

## ESCALATION POLICY

Document type: Policy  
Category: Governance

Document number: Rt 292/19

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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly the route that should be followed by staff, students, researchers, service providers and contractors in escalating issues, concerns and complaints to Senior Management and the Executive of the University of Pretoria.

This policy should be read in conjunction with any additional or separate policies, regulations and guidelines which are aimed at or otherwise provide for the addressing of reportable events or circumstances and, where applicable, the escalation or reporting of such events or circumstances to the appropriate level of University management or a competent regulatory authority. In so far as any such additional or separate policies, regulations or guidelines contradict this policy, the determinations of the former shall prevail.



## **2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE**

This policy is applicable to all staff, students, researchers, service providers and contractors at the University of Pretoria, and all persons whom they may engage to take up issues with the University on their behalf.

## **3. POLICY PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 It is our policy that staff members must be responsive to queries and managers must be responsive to complaints.
- 3.2 The University has a hierarchical structure, which in general establishes a line management framework. This is aimed at ensuring efficient and accurate communication, orderly an organised business operations and proper allocation of time and resources.
- 3.3 Past experience has demonstrated that disgruntled staff, students, researchers, service providers and contractors on occasion bypass line management and lines of responsibility and attempt to take issues up directly with members of the Executive or the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University, before they have engaged with the appropriate organisational functionary for managing such issues as a first line of action. This is especially true in circumstance where staff members, students, researchers, service providers and contractors are dissatisfied with what they perceive to be a lack of responsiveness or failure to attend to queries, complaints and issues timeously.
- 3.4 This practice is undesirable. Persons must raise their issues with the appropriate and responsible person at Faculty or Departmental/Centre/Institute level as they are best placed to resolve the matter immediately or escalate it should it be required. This is based on the fact that they possess or are able to obtain the information required to form an informed view on the issue raised. Failure to follow this route will result in the matter being referred back to that person and a delay arising in reaching resolution.
- 3.5 Staff members responding to issues are required to keep a written record of such issues, any interventions undertaken and the outcome thereof. Where a decision is made, a detailed written record of the reasons for the decision must be generated and kept until the matter has been finally resolved. The records will be made available if the matter is escalated in accordance with the policy. These records also may be required if the issue is escalated to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), the Public Protector (PP), the High Court of South Africa and/or any other relevant external forum.
- 3.6 Escalation is a normal practice when there is no response, when there is an undue delay in response, when there is a lack of substantive engagement on the issues that have been raised, the person with whom the issue has been raised lacks the authority to make a decision or by mutual agreement between the parties. Escalation, even by mutual agreement between two or more parties, can occur if agreement cannot be reached (deadlock) or if the decision or

action required can only be taken by a person at a higher level. Such a situation may arise if a matter cannot be addressed definitively within the existing organisational framework (such as policies, procedures, regulations and guidelines) or the requisite authority does not lie with the person dealing with a matter.

- 3.7 A staff member who wishes to escalate a matter must follow the steps set out in Rt 292/19: Annexure A. A student who wishes to escalate a matter must follow the steps set out in Rt 292/19: Annexure B.
- 3.8 Any person who has raised an issue which has not been resolved to his or her satisfaction, must advise the functionary with whom the initial complaint was lodged or to whom the matter was previously escalated, that the matter should be escalated or further escalated to the next level of authority.
- 3.9 All line managers across the University are required to determine provisional timelines for dealing with issues in their respective areas, and to communicate these timelines to the complainant and staff members where relevant. All issues must be dealt with in a professional manner and all correspondence must reflect such professionalism. All matters must be dealt with as strictly confidential.
- 3.10 This policy does not apply in emergencies and/or to matters involving threats to life or property, which should be reported to the Department of Security Services immediately. All complaints pertaining to gender-based harm, racial discrimination, homophobia or xenophobia and other forms of discrimination should be directed to the Transformation Office and will be dealt with in terms of the University's Anti-discrimination Policy and Manual.
- 3.11 If a staff member, student, researcher, service provider or contractor is unsure as to who the relevant functionary is to whom a matter should be reported as a first line of action, he or she should engage with his or her line manager or the responsible functionary (in the case of service providers and contractors).
- 3.12 The guiding principle of this policy is that matters should be dealt with at the relevant level of authority in order to ensure that they are resolved as soon as possible. Non-compliance will result in time and resources being wasted.

#### **4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

Guidelines for staff members for the escalation of matters (Rt 292/19: Annexure A)  
Guidelines for students for the escalation of matters (Rt 2929/19: Annexure B)

#### **5. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The Office of the Registrar will be responsible for the execution of the decision.

#### **6. POLICY LIFE CYCLE**

This policy should be reviewed every four (4) years.

