Complaints management policy

Commitment to complaints management

Purpose

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) is committed to delivering quality services that are responsive to the needs of staff, stakeholders, clients and the wider community.

Complaints are a valuable source of feedback and an important tool for business and staff development. Diligent and prompt attention to complaints can help us identify the needs of our clients and stakeholders, understand our business shortcomings, increase client satisfaction and improve overall performance.

The QCAA is therefore committed to effective complaints management by ensuring that complaints are managed fairly, reasonably and in a timely manner.

Scope

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service or action of the QCAA, or its staff, by a person who is directly affected by the service or action, and includes issues related to:

- a decision made, or a failure to make a decision by a QCAA employee
- an act, or failure to act, by the QCAA
- a proposal or intention formulated by the QCAA
- recommendation made by the QCAA
- the customer service provided by an employee of the QCAA.

What is not a complaint

The QCAA is contacted for many reasons, and most of the time it’s not a complaint. It is not a complaint when someone:

- requests more information about an action, or failure to take an action, by the QCAA
- requests a change in products and services or requests a new service
- makes a suggestion for improving our products and services
- expresses a concern about a situation
- provides feedback on the QCAA’s performance
- is not directly affected by the decision or action of the QCAA
- provides information, e.g. reports an incident.

The policy also does not cover complaints regarding information privacy, right to information, public interest disclosures, employee complaints, or matters specifically dealt with through other legislative
and/or appeal processes. These matters have their own legislation and associated policies and procedures for their management.

**Responsibilities**

Officers of the QCAA must:

- inform the community via the QCAA’s website about the process for managing complaints
- widely promote the complaints management system to the community and stakeholders
- deal with all complaints at the appropriate level in the first instance
- make accurate records of all complaints
- respond to complaints promptly
- monitor and report on the type of complaints
- advise complainants of the process for referring unresolved complaints
- accept feedback willingly
- uphold fairness toward complainants and employees throughout the complaint management process.

Complainants must:

- provide the QCAA with details about the complaint
- provide all relevant information when the complaint is made
- not deliberately include false or misleading information
- provide a clear idea of the problem and the desired solution
- inform the QCAA of changes affecting the complaint, including advising when they no longer require assistance
- understand that complex complaints can take time to review
- cooperate with the organisation in a respectful and reasonable way
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints
- understand that abusive, aggressive or disrespectful conduct is not tolerated.

**Principles for complaints management**

This policy and associated procedures are underpinned by the following principles.

1. **Visibility and accessibility**

   Information about the QCAA’s complaint management policy and procedures will be published on the internet and intranet sites, detailing how and where to make a complaint and how complaints are managed.

2. **Staff training**

   All staff will be given an initial training session about the complaints management policy and procedures, with subsequent new staff being advised about the policy and procedures as part of the induction process. This training will be included as part of the broader training on ethics.

   Reminder information will be given to all staff on at least an annual basis.
3. Responsiveness

Complainants will be kept informed about the steps involved in the complaints process, estimated timeframes and any other factors affecting the progress of their complaint.

The QCAA will aim for timely and meaningful resolution of complaints, recognising that legitimate delays in the assessment/investigation may occur. Where delays are unavoidable, they will be communicated to the complainant.

4. Objectivity and fairness

All complaints received by the QCAA will be taken seriously and handled fairly and objectively without personal bias or partiality.

After receiving a complaint, staff must take reasonable steps to ensure that the complainant is properly understood, which may include seeking clarification or additional information from a complainant.

If a complaint is received outside the scope of the complaints management policy, the complainant will be advised of the correct process for handling their matter.

Where appropriate, complaints and/or complainants will be referred to external agencies.

If a complaint is made about a person, that person has the right to know the details of the complaint and will be given the opportunity to make a statement of reply.

All people involved in the complaint process have the right to be supported by an appropriate third party.

The QCAA will take reasonable steps to protect personal information from loss, unauthorised access, use or disclosure during the complaints process.

The QCAA is committed to dealing with complaints in a manner that is respectful to both the complainant and the respondent. The information that may be requested to be kept confidential is not limited to ‘personal information’. However, the QCAA cannot give an assurance of absolute confidentiality given its statutory obligations and principles of procedural fairness.

The QCAA will collect personal details from the complainant for the purpose of resolving the complaint. The QCAA will not disclose the information collected to a third party without the complainant’s consent unless required or authorised to do so by law.

Decisions about a complaint are to be communicated to the complainant as soon as possible following the assessment/investigation. When a decision about a complaint is made, the QCAA will explain to the complainant the factors considered in the decision.

Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, they will be informed of any further review mechanism that is available.

5. Continuous improvement

The QCAA values continuous improvement in its administration and strives to ensure strong relationships with the community through feedback to staff about the general nature and outcome of complaints.

The QCAA uses formal, documented processes to manage complaints and identify themes and trends in complaints. This information and feedback from stakeholders and staff will be used to inform improvements to service delivery, policy and operations.
6. Monitoring and review

The QCAA will regularly review the effectiveness of the complaints management system, and will revise and improve it if necessary.

Information on trends and systemic issues will be provided to senior management.

Complaints information will be published on the QCAA internet on an annual basis.

The Complaints management policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required.

Lodging a complaint

Wherever possible, complaints should be submitted in writing (hard copy or electronically) to:

Chief Executive Officer
Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority
PO Box 307
Spring Hill QLD 4004
Email: confidential@qcaa.qld.edu.au
Phone: (07) 3864 0299

Verbal and anonymous complaints will be accepted.

All complaints will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the privacy principles contained in the Information Privacy Act 2009.

There are no fees or charges to the complainant for complaints lodged with the QCAA.

Definitions and terms

Complaint is a generic term referring to the expression of dissatisfaction, orally or in writing, about the service or actions of the QCAA or its staff.

Complainant is a person who lodges a complaint with the QCAA. A complainant may be a student, parent/carer or a member of the community who is aggrieved about a matter.

Employee is defined as permanent, temporary and casual staff, as outlined in Section 9(1) of the Public Service Act 2008.

References and resources

Public Service Act 2008
Information Privacy Act 2009