

# SP-8.5 GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

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## Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that:

- all complaints are dealt with promptly and efficiently
- all complaints are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner
- confidentiality and impartiality are respected and maintained
- parties are informed regularly of action being taken/progress
- follow-up checks are made later to review the appropriateness of solutions reached
- documented records are maintained.

## Scope

This procedure applies to the handling of complaints initiated by a student, client, ECTARC employee or member of the community.

## Deployment

A complaint is a statement or approach by a client or staff member that may relate to:

- provision of service
- interpersonal conflict
- lack of communication
- harassment and/or discrimination
- service delivery
- procedures or policies

Complaints can be raised in person, in writing, by telephone or via email.

## Complaints resolved informally

In the first instance, the ECTARC employee who attends to the complaint should deal with it as soon as is practical. The employee should listen empathetically and actively and, if possible/appropriate, that is, when the employee has the authority to act, and the client is satisfied with the response, resolve the issue promptly at an informal local level. Management may be requested to assist in these situations.

The discussion and outcome should be made on a *Record of Complaint Form*. A short summary of the circumstances is to also be recorded on the ECTARC Student Management Portal (JobReady) if the complaint is from a student.

## Formal complaints

The following three (3) steps will guide the formal complaints handling process:

### Step 1 - Lodging a formal complaint

If an employee, client or member of the community feels the complaint cannot be resolved informally, then the matter should be addressed officially in writing. To lodge an official complaint, a written letter or email should be forwarded to ECTARC Management adequately identifying and providing details of the complaint and the outcome sought.

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In the case that it is not possible to obtain a written document, a complaint can be given verbally with details recorded by an ECTARC staff member on a *Record of Complaint Form*. The ECTARC employee handling the complaint must, when recording details on the *Record of Complaint Form*, take accurate notes, using the complainant's own words, and identify the outcome sought by the complainant

All official complaints are to be formally recorded on a *Record of Complaint Form* by an ECTARC employee attending to the complaint and, where possible, with a copy of the written complaint attached. The issue and *Record of Complaint Form* is then presented to ECTARC management, CEO or to the Board if required.

Students enrolled under Smart and Skilled are provided with the contact details of the Consumer Protection Officer (CPO), who will be the Manager – Funded Programs, to have complaints dealt with. Where an ECTARC employee other than the CPO receives a verbal or written complaint from a student enrolled under Smart and Skilled, this will be forwarded to the CPO. All complaints will then be reported to the CEO and ECTARC management.

## Step 2 – Internal review

All matters will be responded to without prejudice and within specified time frames - usually three to five (3-5) working days. For complaints where ECTARC considers that more than six (6) calendar days are required to process or finalise the complaint or appeal, the complainant will be notified in writing stating the reasons for the delay and receive regular written updates on progress of the matter.

To ensure confidentiality, employees, clients or the member of the community raising the complaint are advised to discuss the matter only with persons directly involved.

Regarding the person(s) named in the matter, he/she will be:

- provided with information about the complaints handling process
- provided with information about the complaint by the Manager. The name of the complainant can be withheld if requested or deemed to be appropriate
- interviewed
- advised of their right to time/advice (if required) before providing a response.

Details of this person's response will be recorded on the *Record of Complaint Form*.

## Management review and mediation meeting

Where required, and with the complainant's consent, the manager will call the parties together and attempt to reach an agreement. The employee, client or member of the community raising the complaint may, at any stage of the procedure, invite an external representative to advise, assist or advocate on their behalf. In an interview situation, a friend/colleague may be invited to support and observe. An observer is not a participant. At the end of the mediation process, if an agreed position is reached, the details will be recorded on the *Record of Complaint Form*.

If an agreement is not reached, within an agreed timeframe, the matter will be referred to the relevant agency to arbitrate.

Students enrolled under Smart and Skilled may contact the Smart and Skilled Hotline for further support.

## Substantiated complaints

ECTARC must act on each substantiated complaint.

## Notification of outcome

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The Manager or nominated representative will record the outcome of the meeting in writing and forward this to the complainant. A copy will be distributed to all parties involved in the matter.

## Documentation

At every step in the process details should be noted on the *Record of Complaint Form*.

The *Record of Complaint Form* is then filed in the *Complaints Form Register*.

The *Record of Complaint Form* and any relevant attachments should be filed in a separate, restricted access *Complaints Form Register*. Complaints must be handled in a way that protects confidentiality, and at all stages the person(s) making the complaint must be kept informed of progress and action. This file will form the basis of areas for review and improvement of ECTARC services (Refer to *SP-8.1 Management Review*, *SP-8.2 Control of Documents, Data and Quality Records* and *SP-8.4 Continuous Improvement Procedure*). Each *Record of Complaint Form* must be documented on the *Complaints Handling Form Control*, located at the front of the *Complaints Form Register*.

## Step 3 – External review

Where a formal complaint cannot be resolved internally, ECTARC will arrange for an external, independent person or body to review the complaint. For students enrolled under a Funded Program, ECTARC will provide the contact details for the relevant Department's Customer Support Centre and/or contact.

Where a student feels that an issue needs to be addressed further by an external organisation, they can contact the National Training Complaints Hotline. The hotline will not investigate complaints but will forward complaints to the most appropriate agency, authority or jurisdiction for consideration. Complaints can be registered with the National Training Complaints Hotline by **Phone:** 13 38 73, Monday–Friday, 8am to 6pm nationally or by submitting an email complaint.

## Quality Control

ECTARC must use stakeholder and client feedback and satisfaction data as a basis for improving its processes, services and products.

New Procedure

Reviewed Procedure