## **Conflict Management Framework for PGR Supervision**

Enhance and expand supports for management of conflict in supervision relationship

WP#6 – Staff Experience



## What you said (voice of the community):

- Lack of visibility on available guidance on managing and resolving conflict in the supervision relationship.
- Tailored and dedicated supports for postgraduate research students are required such as peer-to-peer mentoring, coaching.
- Provide enhanced training and support for supervisors of postgraduate students.

## What we learned (Analysis):

- The pathways to conflict resolution are not clearly marked as there is not a College-wide guideline for conflict resolution.
- The current conflict resolution supports are decentralized, ad-hoc and vary across Schools, adding complexity and frustration to parties experiencing difficulties, often resulting in conflict escalation.
- Although there are several institutional services supporting resolution of conflict in supervision of research students, they experience significant workload issues.
- Delays in access to appropriate help may lead to escalation of conflict and impacts negatively on students' and supervisors' experience, mental health and well-being.

Horizon 2: Mapping out and enhancing resources for management of conflict in the supervision relationship

## 6 Rs Conflict Management Framework for Supervisors and Research Students

#### 1. Recommend 3. Reflect 4. Resolve 5. Refer 2. Recognise (Prevention) (if Conflicts Exists / Emerging) (Finding Potential Solutions) (Taking Action to Find Solution) (by Escalation) Existing resources: Existing resources: Existing resources: Engage in dialogue to agree Level 1 • Use Supervisor - Research strategies to address · Conflict Resolution · Review resources and Engage with Student Agreement. concerns (both parties). trainings available. Flowchart. School Contact Person or · Terms of Reference for Thesis Engage in dialogue to Director of Teaching & Committees. understand emerging Learning (PG) or nominee Thesis Committee Guidelines. concerns (both parties). Postgraduate Advisory Research Student Handbook. Discuss with the Thesis Service Supervision of Research Committee (both parties). Avail of independent Students Best Practice Guide. Consult College Support mediation. · Avail of Supervision Services (both parties). Development Programme (Supervisors). Level 2 · Code of Conduct guideline Engage with (currently in development) · Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Recommended resources Recommended resources Recommended resources Escalate to Conflict (to be explored): (to be explored): (to be explored): Ombudsman. Avail of Peer-to-Peer PGRs engage with peer Tailored Induction Programme Mentoring Programme for mentoring group. for PGR students. If not resolved: PGR students. · PGRs engage with dedicated · Peer-to-Peer Mentoring. Avail of Tailored Coaching coaching service. Programme for PGR students. Level 3 Support for PGR students. · Tailored Coaching Support for Submit a complaint / PGR students. disclosure. 6. Respect (Dignity & Respect Policy)

## Still to do:

### **Horizon 2 (ending December 2025)**

- Present proposed Code of Conduct for Supervisors and Research Students for consideration by College governance.
- Develop proposal for pilot Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Programme for research students.
- Identify feasible opportunities for providing tailored coaching supports to research students.
- Develop proposal for introduction of Independent Mediation and Conflict Ombudsman service.

## Impact (what would success look like):

- Transparent procedures and support structures to enable early and local management of issues between supervisors + students.
- Specialist resources in place to offer impartial, independent and sustainable supports.
- Adequately trained and supported staff and students who are empowered to resolve issues informally and constructively.
- Reduction in the number of conflict cases that escalate or remain unresolved, decrease in the attrition rates.
- Fewer formal complaints.

## Conflict Resolution Flowchart for PGR Supervision

Identifying pathways and supports for early + local resolution of disagreements if they arise



