P-8.17 COMPLAINTS POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all complaints raised by students, personnel, and other stakeholders are handled in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner. The policy aims to promote a culture of integrity and continuous improvement.

Scope

This policy applies to all complaints received regarding the services, operations, or conduct of ECTARC Training Services (ETS) and its employees.

ETS is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and high-quality environment for all stakeholders. All complaints will be managed professionally, confidentially, and in accordance with the principles of natural justice, ensuring that complainants and respondents are treated fairly and respectfully.

If a student or other stakeholder is unhappy with an assessment outcome or decision made by ETS then the Appeals Policy and Procedure must be followed.

Deployment

ETS ensures that students, personnel, and stakeholders are made aware of the feedback, and complaints processes through multiple accessible channels. Information on these processes is clearly outlined in the ETS Student Handbook, organisational website, and enrolment documents. During orientation sessions and onboarding for both students and personnel, the complaints process is explicitly discussed to promote awareness.

ETS' complaints management system is designed to reflect the principles of fairness, timeliness, and effectiveness. Complaints are handled by unbiased personnel to ensure impartiality, and complainants are given the opportunity to present their case without fear of repercussions.

Acknowledgements of receipt and updates on progress are provided regularly to maintain transparency. All complaints are resolved with procedural fairness, respecting the rights of all parties involved.

Clear guidelines, training for personnel, and accountability measures, such as tracking complaints in the Complaints Register, ensure consistency and professionalism.

The outcomes of complaints are systematically analysed to identify trends, root causes, and opportunities for improvement. Substantiated complaints result in corrective actions that are documented in the Continuous Improvement Register in the ECTARC Student Management Portal, and relevant policies, procedures, or practices are updated accordingly. ETS conducts regular audits of the complaints handling process to assess its effectiveness and adjust as needed. Feedback from complaints is also used to inform strategic planning, risk management, and resource allocation, contributing to a culture of continuous improvement.

Guiding Principles

ETS' complaints process reflects the following guiding principles.

Commitment	The organisation is actively committed to defining and implementing a complaints-handling process.
Capacity	Sufficient resources are made available for and committed to complaints handling and are managed effectively and efficiently.
Transparency	The complaints-handling process is communicated to customers, personnel and other relevant interested parties. Individual complainants are provided with adequate information about the handling of their complaint.

Accessibility	The complaints-handling process is easily accessible to all complainants. Information is made available on the details of making and resolving complaints. The complaints-handling process and supporting information is easy to understand and use. The information is in clear language. Information and assistance in making a complaint is made available, in whatever languages or formats that services are offered or provided in, including alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or audiotape where requested, so that no complainants are disadvantaged.
Responsiveness	The organisation addresses the needs and expectations of customers with respect to complaints handling.
Objectivity	Each complaint is addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner through the complaints-handling process. Please refer to the principles of objectivity below for further information.
Charges	Access to the complaints-handling process is free of charge to the complainant.
Information integrity	The organisation ensures that the information about its complaints handling is accurate and not misleading, and that data collected are relevant, correct, complete, meaningful and useful.
Confidentiality	Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant is available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint within the organisation and is actively protected from disclosure, unless the customer or complainant expressly consents to its disclosure or disclosure is required by law.
Customer-focused approach	The organisation adopts a customer-focused approach with respect to handling complaints and is open to feedback.
Accountability	The organisation has established and maintains accountability for, and reporting on, the decisions and actions with respect to complaints handling.
Improvement	Increased effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints-handling process is a permanent objective of the organisation.
Competence	Organisation personnel have the personal attributes, skills, training, education and experience necessary to handle complaints.
Timeliness	Complaints are handled as expeditiously as feasible given the nature of the complaint and of the process used.

The ETS complaints process is free, and easily available, to manage and respond to allegations involving the conduct of:

- ETS, its trainers, assessors or other personnel, or
- A student of ETS.

Objectivity

ETS is committed to the principles for objectivity in the complaints-handling process.

