

Customer complaint management

Procedure

Audience

Agency-wide

Purpose

The procedure outlines the responsibilities and processes for consistent management of customer complaints across the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).

Scope

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service or action of the QCAA, or QCAA 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
- an act or decision that is not compatible with human rights specified under the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld)
- a proposal or intention formulated by the QCAA
- a 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 is not a complaint. It is not a complaint when someone:

- requests more information about an act we have undertaken, or failed to undertake
- requests a change in products or services or requests a new service
- makes a suggestion for improving our products or services
- expresses a concern about a situation
- provides feedback on our performance
- is not directly affected by a decision we have made or an action we have undertaken
- provides information, e.g. reports an incident
- asks for more information about processes and procedures.

The QCAA's complaint management system does not cover complaints about 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.

The QCAA complaint management system also does not apply to complaints subject to legal proceedings.

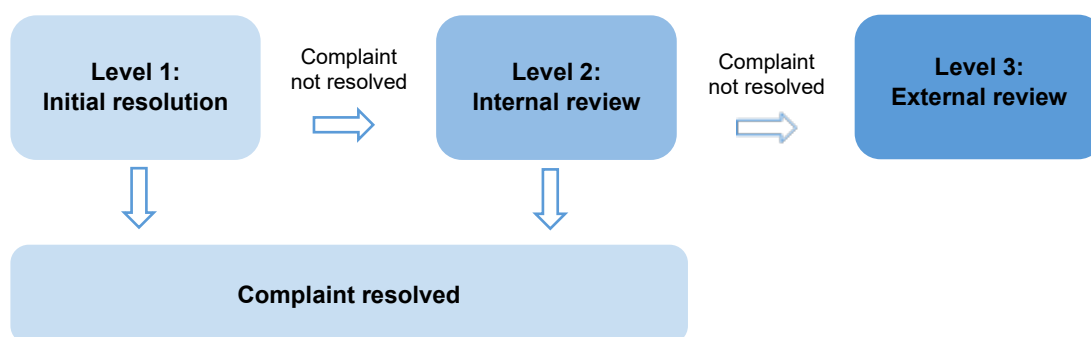
Complaint management procedure

When responding to a complaint, staff should act in accordance with the complaint management procedure, as well as any other internal documents that provide guidance on the management of complaints. Staff should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to a complaint.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the QCAA [Customer complaint management policy](#) and [Customer complaint management framework](#) which are available on our website.

The QCAA has a three-tier model for complaint management, consisting of initial complaint handling, internal review and external review (AS 10002:2022, p. 38).

Three-tier model for complaint management



Initial resolution

The QCAA tries to resolve complaints as quickly as possible when they are first received. The complaint is directed to the appropriate business area to resolve.

The issue is addressed by phone, written or face-to-face contact and the details of the complaint and any actions are recorded.

Internal review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the QCAA's decision about their complaint, they can apply for an internal review. They should submit their application to us within 20 business days of receiving the complaint outcome. We consider requests received outside this timeframe when there are reasonable grounds to do so.

The application for internal review is forwarded to a senior officer who is either at the same level as the first decision-maker or more senior, and independent from the original process. A timeframe for the senior officer's review is specified.

The complainant is to be notified of the outcome of the internal review within 20 business days of the application for internal review being received. The notification includes information about how the complainant can request an external review if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review.

The outcome of the review is recorded in the QCAA Complaint Register in the records management system.

External review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, they can ask for an external review from an external review agency, such as the Queensland Ombudsman or Queensland Human Rights Commission.

External review processes are managed by the appropriate oversight or complaint-handling organisation.

Complaint management stages

The key stages of the QCAA complaint management process are:

- Stage 1: Receive
- Stage 2: Assist
- Stage 3: Acknowledge
- Stage 4: Assess
- Stage 5: Respond
- Stage 6: Report
- Stage 7: Improve.

The majority of complaints will progress through each stage, though this may not be linear and some stages may be repeated.

Stage 1: Receiving and recording a complaint

A complaint can be made:

- by telephone
- by email
- by social media
- by letter
- in person
- via the Minister of Education or other member of parliament
- through Smart Service Queensland
- through the QGov website
- anonymously.

We record and track complaints in our records management system.