## 7. DOCUMENT METADATA

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Document</b>                                      |                         |
| Number:  | Rt 292/19               |
| Version:   | First approved version  |
| <b>Role players</b>                                  |                         |
| Owner:   | Registrar               |
| Author:  | Prof C Nicholson        |
| Entity of author:                                    | Office of the Registrar |
| Contributor(s):                                      |                         |
| <b>Recommended</b>                                   |                         |
| Senate Committee                                     |                         |
| Date:  |                         |
| <b>Approval</b>                                      |                         |
| Executive  |                         |
| Meeting reference number:                            | Rt 293/19               |
| Date:  | 13 August 2019          |
| <b>Announced</b>                                     |                         |
| Date of announcement:                                |                         |
| <b>Effective from</b>                                |                         |
| Implementation date:                                 |                         |
| <b>Review</b>  |                         |
| Next review date:                                    | 2023                    |
| Last review date:                                    |                         |
| Last reviewer:                                       |                         |
| <b>Successions</b>                                   |                         |
| Superseded (this document has been replaced):        |                         |
| Supersede (this document consolidates and replaces): |                         |
| <b>Revoke</b>  |                         |
| Cancellation date:                                   |                         |

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## **GUIDELINES FOR STAFF MEMBERS FOR THE ESCALATION OF MATTERS**

Document type: Guidelines  
Category: Governance

Document number: Rt 292/19

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### **1. STAFF, RESEARCHERS, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND CONTRACTORS**

A staff member, researcher, service provider or contractor who wishes to escalate a matter must first raise the matter with the appropriate line manager responsible for managing the issue.

It should be noted that in instances where academic staff members or researchers wish to lodge a complaint or otherwise raise an issue which is not of an academic nature, such complaint or issue must be reported or escalated to the Head/Director of the relevant Department or Unit.

#### **1.1 Academic staff and researchers**

- (a) Report the matter to the Head of Department/School/Centre/Institute for resolution.
- (b) If the matter has not been resolved timeously, appropriately or definitively, the matter should then be escalated to the Dean.
- (c) Escalation to a level beyond Deans for academic matters should be directed to the Vice-Principal: Academic.
- (d) Escalation to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal should only take place as a last resort.
- (e) The decision of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal is final.

#### **1.2 Non-academic professional and support staff, service providers and contractors**

- (a) Report the matter to the relevant line manager and thereafter to the Director of a Department or Head of a Division or Unit.
- (b) If the matter has not been resolved timeously, appropriately or definitively, the matter should be escalated to the relevant Senior Executive Member (i.e. the Vice-Principal, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, the Registrar).
- (c) Escalation to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal should only take place as a last resort.
- (d) The decision of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal is final.

## 2. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Escalation Policy (Rt 292/19)

Guidelines for students for the escalation of matters (Rt 292/19: Annexure B)

## 3. REVIEW OF GUIDELINES

The Guidelines for staff members for the escalation of matters must be reviewed every four (4) years. The guidelines that are current at the time of review will remain operative until such time as they are formally amended.

## 4. DOCUMENT METADATA

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Document   |                         |
| Number:  | Rt 292/19: Annexure A   |
| Version:   | First approved version  |
| Role players   |                         |
| Owner:   | Registrar               |
| Author:  | Prof C Nicholson        |
| Entity of author:                                    | Office of the Registrar |
| Contributor(s):                                      |                         |
| Recommended  |                         |
| Senate Committee                                     |                         |
| Date:  |                         |
| Approval   |                         |
| Executive  |                         |
| Meeting reference number:                            | Rt 293/19               |
| Date:  | 13 August 2019          |
| Announced  |                         |
| Date of announcement:                                |                         |
| Effective from                                       |                         |
| Implementation date:                                 |                         |
| Review   |                         |
| Next review date:                                    | 2023                    |
| Last review date:                                    |                         |
| Last reviewer:                                       |                         |
| Successions  |                         |
| Superseded (this document has been replaced):        |                         |
| Supersede (this document consolidates and replaces): |                         |
| Revoke   |                         |
| Cancellation date:                                   |                         |

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## **GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS FOR THE ESCALATION OF MATTERS**

Document type: Guidelines  
Category: Governance

Document number: Rt 292/19

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### **1. GENERAL**

Students who encounter a difficulty or wish to raise a concern or take up an issue, should do so in accordance with the following processes:

- 1.1 Non-academic matters should be raised via the Student Representative Council (SRC) or through the relevant managers in the Office of the Director: Student Affairs and/or the Office of the Director: Residences and Student Accommodation.
- 1.2 If a matter has not been resolved timeously, appropriately or definitively, the matter must be escalated to the relevant Director.
- 1.3 If a matter has still not been resolved, it must be escalated to the Vice-Principal: Student Affairs.
- 1.4 Escalation to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal should only take place as a last resort.
- 1.5 The decision of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal is final.
- 1.6 It should be noted that the Department of Residence Affairs and Accommodation has its own procedures that are set out in the *TuksRes Guide and Rules* and are updated from time to time.
17. In relation to academic matters, as far as possible, the complaints process should be set out in the course handbooks and outlines. The relevant information should also be prominently displayed on faculty websites.