Openness	Well publicised, accessible, and understood by those involved in a complaint. The process is clear and well publicised so that both personnel and complainants can follow.
Impartiality	Avoiding any bias in dealing with the complainant, the person complained against, or the organisation. The process is designed to protect the person complained against from any biased treatment. Emphasis is placed on solving the problem and not on assigning blame. If a complaint is made about personnel, the investigation is carried out independently.

Confidentiality	The process is designed to protect the complainant's and customer's identity, as far as is reasonably possible. This aspect is very important to avoid deterring possible complaints from people who might be afraid that giving details could lead to inconvenience or discrimination.
Accessibility	The organisation sallow the complainant access to the complaints-handling process at any reasonable point or time. Information about the complaints process is readily available in clear language and in formats accessible to all complainants. When a complaint affects different supply chain participants, a plan to coordinate a joint response is made. The process allows any information arising from the complaints to be known by any suppliers of the organisation that are concerned by the complaint so that they are able to make improvements.
Completeness	Finding out the relevant facts, talking to people from both sides involved in the complaint to establish a common ground, and verifying explanations, whenever possible.
Equitability	Giving equal treatment to all people.
Sensitivity	Each case is considered on its merits, paying due care to individual differences, and needs and expectations.

Objectivity for Personnel

Complaints-handling procedures ensure that those complained against are treated objectively. This includes:

- Informing them immediately and completely on any complaint about their performance.
- Giving them the opportunity to explain the circumstances and allowing them appropriate support.
- Keeping them informed of the progress in the investigation of the complaint and the result.

It is vital that those against whom a complaint has been made are given full details of the complaint before they are interviewed. However, confidentiality should be observed.

ETS personnel are reassured that they are supported by the process. Personnel are encouraged to learn from the complaints-handling experience and to develop a better understanding of the complainant perspectives.

The complaints-handling process ensures confidentiality in the case of complaints against personnel. The details of such complaints are known only by those directly concerned.

Complaints Process Approach

ETS is open to receiving feedback and complaints and ensures information about how to provide feedback and make complaints is publicly available and easily accessible, including via the ETS Student Handbook and website.

ETS takes a best practice approach that:

- Fostering a receptive, blame-free culture that is open to feedback and improvement.
- Ensures there is no detriment to people who complain.
- Makes it easy and accessible for people to provide feedback and make complaints.

Students are supported to provide feedback and make complaints. Allowing students to easily engage with the personnel of ETS about any concerns they have can stop minor issues becoming larger. There are a range of avenues through which complaints can be made. This includes in person made directly to ETS representatives, via phone or in writing, including via email, surveys and feedback forms in the ECTARC Training Portal.

ETS actively seeks to remove any barriers that may be identified when making complaints and any fear of repercussions to the complainant.

Complaints are handled impartially, with respect for all parties involved, reflecting procedural fairness and natural justice.

ETS personnel are well trained and supported to manage complaints, acknowledging promptly and providing timely responses.

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Complaints are resolved without unnecessary delay. ETS recognises that some complaints may require more urgent attention than others, and that some complaints may take longer to resolve than others. ETS' process includes triaging complaints where needed.

ETS communicates transparently with stakeholders about the expected timeframes for acknowledging, resolving and communicating the outcomes of complaints. In any situation where timeframes are not being met (because the complaint is taking longer to resolve than anticipated) ETS maintains regular contact with the complainant including to explain any delays.

All complaints are handled by an unbiased person.

ETS ensures the privacy of complainants, and the confidentiality of information included in a complaint.

Reflecting the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, both the complainant(s) and the subject(s) of each complaint are given an opportunity to be heard and to provide relevant information before a decision is made.

