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|  | Strategy, Planning and Corporate Support Division  QCAA Ref no: 20/17088 (800/4/9/0046)  Complaints management process  A guide for QCAA staff |

# Purpose

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) is committed to effective complaints management by ensuring that complaints are managed in an accountable and fair manner that is compatible with human rights. The following procedures enable the QCAA to provide clear, timely and accurate responses to complaints it receives. All staff should be familiar with and adhere to these procedures.

# 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:

Review   
and   
decide solution

* 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 expressed in 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’s not a complaint. It is not a complaint when someone:

* requests more information about an act, or failure to act, by the QCAA
* requests a change in services or requests a new service
* makes a suggestion for improving our 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
* queries for more information about processes and procedures.

# Complaints management process

When responding to a complaint, staff should act in accordance with the complaints process, 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 guide should be read in conjunction with the QCAA’s *Complaints management policy*, which is located on the website: [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/corporate-policies/complaints-management](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/corporate-policies/complaints-management)

The key stages of the complaints management process are:

1. Receive
2. Record
3. Acknowledge
4. Assess
5. Review
6. Respond
7. Report.

## 1. Receiving a complaint

A complaint can be made:

* by telephone
* by email
* by social media
* by letter
* in person
* through Smart Service Queensland
* through the QGov website
* anonymously.

## 2. Recording a complaint

The QCAA records and tracks complaints in its records management system. The Complaints Register is located in record number 19/02483.

When a complaint is first received, a QCAA staff member will follow the process below to record it.

* Record the email or letter of complaint in the records management system.
* If the complaint is received by telephone or in person, prepare a file note of the conversation and save it in the records management system.
* The system will generate a record number. This number must be used in all future correspondence regarding this complaint.
* A notification about the complaint will be automatically generated and sent to the Executive Secretary, Strategy, Planning and Corporate Support. The Executive Secretary will add this to the record.
* Record the details of the complaint in the Complaints Register.

Anonymous complaints will be managed in the same manner as any other complaint.

## 3. Acknowledging a complaint

Receipt of the complaint should be acknowledged within two working days of the complaint being received by forwarding an email or letter to the complainant. This will usually be prepared and sent by the Executive Secretary, Strategy, Planning and Corporate Support.

Acknowledgments should include the expected timeframe for responding to the complaint and the contact details of the officer managing the complaint.

An example of a complaint acknowledgment email:

Dear [name of complainant]

Thank you for your [letter/email] received on [date] regarding [outline of complaint].

We are currently investigating this matter and you will hear from us again by [date].

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact [name of officer handling the complaint] on telephone (07) 3864 [extension no] or by email at [first.surname]@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

## 4. Assessing a complaint

Forward the complaint to the relevant Manager/Assistant Director for review.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, consider:

* what the complaint is about
* whether the complaint engages or limits human rights specified in the Human Rights Act
* how serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
* whether additional information is required
* whether resolution requires the involvement of other agencies or is the responsibility of another agency.

The officer’s assessment should be recorded in the relevant file in the records management system.

## 5. Reviewing a complaint

Complaints should be dealt with quickly and efficiently, and handled in a fair and objective way.

* 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 a complaint.
* Decide how to resolve the complaint and/or make recommendations to address any problems identified.
* Continue to record all decisions or actions of the complaint investigation in the records management system.

## 6. Responding and providing reasons for a decision

A final response should be provided within 15 working days of the complaint being received. It can be provided verbally but should be confirmed in writing.

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

The final response should include:

* the decision and the reasons for the decision
* contact details for the officer managing the complaint
* information about options for review or appeal.

The final response and any relevant actions undertaken relating to the complaint must be recorded in the records management system and the Complaints Register.

### Internal review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they can request an internal review. This request should be submitted within 28 days of receiving the complaint outcome.

The complaint and the results of the review should be recorded in the Complaints Register.

### External review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, they can seek an external review.

The complainant should be provided with details of external review agencies, such as the Queensland Ombudsman or Queensland Human Rights Commission, to assist them to seek an external review.

## 7. Reporting to senior management

Senior management should receive a yearly report about the complaints received by the QCAA.

The report should:

* identify any complaint trends, significant issues and whether the complaints policy is operating effectively
* include any recommendations for improvement.

Senior management will monitor the implementation of the accepted recommendations.

By 30 September each year, the Chief Executive Officer will publish information regarding complaints consistent with section 219A(3) of the *Public Service Act 2008* (Qld).

# More information

If you would like more information, please contact the Manager, Policy Unit by email [QCAASecretariat@qcaa.qld.edu.au](mailto:QCAASecretariat@qcaa.qld.edu.au) or by telephone on (07) 3864 0208.