



# Client Complaints Policy and Procedure

## Purpose

North Regional TAFE (the College) values client feedback and recognises that opportunities to improve products and services arise from effective handling of client complaints. The College ensures complaints are processed in a way that reconciles the interest of clients and the College whilst ensuring expectations of fairness are met.

## Definitions

<b>Complaint</b>	<i>is any expression of dissatisfaction or concern raised by a client in relation to the products or services provided by the College.</i>
<b>Client</b>	<i>any person or organisation accessing the products and services of the College, including students, employers, industry/enterprises, other government agencies and community groups, or those providing services to the College.</i>
<b>Reasonable action</b>	<i>action taken by a staff member to try to resolve a complaint that is within their area of responsibility and takes account of their level of authority and decision making.</i>
<b>Resolution</b>	<i>an outcome to a complaint which seeks to reconcile the interests of the client making the complaint and the College.</i>

## Objective

This policy and procedure outlines the way in which the College manages and responds to client complaints involving the conduct of:

- the College, it's trainers, assessors or other staff,
- a third-party providing services on the College's behalf, it's trainers, assessors or other staff or,
- a student of the College

This policy does not relate to:

- Appeals by students against academic matters such as student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study at North Regional TAFE (refer to Assessment Appeal Policy).
- A matter of concern between North Regional TAFE employees (refer to Employee Support and Grievance Policy).

Appeals or feedback regarding decisions related to actions covered by the provisions of the Public Sector Standards in Human Resource Management.

## Access to the College's Complaints Policy

- The opportunity for Clients to provide the College with feedback, including using the complaints procedure, will be made widely available to Clients through printed material and publication on the College's website (<http://www.northregionaltafe.wa.edu.au/>).



- Where Clients have special needs, every reasonable effort will be made to provide additional information if requested, and to make the complaint lodgement procedure in a format that is suitable.

## Principles of natural justice and procedural fairness

- Complaints will be handled fairly, recognising the rights of both the Client making the complaint and the College, or the section/division of the College, or person against whom the complaint is being made. All parties concerned will be treated with courtesy and appropriate confidentiality will be maintained.
- At all stages of the process, the complainant and/or respondent has the right to be represented by a third person (such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person).
- The College will be transparent and accountable in relation to Client complaints by informing stakeholders about feedback received and actions taken to improve products and services resulting from analysis of feedback.
- The complainant is to be informed of their right to be able to apply to an external body if unsatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint process (eg Australian Mediation Association or Ombudsman).
- The College agrees to be bound by any recommendations arising from the review by an external agent. The Managing Director will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report from the external agent.

## Complaints are addressed in a timely manner

- In the interest of providing the most effective and timely address of Client concerns and complaints, complaints should be dealt with as close to the source as possible and involve the people most directly concerned.
- The College will respond to complaints in a timely manner and ensure the complainant is kept informed of progress in the resolution of the complaint and of any undue delay.
- Where a complaint is made anonymously this will be regarded as feedback and rated into the College's continuous improvement processes where appropriate.

## Responsibility for application of this Policy

- Managers are responsible for the training of staff in the application of this policy and implementation and adherence of the policy. The College will ensure appropriate training for staff involved in the complaint management process. The College's policies and procedures are mapped through the staff induction program.
- Where a complaint represents a significant or strategic risk, the Manager Student Support Services will immediately bring this to the attention of the Managing Director or an appropriate member of Executive Management Team (EMT).
- Where necessary the Managing Director will have the final determination in the outcome of a complaint.

## Data collection and recordkeeping

- The College will collect data and maintain records of complaints received and their outcomes. These will be analysed by EMT at least twice yearly to identify systemic issues that can be addressed through continuous improvement.



- All documentation relating to Client complaints will be forwarded to the Manager Student Support Services to be recorded in accordance with the College's electronic records management system and policy.

## Procedures

A Client may withdraw a complaint at any point in the procedure.

### Informal Complaint

- The first level of the complaint procedure is informal where a Client may approach a member of staff to discuss a concern or make a complaint. This does not need to be in writing, and it is anticipated that most complaints can be resolved at this level.
- A Client may approach any College staff member to discuss a concern or make a complaint. The staff member has a responsibility to take prompt and reasonable action to try to resolve the complaint. If necessary, the staff member may ask for assistance from or refer the Client to an appropriate officer, for example their supervisor or relevant Director.
- Where the Client lodging the complaint is under the age of 18, the staff member is to inform the Client that their parents will be notified and asked to be involved in resolution of the complaint, unless the informal complaint is of a trivial nature, easily addressed and it is not practicable under the circumstances to contact parents.
- The staff member should record the details of the complaint, the Client involved and any actions taken to resolve the complaint. The details can be recorded in an informal way, e.g. in a diary or as a file note, however appropriate confidentiality must be maintained.
- An informal response will generally be given verbally to the Client within **ten working days** from when it was received. The Client should be informed that a formal procedure is also available to them if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the informal process.
- The staff member involved is to provide details of the complaint to Manager Student Support Services by the most appropriate means. This should be done ensuring appropriate confidentiality is maintained and as soon as is reasonable to ensure data regarding complaints is recorded and shared with the Manager/Director of the area as necessary.
- If the complaint has not been resolved to a satisfactory level through this informal process, the Manager Student Support Services is to forward the complaint to the relevant area for investigation and recommendation. The complaint then becomes a formal complaint.