The General Manager- Training Services and General Manager – Learning, Development and Quality Assurance have overall responsibility for managing complaints and communicating their value to the organisation. ETS ensures:

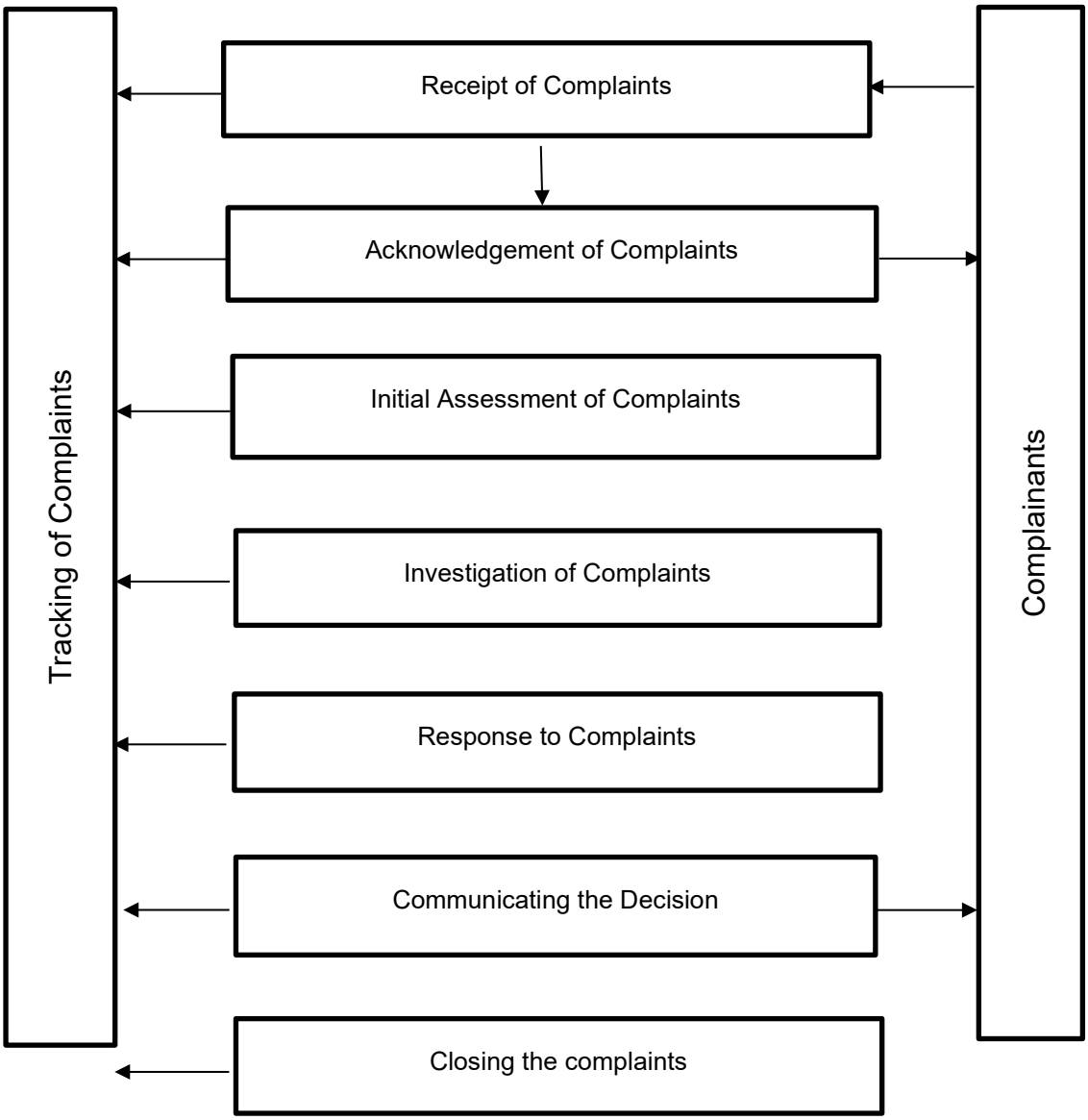
- Personnel at all levels understand and comply with complaints management policies and procedures,
- Personnel have received appropriate guidance, training and support to handle complaints,
- Students are directed to the complaints process and supported to lodge complaints when they experience a problem or have an issue, and
- Personnel performance is monitored to ensure complaints are handled properly and appropriate remedies are provided.

ETS maintains a student complainant's enrolment during any complaint process.

