other	30%	9