

11.6 Being a successful Grievance Officer

Every person at UNSW deserves to participate in the range of activities and opportunities offered by Clubs without fear of bullying, harassment, or discrimination. Arc is committed to ensuring this.

In 2019, Arc implemented new requirements for affiliated Clubs to have at least one role on the Executive team with grievance responsibilities. This position is intended to enable Clubs to better respond to feedback or issues, including bullying, harassment, and discrimination in Club settings. Arc understands that Clubs will sometimes have conflict and this is a healthy part of being part of a community of passionate people, however if that conflict becomes unhealthy, harmful or unlawful, Arc may not continue supporting the Club.

What does the Grievance Officer do?

Upon taking on a role with grievance responsibilities, they should familiarise themselves with their Club's Grievance Resolution Policy & Procedures document. This lays out guidelines for how grievances should be handled, though it does not prescribe the actions required to handle every grievance. Arc has minimum requirements for this document and has provided a template that can be used by Clubs and can be found on our Clubs Files & Forms page. *The steps outlined below are consistent with the template.*

The first step of any grievance process in an Arc-affiliated Club is that the involved parties should attempt to sort out the matter amongst themselves where possible and appropriate. A formal grievance process can sometimes have detrimental effects on the Club and/or the parties themselves, so the parties are encouraged to pursue informal options. If other options have been exhausted and one or both parties wish to raise a formal grievance (or where at least one of the parties does not feel comfortable addressing the grievance with the other parties), then the Club's Grievance Officer is tasked with receiving official reports of grievances.

If appropriate, the Grievance Officer will then examine the issue and explore appropriate outcomes. Depending on the issue they will either make a decision on the resolution of the grievance or recommend to the Club Executive on how the grievance should be resolved (the resolution may require approval/agreement from the Executive, e.g. agreement on changes to Club events or procedures). The Grievance Officer will then communicate the Club's decision to the involved parties.

Any Club member or person who has interacted with the Club is able to report a grievance, however, not all grievances will be the responsibility of the Grievance Officer to handle.

Grievances involving a crime or related to sexual misconduct should be reported directly to UNSW and/or police if the survivor is comfortable (these issues **must** be reported to Arc Clubs, but may be de-identified if the survivor wishes their details to be kept confidential). Student Grievance Officers are not trained in responding to sexual crimes or other serious crime and therefore are not expected to respond to allegations of this severity. For more information on how to respond to disclosures of sexual assault, please see the [Sexual Assault Action Plan](#).

Additionally, Grievance Officers are not required to handle personal disputes in which parties are not acting on behalf of the Club. The Grievance Officer is advised to use their discretion on this, however if they decide it is not appropriate for the Club to handle this grievance, this should be communicated and the complainant advised of their right to appeal to the Club Executive. This appeal should initially be made to a Club Executive member the complainant feels most comfortable with. That Club Executive member will then convene a second decision group of other Club Executive members. Following that, if the handling of the grievance or the outcome continues to be unsatisfactory for the complainant, they may in some circumstances refer the matter to the Arc Clubs team. This process is outlined in pictorial form in the appendix to this document.

Are you the type of person that would make a good Grievance Officer?

The ideal Grievance Officer is empathetic but understands their own boundaries. They should be able to acknowledge the feelings and perspectives of other Club members but also professionally communicate to complainants the limits of what can be achieved.

We understand that this is a lot to ask of someone, so if you care about people, care about the future of your Club, and care about doing the right thing, this role is right for you. Arc will provide you with information and support to make this job easier, including training, resources and guidance. If you are in this role and want advice on how to proceed with a grievance, please feel free to contact the Arc Clubs team (call (02) 9385 9840, email clubs@arc.unsw.edu.au or visit the Arc Clubs Space).

Behavioural requirements of a Grievance Officer

As a Club Grievance Officer, you are expected to uphold the following standards:

- Transparency – be open with your reasons for decisions
- Unbiased – if you feel you are conflicted, you should remove yourself from investigating and decision making. Another appropriate Club Executive can act as the Grievance Officer in these instances.
- Empathetic
- Communicative – you must communicate progress and decisions to the involved parties and Club Executive
- Accessible – Club members should know how to contact you
- Discretion and tact

For yourself you should also:

- Practice self care
- Ensure that you seek help if pressures are becoming too much

Extra tip: Do your best. Seek advice. Always seek to make decisions and actions that make you proud. This sort of role can be daunting but if you are doing all those things, you will most likely be doing a good job.

What sort of grievance might I expect to receive?