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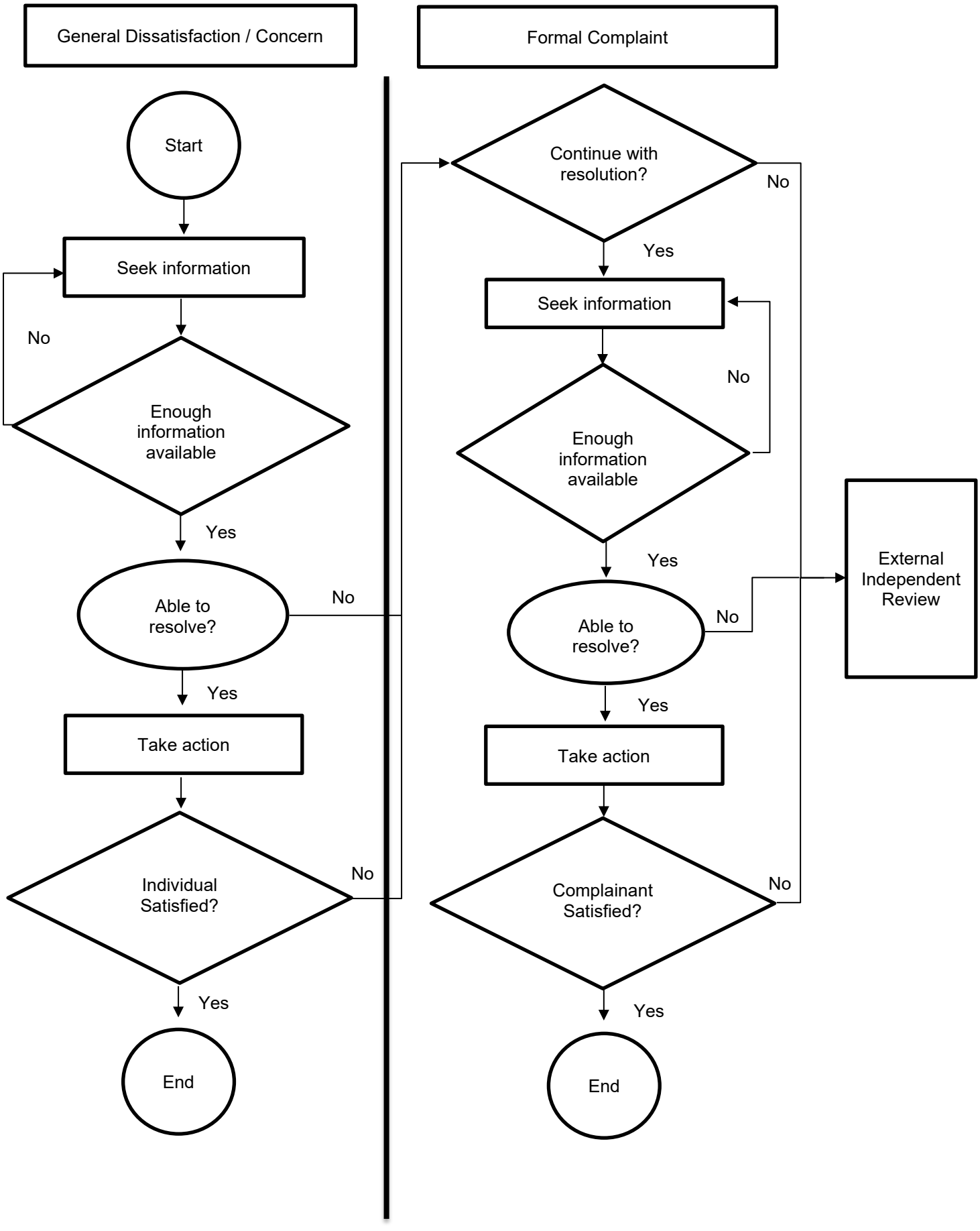
Complaint, Grievance and Dispute Resolution Procedure

Complaints Handling Flowchart



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Escalation Flowchart



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The following complaints handling framework has therefore been implemented for any stakeholder raising a complaint or issue. This procedure applies to all complaints, including those about:

- Academic matters from students,
- Non-academic matters from students, and
- Non-academic matters from persons seeking to enrol with the ETS in a VET course or unit of study.

No fees are applicable or levied to the student or other complainant for any stage of the complaints process.