When a QCAA officer receives a complaint, they:

- where possible, resolve the complaint at the point of receipt
- record the complaint in the records management system
- forward the complaint to the Policy Unit, Strategic Engagement Branch (email: confidential@qcaa.qld.edu.au) if unable to resolve it at the point of receipt

- If the complaint is not resolved at the point of contact or is sent to the confidential@qcaa.qld.edu.au mailbox or to the QCAA's CEO:
 - the Policy Unit records the details of the complaint in the QCAA Complaint Register, located in record number 22/09773 (800/1/5/0098).
 - the system generates a record number which must be used in all future correspondence about the complaint.

Stage 2: Assisting complainants

The QCAA provides additional options and services to assist in lodging a complaint if required. These may include, but are not limited to:

- access to interpretation or translation services
- access to the National Relay Service and teletypewriter services
- plain language complaint policies
- a contact number to discuss complaint processes before lodgement
- the option for a person's complaint to be recorded in writing for them.

Stage 3: Acknowledging a complaint

The QCAA acknowledges receipt of a complaint within three business days of the complaint being received. The acknowledgment is sent to the complainant in the same format as it was received.

The acknowledgment includes the expected timeframe for responding to the complaint and the contact details of the officer managing the complaint.

Example of a complaint acknowledgment email

Dear <insert name>

I refer to your complaint to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) concerning <insert issue>.

We anticipate that you will receive a response from us within 30 business days from <insert date of receipt>, the date your complaint was received. If there are any potential changes to this timeframe we will contact you regarding progress of your complaint and advise of an amended timeframe.

Further information about our [Customer complaint management system](#) is available on the QCAA website.

Should you have any queries or concerns, please contact <name of officer managing complaint> on <insert phone number> or via email <insert email>, quoting the above reference number.

Yours sincerely

<insert relevant signature block>

<Correspondence Reference Number>

Stage 4: Assessing a complaint

When determining how a complaint will be managed, the QCAA initially considers:

- whether the matters raised in the complaint are within the agency's jurisdiction
- whether the complaint is within the scope of the agency's customer complaint management policy.

Note: If a QCAA officer reasonably suspects that a complaint involves or may involve corrupt conduct, they must notify the Crime and Corruption Commission.

The complaint is then referred to the appropriate QCAA business unit manager and branch director for investigation, and a response.

The manager or director investigates the complaint quickly and efficiently, and in a fair and objective way. They:

- if necessary, contact the complainant to ensure they understand the complaint management process
- gather and consider all relevant information about the complaint
- identify and consider relevant policies and procedures
- give anyone affected by the complaint a fair hearing before the complaint is decided
- consider human rights when deciding the response to the complaint
- decide how to resolve the complaint and/or make recommendations to address any problems identified.

The business unit can respond directly to the complainant or may decide to send the results of their assessment or investigation of the complaint and a draft response to the Policy Unit for advice.

The Policy Unit reviews the results of the investigation and response, and requests further information or clarification if required.

Stage 5: Responding to a complaint

A final response should be provided to the complainant within 30 business days after the complaint was originally received. Early resolution of complaints is strongly encouraged.

If the final response cannot be provided within this timeframe, the complainant must be kept informed of the progress of their complaint and when they can expect a response.

The final response to the complainant should include:

- the decision made in response to the issues raised
- clear, meaningful and accurate reasons why the decision was made, including the relevant policies, legislation and directives used in making the decision
- actions taken because of the complaint (subject to any privacy considerations), including any remedies or business improvements
- information about the review options available to the complainant, which include
 - the timeframe for lodgement of an internal review request (20 business days after they received the outcome of their complaint)
 - how their submission should be made, e.g. in writing, taking into account their known support needs
 - that they need to outline why they are asking for an internal review
 - what their responsibilities are as part of an internal review
 - what outcomes they are seeking
- contact details of the officer managing the complaint.

The final response and any relevant actions undertaken relating to the complaint must be

recorded in the QCAA Complaint Register.

Stage 6: Reporting

As required by section 264(3) of the *Public Sector Act 2022* (Qld), the QCAA publishes information on the website by 30 September annually on the number of customer complaints:

- received
- resulting in further action
- resulting in no further action.

A report is provided to senior management — Strategic Directions Group (SDG) — on:

- any complaint trends, significant issues and whether the customer complaint management system is operating effectively
- any recommendations for improvement.