You could receive any form of grievance however the following are examples of those you might wish to investigate:

- There are not enough people of colour on the Club’s Executive;
- My contributions are being ignored;
- Not enough women are engaging in our Club;
- There is a culture of all the work being lumped on one person;
- Someone has posted inappropriate content on a public or private communication channel;
- I am being misgendered by members of this Club;
- People in this Club are making ‘jokes’ at the expense of my ethnic identity;
- People are not respecting that I need adjustments to my workload due to disability;
- I feel that because I’m not in the ‘in’ crowd of this Club, I am not being valued as highly, and;
- Many others

If you receive a grievance of the following description, you do not need to investigate:

Type of grievance	Why you do not need to investigate
I don’t believe that a person of <i>that</i> political belief should be on the Executive of this Club	Anti-discrimination policies require that any person is given the opportunity to be a part of Arc Clubs regardless of their political belief, unless their speech becomes unlawful e.g. hate speech
Accusation of sexual assault by a member of the Club	While you can provide support to the survivor, you are not trained in handling an allegation of this magnitude. You should report this incident to UNSW/police if the survivor is comfortable
At a party off campus a Club member spoke to me rudely	This is a minor incident and occurred when neither party was representing the Club in any capacity

You also do not need to investigate a grievance if requested by the complainant at any stage.

Am I conflicted?

As a Grievance Officer you should be able to recognise if you are conflicted and should remove yourself from any investigative or decision-making role. If you are directly involved in a report (either as the reporter or part of the activities described in the report), you must remove yourself from proceedings and instead another non-conflicted Executive member should handle the grievance.

You might also be conflicted if a close friend or someone you have had disagreements with in the past is involved in the report either as the reporter or part of the activities described in the report. You should responsibly use your discretion to decide if you are too conflicted to be involved in investigation or decision making.

If you feel that you are conflicted you should communicate this to the person who has made the report. The Club Executive should nominate another (willing) member of the Executive this is appropriate to act as the Grievance Officer in this instance. You should pass on to them all the information required to perform the role (such as guide documents and other support and everything you have received or collected about the grievance at the time). After this point, you should minimise further involvement with the grievance. Exceptions include responding to direct enquiries from the acting Grievance Officer.

How to investigate grievances

When you receive a grievance, you are required to determine whether that report is within your scope to handle and what form of action should be taken following that report. When investigating grievances you should generally interview the parties involved to get all sides of the story (if appropriate). From these interviews you should use your discretion to ascertain the required action. Your Club's Grievance Policies & Procedures should outline the standard policy to be followed.

Possible outcomes following review

Following the review, the Grievance Officer either makes a determination of the outcome or submits to the Club Executive their recommended outcome (depending on whether the outcome requires approval/agreement from the Club Executive). When a decision is reached by the Grievance Officer or the Club Executive, the Grievance Officer communicates the outcome to the involved parties. This can be a daunting prospect but if you seek advice and always seek to do the right thing, you will be fulfilling your role. The following actions are some potential outcomes of a grievance:

Action	Potentially relevant situation
Training modules for the Club Executive (and potentially other students that represent the Club, e.g. at stalls)	A grievance regarding bad culture in the Club broadly
Training for a specific Club member	A Club member has acted inappropriately in some minor way and shows remorse eg. Sexist 'jokes', lack of empathy for other Club members etc.
Commitment to improving culture e.g. more minority specific events, introducing an Executive position that focusses on fostering an inclusive culture within the Club	A Club has been exposed as having a bad culture with few Executive or general members from minority groups; a Club has had a few incidents of minor sexism, racism etc.
Warning	A Club member has disregarded the input of another member; a Club member has acted inappropriately in some minor way and shows remorse eg. Sexist 'jokes'
Removal of member from Club	A Club member has received three warnings; a Club member has committed a high-level misconduct eg. Sexual assault, bullying, intimidation etc.
Removal from the Club Executive	An Executive member has been inappropriate in their Club role; an Executive member has not been fulfilling their role and has no relevant excuse; an Executive member has been maliciously disregarding contributions from other members
Report to UNSW/police	If a serious misconduct has occurred particularly of a criminal nature eg. Sexual assault, theft etc.

No action	After review, it is found that there is documented evidence that complaint is vexatious (e.g. that this complainant has made similar complaints previously that were investigated and determined to be baseless).
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Please note that the above are just some examples of actions. You can also use more than one of these actions concurrently, for example, you may wish to give a member a warning and also recommend they complete training. There is no one grievance procedure or outcome that will be appropriate under every circumstance - you should use your discretion to determine what will work best for your Club and what is fair to those involved.

What do I do if members are unhappy with my decision?

Part of this role is accepting that your decisions will not always be well received by all parties. This can be difficult to handle especially when Club members are often also friends. To ensure that you are fulfilling your role appropriately while also protecting yourself you should:

1. Keep an open mind
2. Give reasons for how you came to your conclusion
3. Be open to criticism but firm on the limits of your role
4. Communicate clear information regarding appeal rights
5. Seek support when necessary

If criticism becomes abuse, you have a right to report this to UNSW, cease responding, block contacts, and/or communicate to the Club that abuse is not tolerated in your Club and action may be taken against anyone who acts inappropriately. If you need support handling this aspect of the grievance process, feel free to contact the Arc Clubs team and Arc Legal & Advocacy (you can email advice@arc.unsw.edu.au or make an appointment by contacting Arc Reception at (02) 9065 9000).

Are you struggling with your role?