In the first instance the complainant should discuss the matter with the personnel member or responsible person concerned. Where this is not considered appropriate then the complainant is encouraged to discuss the matter with ETS management.

If the complainant is satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, it would mean that the matter is resolved.

Any stakeholder may submit a formal complaint to ETS. Complaints information captured includes:

- Submission date of complaint,
- Name of complainant,
- Nature of complaint,
- Date of the event / activity which lead to the complaint,
- The products and services or related organisation practices complained about,
- A description of the complaint and relevant supporting information/documentation,
- Any other relevant information or attachments (if applicable),
- The requested remedy,
- Immediate action taken (if any), and
- The due date for a response.

All stages of the complaints process are documented. Complaints may be lodged via various channels including in-person via ETS personnel, via telephone and via email.

All complaints are automatically recorded in the ETS Complaints Register from the Jot Form. ETS commences processing of complaints as soon as practicable and within two (2) business days of a complaint being made and finalises the outcome as soon as practicable, preferably on the first contact if the complaint is straightforward. Complaints are assessed on a risk-based approach to assign them priority, considering items such as severity, safety implication, complexity, impact, and the need and possibility of immediate action. Personnel are alert to the needs of students who are vulnerable or require special assistance.

Simple complaints may be easily addressed by the personnel who has received the complaint. More complex complaints are allocated to the ETS Quality Manager in the first instance. Serious complaints are immediately reported to the ETS Chief Executive Officer and/or board, who may allocate alternate or additional resourcing to the investigation and processing of the complaint.

ETS acknowledges receipt of complaints in writing immediately, as soon as practicable, and:

- Arranges a suitable time if needed to discuss the complaint,
- Advises complainants of expected timeframes, and
- Gives complainants the contact details of the allocated contact person they can speak to about their complaint.

An ETS General Managers investigates complaints or refers matters to appropriate ETS personnel for investigation. In either case, investigations are expected to be resolved, and decisions made on the complaint as soon as practicable and within twenty (20) working days of the complaint being received in writing.

Complainants are given an opportunity to formally present their case at no cost and be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings.

An up-to-date status is made available to the complainant upon request and at regular intervals.

Decisions and outcomes of all complaints are merit-based decisions that consider all available evidence. ETS ensures complaints are considered with an open mind and without bias arising from any past issues with the complainant.

Issues raised in complaints are analysed to determine cause(s) and the root cause evident.

Complainants are advised on the outcome of complaints in writing, including detailed reason(s) for the outcome, explanations for decisions and remedies where appropriate.

The organisation ensures appropriate responses to complaints are provided promptly, addressing the needs and expectations of complainants while aligning with organisational policies and legal obligations.

Responses are designed to resolve the complaint effectively and prevent recurrence where applicable.

Types of Responses

Depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, the organisation's responses may include, but are not limited to:

- Issuing refunds where justified.
- Providing replacements for faulty or unsatisfactory products/services.
- Conducting repairs or rework to address service/product issues.
- Offering substitute products or services.
- Delivering technical assistance to resolve specific concerns.
- Sharing information to clarify the issue and its resolution.
- Making referrals to relevant personnel, departments, or external parties.
- Providing financial assistance where appropriate.
- Offering other assistance as deemed necessary.
- Awarding compensation for damages or inconvenience caused.
- Issuing an apology to acknowledge the organisation's responsibility.
- Offering a goodwill gift or token as a gesture of sincerity.
- Implementing changes to products, services, processes, policies, or procedures based on the complaint.

Implementation Considerations

The organisation will take into account the following when deciding on and implementing responses:

- Addressing all aspects of the complaint comprehensively to ensure resolution.
- Conducting follow-ups where appropriate to confirm complainant satisfaction and resolution effectiveness.
- Determining if it is suitable to extend remedies to others who might have been similarly affected but did not file formal complaints.
- Ensuring the level of authority required for approving various types of responses.
- Ensuring the dissemination of information about the response to relevant personnel for proper action and future prevention.

