

Policy Owner: College Director and Principal
Keywords: Complaints, Administration, Quality
Policy Code: QBIP0027

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1. INTENT

- 1.1 The purpose of the Student Complaints Policy is to provide a constructive service environment that supports individuals to make or respond to Student Complaints, and Edith Cowan College ('ECC' or the 'College') to learn from Complaints.
- 1.2 Accordingly, this Policy outlines the principles, roles and responsibilities in relation to Student Complaints handling at Edith Cowan College. This Policy complements, but does not supersede, formal processes established for the resolution of concerns related to academic matters designated under other instruments.

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all ECC Staff and to all prospective and Enrolled Students.

3. DEFINITIONS:

- 3.1 The *Glossary of Policy Terms* applies to this Policy.

4. POLICY CONTENT:

- 4.1. Edith Cowan College is committed to ensuring that Student Complaints are addressed fairly, promptly and at the most appropriate level in the College and that Student Complaints handling will contribute to the quality improvement cycle at the College. This commitment is consistent with the College's long-term goal to be recognized for providing a world-class pathway education and a fulfilling Student experience.

Student Complaint Management Principles

- 4.2 Edith Cowan College's management of Student Complaints will be guided by the following:
- 4.2.1 **Improvement** – Student feedback and Student Complaints are important mechanisms which assist the College to achieve its strategic priorities. Feedback from Students provides a means by which the College can analyse and improve its services as part of its broader commitment to continual improvement.
 - 4.2.2 **Accessibility** - Information on who and where to Complain is readily available to Staff and Students and the process of making a Student Complaint should be free of charge, flexible and easy to understand.
 - 4.2.3 **Responsiveness** – Student Complaints are acknowledged and acted on promptly and parties to a Student Complaint should be kept informed about the progress of that Complaint.
 - 4.2.4 **Procedural Fairness** – Principles of procedural fairness will be observed appropriate to the circumstances, allowing for:
 - a) parties to a Student Complaint reasonable opportunity to explain their position in relation to the Complaint;
 - b) objective assessment of the information provided by both parties by a person or persons other than the original decision-maker; and
 - c) the provision of reasons for any decisions made, or conclusions reached, sufficient to enable a party to decide if they wish to challenge a decision or conclusion.
 - 4.2.5 **Supportive** – The College's Student Complaint handling process demonstrates to individuals who are involved in a Student Complaint that the personal and professional needs and expectations of Students and Staff are important.
 - 4.2.6 **Confidentiality** – Principles of confidentiality will be observed in the course of handling a Student Complaint and associated record keeping. Some personal information will need to be shared with the Staff member helping to resolve the Complaint.
 - 4.2.7 **Support persons** – Students making a Complaint are entitled to be accompanied by a support person when meeting with a College Staff member. The role of support persons under this Policy is to support parties to a Student Complaint. Support persons shall not mean persons acting on the behalf of, or as an agent or representative of a party to a Student Complaint.
 - 4.2.8 **Accountability** – The College is accountable for its actions and decisions.

Student Complaint Management Levels

- 4.3 Wherever possible the College aims to resolve Student Complaints at the earliest opportunity and most local level thereby reducing the potential for costs, delay or anxiety for all parties.

- 4.4 Edith Cowan College provides Students with a three-level Complaints resolution process, comprising an Informal Student Complaint process, and, if the issue is not resolved for the Student, a Formal Student Complaint process. Students may Appeal the outcome of a Formal Student Complaint to the Student Appeals Committee.

Informal Student Complaint

- 4.5 In the course of Staff members' day-to-day provision of a responsive service, Student concerns are often negotiated and resolved as and when they arise through clear, reasonable and responsive communication between Staff and Students.
- 4.6 Students with a concern should in the first instance attempt to resolve their concerns through discussion with a member of Staff directly involved in the matter which has given rise to the concern, asking for an Informal review of the decision or action.
- 4.7 Where this is not possible, or where the Student feels unable to contact the person most directly concerned, the Student may elect to contact a Manager or Academic Program Coordinator.
- 4.8 An Informal Complaint review should be provided as quickly as possible, with Students given advice as to when they should expect a response.