### Formal Complaint

Once it has been established that the complaint could not be resolved through the informal process the complaint is made formally in writing and must contain at least the following details:

- Client's name and contact details.
- A description of the complaint, including where, when and who was involved.
- A description of the steps already taken to try to resolve the complaint.
- An indication of the Client's desired outcome.
- In the interests of making the procedure as accessible as possible, Clients may use any format listed on the College website Feedback page.



- Staff will provide assistance to Clients in putting their complaint in writing if this is requested. Staff may record a formal complaint over the phone into an email for actioning as a formal complaint. Clients may also ask a friend/colleague or fellow student to assist them in lodging a complaint.
- Where the Client lodging the complaint is under the age of 18 the staff member is to inform the Client that their parents will be notified and asked to be involved in resolution of the complaint.  
Any staff member may take receipt of a written complaint. All written complaints should be forwarded immediately to the Manager Student Support Services who will scan and register the complaint on the relevant electronic records file and then forward to the appropriate Director or Manager for resolving. Details of the complaint are recorded and tracked through the complaints register.
- The Manager Student Support Services Quality will issue a written acknowledgement to the Client's supplied email address advising that the complaint has been received and lodged as a formal complaint as per this policy. Also included is the expected outcome resolution date, and the name of the nominated staff member who will be contacting them.
- The nominated staff member, will liaise with the Client and relevant staff to ensure the complaint is resolved. Where the complaint involves allegations against a College staff member, the Director will inform the Manager Human Resources. Where necessary, the Managing Director will be consulted and have the final determination in the outcome of a complaint.
- The Client making the complaint will have the opportunity to formally present their case. This can be in writing or verbally and may involve clarification of the initial complaint.
- Upon completion of the investigation, the area Director or Manager will provide the Client with a response in writing, informing them of the outcome of the complaint and the reasons for any decisions.
- The Client will normally be provided with a written response within **30 working days** from when the formal complaint was received. The Director or nominated staff member should keep the Client informed of the progress of the complaint resolution or if there are any delays in the resolution process.
- Where the College considers more than 60 calendar days is required to process and finalise the complaint, the College will:
  - inform the Client in writing, including the reasons why more than 60 calendar days is required; and
  - regularly update the Client on the progress of the matter.

The written response will include the outcome of the complaint, reasons for the decision, any changes which have resulted from the complaint, an apology where appropriate, and information about the option to have the complaint reviewed by an external agency, such as the Ombudsman and will provide the contact details as follows:

If you feel the College has not resolved your complaint and wish to pursue this matter further you may refer the complaint to the Ombudsman Western Australia:

In person: Level 2, Albert Facey House  
469 Wellington Street  
PERTH WA 6000  
Phone: 08 9220 7555  
Freecall: 1800 117 000 (free from landlines)  
Fax: 08 9220 7500  
Email: [mail@ombudsman.wa.gov.au](mailto:mail@ombudsman.wa.gov.au)



Postal: PO Box Z5386  
St Georges Terrace PERTH WA 6831  
Further information can be obtained by visiting:  
[www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au)

- If the recommended actions involve discipline of staff the Manager Human Resources is to be consulted.
- All relevant information regarding the complaint is to be made available to all parties to assist in the resolution process. However, appropriate confidentiality must be maintained.
- Once the complaint has been finalised all documentation, including any replies, meeting notes and file notes are to be forwarded to the Manager Student Support Services for recording and registering on the College's records management system.

## References

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)

[WA Equal Opportunity Act 1984](#)

[WA Public Sector Code of Ethics](#)

[Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986](#)

[Racial Discrimination Act 1975](#) Racial Discrimination Act 1975

[Sex Discrimination Act 1984](#)

[Sex Discrimination Amendment \(Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status\) Act 2013](#)

[Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984](#) National Complaints Code

[Vocational Education and Training Act 1996](#)

[Higher Education Support Act 2003](#)

[Standards for RTOs 2015](#)



## Document owner to complete

Document owner	Manager XXX	
Responsible committee	Executive Management Team	
Responsible director	Director Corporate Services/Organisational Services/Training Pilbara/Training Kimberley	
Related policies and documents	Provide a list of hyperlinks to related forms, policies, procedures, legislation, etc  <a href="#">Assessment Appeal Policy.docx</a> <a href="#">Grievance Resolution Procedure.docx</a> <a href="#">Ombudsman Guide - Effective Complaint Handling</a> <a href="#">Ombudsman Guidelines and Information Sheets</a>	
If applicable	Document number	Document name
Removal required of superseded policy or other document?	QM001POL	Complaints Management Policy

## Executive staff to complete

Date approved	Date of Executive meeting or MD's email
Date of next review	Generally 3 years

Refer to [Policy Management Framework](#) in order follow approval process for policy including ensuring important areas for consideration are addressed and applicable consultation is undertaken.