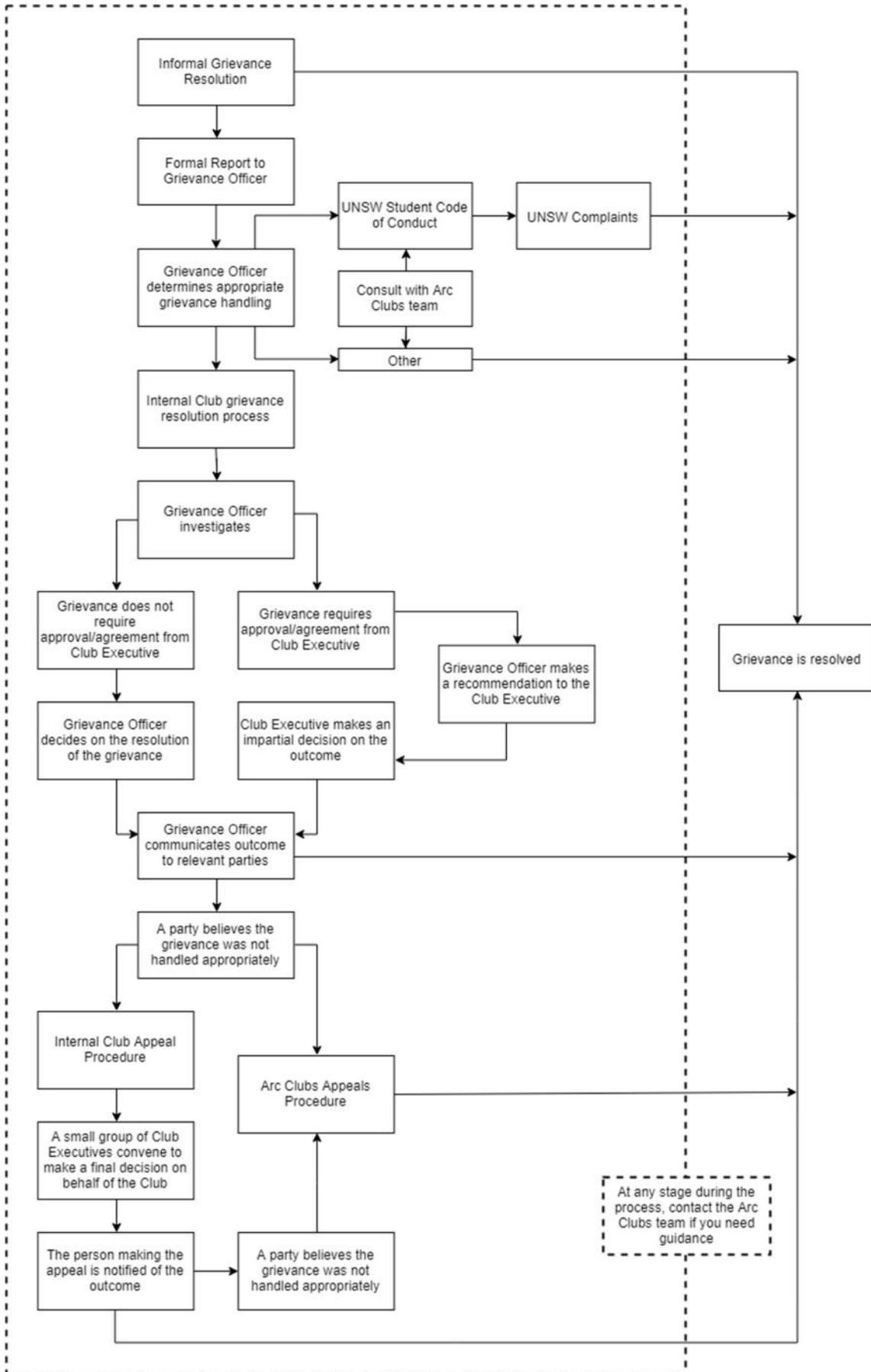
If you are struggling with your role and/or want to access support there are a number of places in Arc and UNSW that can provide that support.

Service	Number	Website
UNSW Psychology & Wellness (formerly CAPS)	9385 5418	https://student.unsw.edu.au/counselling
UNSW After Hours Mental Health Support Line	<u>1300 787 026</u>	https://student.unsw.edu.au/counselling/247
UNSW Health Services	9385 5425	https://student.unsw.edu.au/hsu Telehealth appointments available
UNSW Equitable Learning		https://student.unsw.edu.au/els
UNSW Security	9385 6666 (emergency) 9385 6000 (non-emergency)	
Arc Legal & Advocacy		advice@arc.unsw.edu.au
Arc Clubs Team	0965 0930	clubs@arc.unsw.edu.au

Resources to learn more

- Patriarchy: <https://organizingchange.org/patriarchy-persists-can-change/>
- Bystander fact sheet: <https://www.arc.unsw.edu.au/clubs/club-admin/club-forms>

Grievance Process Flowchart



Need Help?			
Call Us	Email Us	Visit us	Office Hours
02 9065 0930 <i>(during office hours)</i>	clubs@arc.unsw.edu.au	Level 2, Basser College <i>(just off the Basser steps past the Quadrangle)</i>	During Term: 10am - 4pm Outside Term: By appointment only
Files and Forms: www.arc.unsw.edu.au/clubforms		Clubs Handbook: www.arc.unsw.edu.au/clubs/clubshandbook	