

FACTSHEET

Help for Subject Officers

Who is a subject officer?

A subject officer is an employee or volunteer (staff) of The University of Queensland who is the subject of a complaint or allegation; which has been assessed by the Integrity and Investigations Unit (IIU) or management as requiring investigation or where some level of management intervention might be required.

How is a complaint received by the Integrity and Investigations Unit?

The IIU receives information and/or complaints regarding alleged conduct by staff of the organisational unit either in writing or verbally. Some complaints are also made anonymously.

If the complaint made falls within the description provided at section 13 of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010, the complainant may be identified as a "Discloser" under that Act and be afforded specific protection against reprisal.

When is the subject officer notified of an investigation?

When an investigation has been deemed as required, the subject officer is normally advised of the investigation at the time they are required to attend an interview. The purpose of their interview is to provide them with an opportunity to respond to those allegations formally.

If however a preliminary investigation or fact-finding exercise is being undertaken, then usually no particular advice is required to be provided to the subject officer. The reasons for this vary, including protecting the integrity of the investigative process, however one very important reason is so that people, such as subject officers are not placed in a situation where they suffer stress from finding out that they are subject of an inquiry, when the inquiry itself may not require the person to ever be questioned. In other words, why put people through stressful situations if the inquiry determines that there is no case to answer.

Attending an interview

Where it is determined that a response from a subject officer is required, he/she will be advised of a requirement to attend an interview. Where possible,

the subject officer will be afforded reasonable notice to attend such interview. The subject officer is entitled to know about the substance of the allegations prior to attending an interview with the investigator. The substance of the allegation consists of a broad description of the conduct being investigated and does not necessarily include all details of the matter but sufficient to allow that person to understand the nature of the alleged conduct.

The purpose of the interview is then to explore those matters in detail with the subject officer in a manner that is productive. Attendance at the interview is mandatory when directed by an appropriate officer (e.g. supervisor). A subject officer may also be directed to answer questions relevant to the conduct of the inquiry. Failure to comply with either direction could result in disciplinary action separate from the original inquiry.

A subject officer is entitled to invite a representative or support person to attend the interview with the subject officer. See the IIU Fact Sheet titled "Help for Representatives" for further detail. In most cases, the interview will be electronically recorded. If requested by the subject officer, a copy will be made available at the conclusion of the investigation.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the responsibility of all involved in an investigative process. You must not disclose information regarding any aspect of the investigation or fact-finding exercise; other than to authorised persons (such as your union). The IIU will maintain strict confidentiality in regard to all records gathered as a result of any investigation. However staff should be aware that such records could be released by a person or process with appropriate authority (e.g. Right to Information Act 2009 [including release of information to the University's insurer], legal requirements, natural justice, etc.).

At the conclusion of the investigative process, the subject officer will receive advice as to the next step in the process.