Response Authorisations		
Response Type	Approval Level Required	Notes
Refunds in line with refund policy	Accounts or Administration Officer	Refunds in line with fee and refund policy can be processed by administration and accounts without approval of management.
Refunds (up to $1500)	General Manager	Refunds exceeding $1500 (where paid under agreement with an employer) require Chief Executive Officer approval.
Refund within cooling off period	Accounts or Administration Officer	Refunds in line with fee and refund policy can be processed by administration and accounts without approval of management.
Substitutes	General Manager/Coordinator	Substitutes must be of equal value than the original product/service.

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Response Authorisations		
Response Type	Approval Level Required	Notes
Technical Assistance	All personnel	No additional approval required for standard technical assistance requests.
Information Requests	All personnel	Information shared must comply with privacy and confidentiality policies.
Referral to External Parties	All personnel	Ensure referral agreements are in place before providing details to external parties.
Financial Assistance	General Manager	Any concessions/exemptions require General Manager approval. Evidence must be retained to support outcome.
Other Assistance	Coordinator or General Manager	Assistance must align with organisational policy and available resources.
Compensation	Chief Executive Officer	Compensation claims follow ECTARC organisational policies
Apology	All personnel	Standard apologies can be issued; escalations require Coordinator or General Manager approval.
Policy/Process Changes	Chief Executive Officer or General Manager	Significant changes require consultation and formal approval by the governance committee.

All approvals must be recorded on the ECTARC Student Management Portal, including the name and role of the approver.

If an approver is unavailable, the request should be escalated to the next level of authority.

This procedure ensures all responses are effectively authorised, documented, communicated effectively to the complainant, and aligned with the overall complaints-handling framework.

With this notification, all complainants receive information on how they can progress their compliant if still unhappy.

If a complainant is not satisfied with an outcome or decision, they may make an appeal. Please refer to the Appeals Policy for further information.

ETS securely maintain records of all details of the complaints process and retains evidence of all documentation relevant. Each complaint and its outcome is recorded via the Complaints Register. This register is located at: *ECTARC\ECTARCDOC - Training Services\Quality Assurance\Quality System - Complaints and Appeals\1 Forms*

Complaints Processing Delays

If at any stage ETS considers more than twenty (20) working days are required to process and finalise a complaint, ETS:

- Informs the complainant in writing, including reasons why more time is required, and
- Regularly updates the complainant on the progress of the matter.

ETS retains records of all complaints and grievances for a period of at least ten (10) years, allowing parties to the complaint or grievance appropriate access to these records.

Complaints Key Contacts

If a complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of a complaint, they may seek further assistance from the following additional parties as relevant:

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Organisation	Details
Australia Skills & Quality Authority (ASQA)	1300 701 801 www.asqa.gov.au
Skills ACT	www.act.gov.au/skills/home
NSW Department of Education & Training	https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/vocational
QLD Department of Trade, Employment and Training	https://desbt.qld.gov.au

Improvement Actions

ETS is committed to take appropriate action in any case where an complaint is upheld. In cases where an complaint is upheld, ETS endeavours to identify the root cause of the matter and takes appropriate action to prevent the situation happening again.

All improvement actions arising from complaints are raised via ETS Quality Assurance processes. ETS maintains a Continuous Improvement Register in the ECTARC Student Management System for recording the receipt and management of improvement records.

ETS:

- Regularly analyses appeals to identify trends and any further improvements needed,
- Audits the appeals process on an annual basis to assess its effectiveness and improve the complaints process as needed.

Please refer to the Quality Policy for further information on the continuous improvement process.

Monitoring and Evaluation

ETS monitors and evaluates the complaints process to ensure appeals are handled objectively.

A 6 monthly process of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting has been established in the ETS Compliance Calendar for all Complaints.

ETS continually improves the effectiveness and efficiency of processes. Process performance and outcomes are regularly audited to identify and remove causes of existing and potential problems, as well as to uncover any opportunities for improvement.

Please refer to the Quality System – Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement for further information on the continuous improvement process.

VERSION CONTROL	DATE RELEASED	NEXT REVIEW	APPROVED BY	AMENDMENT
Version 2	July 2025	July 2026	ECTARC Leadership	Updated to reflect the requirements of Standards for RTOs 2025