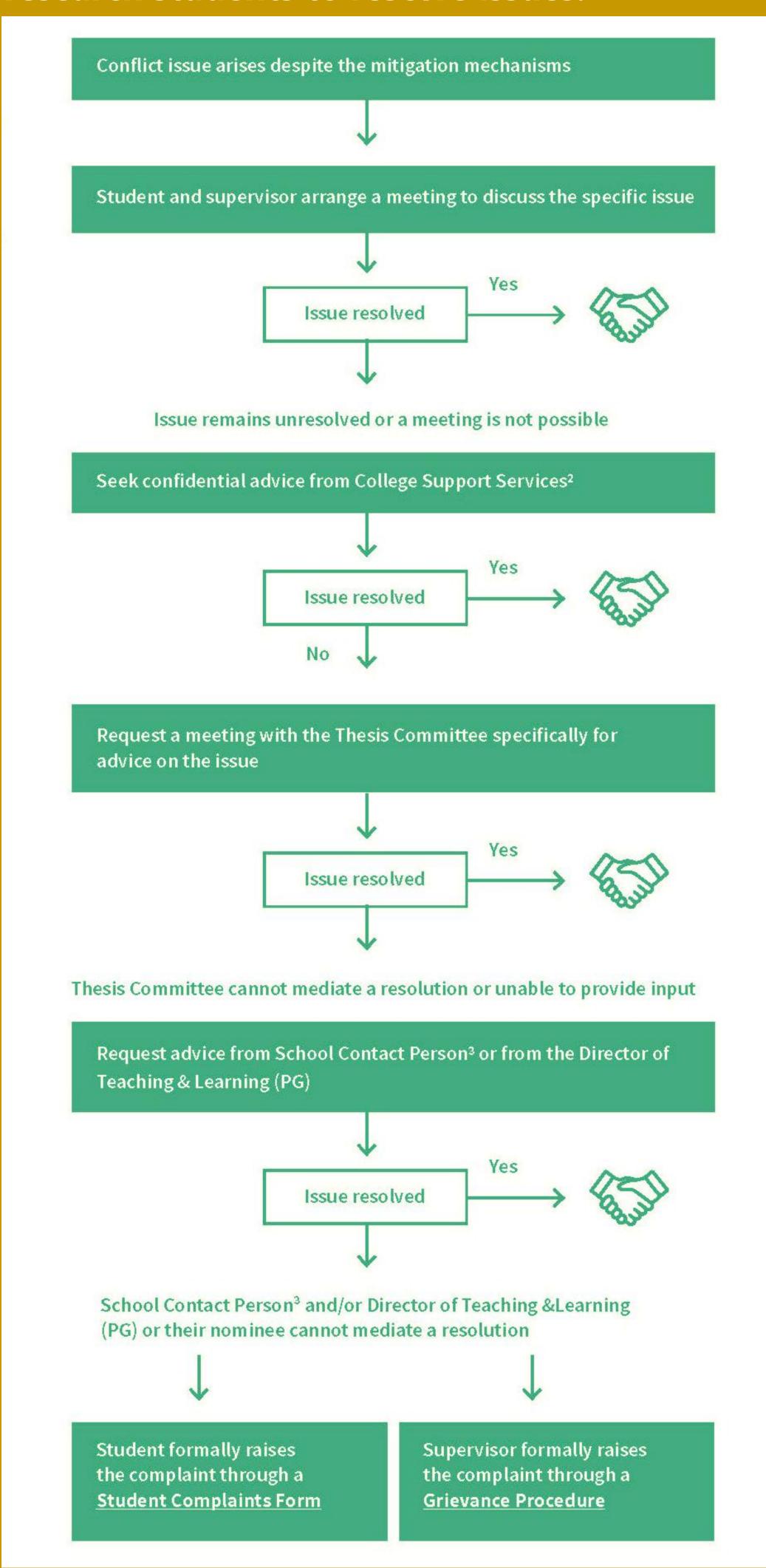
## What you said (voice of the community):

- The pathways to conflict resolution are not clearly marked as there is not a College-wide guideline for conflict resolution: "Provide clear guidance about what measures to address problems are available and how one can accesses them".
- The current conflict resolution supports are decentralized, ad-hoc and vary across Schools, adding complexity and frustration to parties experiencing difficulties, often resulting in conflict escalation.

## What we learned (analysis):

- Unresolved conflict in the relationships between supervisors and research students may have severe impact on the student well-being and progression.
- Escalation of conflict may contribute to the increased demands on the College support services including Postgraduate Advisory Service, Student Counselling, Schools and the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.
- Unresolved conflicts can cause stress and reputational damage for supervisors.
- A transparent conflict resolution process creates an opportunity to validate the circumstances of conflict for both parties.
- Trinity should foster a culture of conflict prevention.

## Horizon 2: We outlined the pathway with step-by-step supports available to supervisors and research students to resolve issues:



# Conflict Resolution Flowchart and enhanced guidance for conflict resolution

• We published **conflict resolution guidance** on the Graduate Studies website and in the Research Student Handbook.



Scan to view conflict resolution resources

• We developed a Conflict Resolution Flowchart to guide supervisors and students in identifying conflicts, considering mitigation strategies, and implementing solutions.

### Still to do:

## **Horizon 2 (ending December 2025)**

- Explore and design options for providing structured supports for navigating difficulties in the supervisor research student relationships, including:
  - Peer-to-Peer Mentoring
  - Coaching Programmes
  - Conflict Ombudsman

#### What success looks like:

- Trinity fosters a culture of conflict prevention, which supports a safe and respectful social foundation of the University.
- Transparent procedures and structures in place to enable an early and local resolution of issues between supervisors and research students.
- Provision of training to empower supervisors and students to constructively discuss disagreements and resolve difficulties.
- Trained resources available to offer impartial, independent and sustainable mediation supports.