

Process for handling complaints of offensive comments in online evaluations

The University adopts the following process in relation to offensive student comments.

There are two stages to this process. The first stage is when a word used by a student is identified as “offensive” in an offensive word glossary that is retained in the system. This comment is automatically forwarded to Evaluation Services (in the Division of Student Learning - DSL) with the offensive word highlighted.

The second stage is when a lecturer clicks on the “report as offensive” tab. A message then pops up asking for a confirmation that the lecturer does indeed find the comment offensive. The confirmatory request verifies the request indicated by the tab action. If a person confirms that they did indeed find the comment offensive, then that report comes to Evaluation Services (DSL).

The Coordinator of Evaluation Services contacts the lecturer to discuss the issue. Sometimes lecturers decide not to proceed with the complaint but, if they wish to take it further, then Evaluation Services arranges a consultation between the lecturer, the University Ombudsman and the Executive Director, Division of Information Technology.

A decision is made on the course of action to be taken, based on an objective evaluation of the usage of the word or phrase that has triggered the lecturer’s response. If disciplinary action is to be taken, the Executive Director, Division of Information Technology notifies the student (with copies to the University Ombudsman, the appropriate Executive Dean and Head of School and the Coordinator, Evaluation Services).

This action is taken under the [Computing and Communications Facilities Use Policy](#).