Formal Student Complaint

- 4.9 Where a Student Complaint is not able to be resolved by the Informal Complaint process, Students may lodge a Formal Complaint.
- 4.10 The Student and Academic Services Manager will be responsible for the administration of Formal Complaints lodged under this Policy, in accordance with the Student Complaints Procedures.
- 4.11 Formal Student Complaints will be acknowledged by Student and Academic Services as soon as practicable, but no later than five (5) Calendar Days after the lodgement of a Formal Student Complaint.
- 4.12 The College's response to a Formal Student Complaint will be issued within thirty (30) Calendar Days of the lodgement of that Complaint. The response issued to a Complainant will provide reasons for any decision made in relation to the Complaint. In consultation with the Complainant, the Quality and Compliance Manager may record an extension of time at the request of a Staff member investigating a Student Complaint, on the grounds of operational need (taking into account such factors as the availability of key Staff).
- 4.13 Expiration of periods for the acknowledgement or issuance of a Formal Student Complaint response will not invalidate a decision reached, but instead shall be used to benchmark the timeliness of the College's responses to Student Complaints.

Complaint Referral

- 4.14 Concerns which fall outside the *Student Complaints Procedures* will be referred by Quality and Compliance Manager to the most appropriate person in the College for consideration. A record will be retained by the Quality and Compliance Manager of the Complaint and the reasons for the referral.
- 4.15 Complaints about Staff which involve corrupt conduct will be directed to the College Director and Principal.

- 4.16 Complaints which are determined by the Quality and Compliance Manager to be frivolous, vexatious or malicious will be recommended to the College Director and Principal for dismissal. A record of each Student Complaint so dismissed, along with reasons for the dismissal, will be made on the Student Complaint Form and provided to the Student. Dismissal of a Student Complaint will not preclude the Student from seeking an external avenue of complaint.
- 4.17 A comprehensive record of each Student Complaint will be kept by the College, documenting the Student Complaint management process and records associated with the response to the Student Complaint. These records will be retained in a confidential College file, in accordance with the College's record management policies.

Student Appeals

- 4.18 If a Student is not satisfied with the outcome of a Formal Student Complaint, they may submit an Appeal to the Student Appeals Committee, as outlined in the *Student Appeals Policy* and *Student Appeals Procedures*.

External Complaints Resolution

- 4.19 Following the provision of a decision from a Formal Complaint, or at any time during the resolution process with Edith Cowan College, Students may lodge a Complaint with an external agency.
- 4.20 When closing a Formal Complaint Student and Academic Services will provide Complainants with details of external avenues of Complaint that may be available, for instance, the Western Australia Ombudsman, the Overseas Student Ombudsman, WorkSafe, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the State Administrative Tribunal or other external agencies that may be relevant depending on the nature of the Complaint.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The Procedures Owner, the **College Director and Principal**, has overall responsibility for the content of this Policy and related Procedures and their operation in the College, including the provision of training and awareness raising activities for Staff involved in Student Complaints management.
- 5.2 **Students** are required to comply with the content of these Procedures and to seek guidance in the event of uncertainty as to their application.
- 5.3 **Staff** members are responsible for ensuring that Student Complaints about the administrative practices or services of the College as may be brought to their attention are treated with due consideration, are dealt with in a timely manner, in accordance with the principles outlined in this Policy and acted upon or referred to the appropriate area of the College for resolution.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- 6.1. This Policy is supported by the *Student Complaints Procedures*.
- 6.2. Associated grievance mechanisms are outlined in the *Student Appeals Policy* and associated *Student Appeals Procedures*.
- 6.3. Academic review mechanisms (for concerns related to Assessment, Unit Results and Grades, Recognition of Prior Learning, Academic Progress status, Study Load, Academic Misconduct Outcomes and penalties, Examinations and Deferred Examinations) are outlined in the relevant policies, including:

Academic Integrity Policy
Academic Progression Policy
Admissions Policy
Assessment Policy
Enrolment Policy
Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

- 6.4. Documents used in the development of this Policy include:

[Australian Standard Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaint handling in organizations \(AS ISO 10002-2006\)](#)
[TEQSA Act 2011](#)
[TEQSA Guidance Note: Grievance and Complaint Handling \(2019\)](#)
[Higher Education Provider Guidelines – Chapter 4](#)
[Higher Education Support Act 2003 – Subdivision 19-D](#)
[Higher Education Standards \(Threshold Standards\) 2015](#)

7. CONTACT INFORMATION:

For queries relating to this document please contact:

POLICY OWNER	College Director and Principal
ALL ENQUIRIES CONTACT:	Quality and Compliance Manager
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8. APPROVAL HISTORY:

POLICY APPROVED BY:	Senior Management Group
DATE POLICY FIRST APPROVED:	May 2021
DATE LAST MODIFIED:	May 2021
REVISION HISTORY:	May 2021 – Complaints and Appeals Policy separated into Student Complaints Policy and Student Appeals Policy.
NEXT REVISION DUE:	May 2023