SDG monitors implementation of the accepted recommendations.

Stage 7: Learning and continually improving

Complaints provide valuable information that can help us learn and improve our operations. In addition to complaint reporting and analysis processes, the QCAA regularly seeks feedback on the complaint process from a variety of sources, such as survey links in online forms, emails or regular customer surveys.

Information privacy considerations

The QCAA protects and manages personal information in line with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. This includes how we collect, store and use any personal information of customers and staff.

Human rights considerations

The QCAA complaint management system respects, protects and promotes human rights in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

We consider human rights when managing complaints and follow three key steps:

1. Identify any relevant human rights.
2. Consider whether an action or decision limits those human rights.
3. Assess whether the limitation is reasonable and justifiable.

Responsibilities

QCAA staff must:

- inform the community via the QCAA's website about the process for managing complaints
- widely promote the complaint 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 (and within 30 business days of the complaint being received)

- monitor and report on the type of complaints made
- 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 us 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 us of changes affecting the complaint, including advising when they no longer require assistance
- understand that complex complaints take time to review
- cooperate with us in a respectful and reasonable way
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints
- understand that abusive, aggressive or disrespectful conduct is not tolerated
- if requesting an internal review, do so within 20 business days of receiving the outcome to their complaint.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided by the Queensland Public Service *Customer Complaint Management Guideline*.

Customer complaint	means a complaint about the service or action of a public sector entity, or its staff, by a person who is apparently directly affected by the service or action. Examples of customer complaints include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a complaint about a decision made, or a failure to make a decision, by a public sector employee of the public sector entity • a complaint about an act, or failure to act, of the public sector entity • a complaint about an act or decision that is not compatible with human rights specified under the <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> (Qld) • a complaint about the formulation of a proposal or intention of the public sector entity • a complaint about the making of a recommendation by the public sector entity • a complaint about the customer service provided by a public sector employee of the public sector entity.
Complaint management system	consists of all policies, procedures, practices, systems, staff and resources used to manage complaints within an agency (AS 10002:2022).
Complainant	is a person or their representative, or an organisational representative who makes a complaint to an agency. A representative must be authorised to make the complaint on behalf of the person or organisation, e.g. parent/ or relative/person with enduring power of attorney, or officer of an organisation.

Customer	is a person or organisation who is apparently directly affected by a service or action by an agency.
Employee	is defined as permanent, temporary and casual staff, as outlined in section 9(1) of the <i>Public Service Act 2008</i> (Qld).
External review	is a process available for specific types of complaints where an oversight agency, such as the Queensland Ombudsman, or other complaints-handling organisation, investigates the handling of a complaint by an agency or deals with complaints that were previously the subject of a complaint to an agency. An external review will only occur after the complainant has progressed through the agency's complaint process in the first instance and exhausted any other internal right of review.
Internal review	is a merits review that involves a consideration of whether, based on the information/facts available at the time, the decision made was the correct one (including whether the actions and decisions were lawful, reasonable, fair and not improperly discriminatory). It is not a re-investigation of the complaint; it is an impartial review of a decision made about a complaint undertaken by an appropriate officer independent from the original decision-maker.

Legislation

- [Human Rights Act 2019 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Public Sector Act 2022 \(Qld\)](#).

Authorisations

Section 264 of the *Public Sector Act 2022* requires the QCAA to establish and implement a system for dealing with customer complaints.

Related QCAA policies and procedures

- [Customer complaint management framework](#)
- [Customer complaint management procedure](#)

Contact

For further information, please contact the Manager, Policy Unit, Strategic Engagement Branch, Strategy, Planning and Corporate Support Division at QCAASecretariat@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

Review date

The *Customer complaint management procedure* will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required. The next review is due in January 2027.

Version history

Version No	Date	Comments	Content Manager number
2.0	17/01/2024	Review to incorporate the requirements of the <i>Public Sector Act 2022</i> and the Queensland Public Service <i>Customer Complaint Management Framework</i> and <i>Customer Complaint Management Guideline</i> .	24/00700
1.0	22/07/2020	Review to incorporate the requirements of the <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i>	20/17088



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Other copyright material in this publication is listed below.

1. Queensland Public Service *Customer Complaint Management Framework* and *Customer Complaint Management Guideline*