### **2. UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

- 2.1 All issues should be reported in writing, providing details of the complaint or issue.
- 2.2 It is imperative that the procedure outlined below be followed if the matter is to be resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible:

- (a) The student should first consult the lecturer concerned about the complaint or issue. If the matter is, however not resolved, the student should consult the class representative (The primary function of the class representative is to serve as a two-way communication channel between the class and the lecturer.)
- (b) If the matter remains unresolved the student should consult the module co-ordinator in the case of large module classes with multiple lecturers.
- (c) Where the co-ordinator is unable or fails to resolve the matter, the student should consult the Head of Department/Centre/Institute.
- (d) Should the matter remain unresolved, the student may approach the Dean of the Faculty.
- (e) Student matters should be resolved at Faculty level. However, should the above steps fail to bring about a resolution, the student may refer the matter to the relevant member of the Executive. In the case of an academic matter, it should be referred to the Vice-Principal: Academic. Other matters may be referred to the Registrar or another relevant functionary.
- (f) Only in exceptional cases, where no resolution has been reached through the above processes, and as a last resort, the matter may be escalated to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal's decision in any such matter will be final.

### **3. POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

- 3.1 All issues should be reported in writing, providing details of the complaint or issue.
- 3.2 Postgraduate students who experience a difficulty or wish to raise a concern or take up an issue whilst studying at the University of Pretoria, should do so in accordance with the following processes:
  - (a) Most issues or complaints can be resolved between the student and the supervisor or course co-ordinator without further escalation. Where the issues or complaints raised are not of a purely academic nature, the supervisor or course co-ordinator should assist the student as far as possible by directing the student to the relevant department/division/unit within the University that can render the appropriate assistance.
  - (b) As a first line of action, a postgraduate student should approach his or her supervisor (in the case of Research Master's or Doctoral students), or the course co-ordinator (in the case of Honours and Coursework Master's students). The supervisor or course co-ordinator is best placed to deal with any personal or study related problem that the student may encounter. The supervisor or course co-ordinator will be able to discuss issues of funding, the study project and also, to direct the student to appropriate personal support services where necessary.
  - (c) In instances where the problem relates to the supervision of the student or the conduct of the supervisor or course co-ordinator, the matter should be escalated to the Head of Department/School/Centre who will attempt to resolve the problem.



- (d) In the event that intervention at the Head of Department/School/Centre level is unsuccessful, the matter may be escalated to the Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies or, in the absence of such a Deputy Dean, to the Chair of the Research Committee of the Faculty.
- (e) If the matter still remains unresolved, it may be escalated to the Dean of the Faculty.
- (f) In the event that a postgraduate matter has not been resolved at Faculty level, the student may refer the matter to the Vice-Principal: Research and Postgraduate Education, who will attempt to resolve the matter.
- (g) Only after all of the above steps have been followed and the matter remains unresolved, the matter may be escalated to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, whose decision will be final.

#### 4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Escalation Policy (Rt 292/19)

Guidelines for staff members for the escalation of matters (Rt 292/19: Annexure A)

#### 5. REVIEW OF GUIDELINES

The Guidelines for students for escalation of matters must be reviewed every four (4) years. The guidelines that are current at the time of the review will remain operative until such time as they are formally amended.

#### 6. DOCUMENT METADATA

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Document                  |                         |
| Number:                   | Rt 292/19: Annexure B   |
| Version:                  | First approved version  |
| Role players              |                         |
| Owner:                    | Registrar               |
| Author:                   | Prof C Nicholson        |
| Entity of author:         | Office of the Registrar |
| Contributor(s):           |                         |
| Recommended               |                         |
| Senate Committee          |                         |
| Date:                     |                         |
| Approval                  |                         |
| Executive                 |                         |
| Meeting reference number: | Rt 293/19               |
| Date:                     | 13 August 2019          |
| Announced                 |                         |
| Date of announcement:     |                         |
| Effective from            |                         |
| Implementation date:      |                         |
| Review                    |                         |

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Next review date:                                    | 2023 |
| Last review date:                                    |      |
| Last reviewer:                                       |      |
| Successions  |      |
| Superseded (this document has been replaced):        |      |
| Supersede (this document consolidates and replaces): |      |
| Revoke   |      |
| Cancellation date:                                   |      |