



# Grades and assessments

## Unhappy about your academic grade or assessment?

This factsheet is about making a complaint when you are unhappy about your mark, grade, exam result or other measure of competency.

If you believe that your education provider has made an error or been unfair in awarding your mark:

**Step 1.** Talk to the teaching staff responsible for the course to question the mark, grade or other result.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome:

**Step 2.** Make a formal written complaint or appeal with your provider, using the provider's internal complaints and appeals policy. Your provider must give you a written outcome with reasons for its decision.

If you are not satisfied with the provider's decision and reasons given in its response:

**Step 3.** Make a complaint to an external complaint-handler, such as the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office)—but note we can only consider if your provider followed its academic assessment procedures. We cannot make academic merit decisions.

## Making an external complaint about academic assessment

The Office can consider complaints about an academic assessment awarded to an international student only from a procedural perspective. This means we can only consider if your education provider followed its academic assessment procedures correctly or not and has responded to your complaint reasonably.

Our Office cannot make academic merit decisions, cannot assess your competency and cannot alter your grade.

We can look at whether your provider has:

- a policy and procedure for assessing academic merit and competency, and awarding academic assessment results
- followed its academic assessment and award policy and procedures
- reasonably responded to your formal complaint or appeal regarding your assessment.

### Contact us

[ombudsman.gov.au](http://ombudsman.gov.au)  
1300 362 072

GPO Box 442  
Canberra ACT 2601

### The Ombudsman has offices in:

- » Adelaide
- » Brisbane
- » Canberra
- » Melbourne
- » Perth
- » Sydney

We can only look at your provider's procedures for assessing academic merit

We cannot make decisions about academic merit or competency, or change your grades

## How can I make an external complaint?

If you are an international student studying with a private education provider, you can complain to our Office. We investigate complaints about problems that intending, current or former students may have with private schools, colleges or universities (education providers) in Australia. You can fill out our online complaint form or phone us on **1300 362 072**. For more information about how to make a complaint and how to contact us, visit [ombudsman.gov.au](#)

If you are an international student or a domestic student studying with a public (government) education provider you can complain to the appropriate [state or territory Ombudsman](#).

## Who do I contact if I am unhappy with the quality of the course?

If your complaint is about the quality of the education, facilities, teaching or resources delivered by your education provider, you may make a complaint to the regulator. For more information, visit our website: [How to complain about the quality of your education provider](#).

You can also tell the regulator if you believe your education provider has not followed its policy or process relating to grades or assessment, for the regulator to note on its file. However, the regulator does not investigate individual student complaints about grades and assessment.

## Case study

Tilly<sup>1</sup> was an international student studying with a private education provider in Australia. She had sat an exam and logged in to her online study portal to see her result. She was pleased to see that she had passed. However the next time she logged in, she noticed that her mark had been changed and she had now failed the unit.

Tilly lodged a complaint with the provider and met with an academic supervisor to discuss the changed exam result, but the supervisor would not change the result back to her original passing mark, so Tilly contacted us to make a complaint.

We investigated the case and found that:

- there had been a computer error when marks were first uploaded to the provider's student portal, and marks were not matched to the right students
- the school later fixed the error, so that students received their own grades
- the school had communicated with concerned students
- the academic supervisor had met with Tilly to explain what had happened and had thought that Tilly had accepted the explanation.

In our view, the provider had acted fairly and reasonably in its actions relating to Tilly's mark, as the computer error had been unforeseen, and the provider had taken fast and appropriate action in the circumstances.

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More information is available at [ombudsman.gov.au](#).

Please note: This document is intended as a guide only. For this reason, the information should not be relied on as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice in individual cases. To the maximum extent permitted by the law, the Commonwealth Ombudsman is not liable to you for any loss or damage suffered as a result of reliance on this document. For the most up-to-date versions of cited Acts, please refer to the [Federal Register of Legislation](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Not her real name