

## Tips for dealing with complaints.

When a person decides to make a complaint, it is generally not spur of the moment and they have been thinking about it for some time. It can be a very stressful time for complainants and managing their expectations is essential.

- Remain calm – most problems have a solution.
- Be empathetic – not sympathetic e.g. *I understand this is difficult for you.*
- Listen and make no judgements.
- Adopt an open and not defensive posture.
- Ensure available evidence is secure.
- Use open ended questions.
- Ensure the conversation is held in a safe environment.
- What is the issue/concerns? Try and obtain agreement from complainant on the nature of concerns.
- What do they expect as a resolution (outcome)?  
*e.g. What are you hoping will happen as a result of making this complaint?*
- Make no commitments as to outcomes.
- Make a firm commitment to help them lodge their complaint or alternatively that you will seek advice so that they can a) be supported and b) their story can be told.
- Ensure available evidence is secured.
- Make a record of conversation and keep it confidential.
- Ask the complainant to be patient while the process is underway e.g. *Please try and be patient while UQ deals with your complaint. UQ needs to ensure that procedural fairness is provided to all parties.*

### Things to consider

- Did it occur on UQ premises?
- Who needs to be informed?
- Do you need expert advice/support?
- Can this matter be dealt with via informal resolution?
- Has the matter been reported anywhere else?
- Can you assist them to access support?
- Do they feel unsafe in anyway?
- Are there any risks to others?
- Is this a complaint that needs to be referred elsewhere e.g. Integrity Unit or HR/WR?
- Does the matter require reporting to the Queensland Police Service?
- Do they wish to report to the QPS and if so can you support them?
- Are there any witnesses?

### **Sexual Misconduct / Harassment matters**

- Are you the first person the complainant/victim-survivor is discussing this matter with?
- Does the complainant/victim-survivor require immediate counselling / support?
- These matters can be particularly traumatic—be cautious of the words and advice you give. Seek additional information on dealing with sexual misconduct complaints from the Sexual Misconduct Support Unit.

### **Research matters**

- Have they discussed these concerns with a Research Integrity Advisor – can you assist in arranging a meeting?
- For authorship disputes – has the complainant attempted to resolve it through direct discussions amongst the individuals involved?
- Is it a difference of opinion and can be dealt with informally?

Training purposes only