
COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

PURPOSE

To establish a framework for the handling of complaints that relates to the operation of Australian Trade College North Brisbane (the school).

To endeavour to increase the level of satisfaction and improve the relationship between the school, students, parents/carers, employees and the wider community.

To provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

To ensure that the complaints handling process is transparent and comprehensive.

To comply with:

- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017

SCOPE

This policy applies to students, parents/carers and employees of Australian Trade College North Brisbane, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.

POLICY

Australian Trade College North Brisbane is committed to ensuring that student, parent/carer and employee complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.

Australian Trade College North Brisbane views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process. Complaints are an indication of an opportunity to improve or clarify some part of our school.

Australian Trade College North Brisbane acknowledges the right of students, parents/carers and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school. Students, parents/carers, employees and the wider community are encouraged to come forward with their concerns and grievances in the knowledge that Australian Trade College North Brisbane will hear their complaints, and that action will be taken in the manner that the school deems as appropriate and lawful.

Australian Trade College North Brisbane recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents/carers and employees. As complaints are direct feedback on actual performance or perceptions of performance of Australian Trade College North Brisbane, there needs to be high-level accountability for screening, follow-up and evaluation of remedial action.

COMPLAINTS THAT MAY BE RESOLVED UNDER THIS POLICY

Australian Trade College North Brisbane encourages students, parents/carers and employees to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination,

workplace bullying and privacy breaches, as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- the school, its employees or students having done something wrong;
- the school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done;
- the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely;
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to the school's Behaviour and Student Welfare Policy and the Student Code of Expectations;
- issues relating to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- issues related to communication with students or parents/carers or between employees;
- issues related to school fees and payments; or
- general administration issues.

Student complaints may be brought by students, or by parents/carers on behalf of their child, as appropriate in the circumstances.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THIS POLICY

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the school's Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-bullying Policy and Behaviour and Student Welfare Policy.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour and Student Welfare Policy.
- Employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their supervisor.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal, who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Formal legal proceedings.

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Australian Trade College North Brisbane is committed to managing complaints according to the following broad principles:

- complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively in a timely manner;
- complaints will be taken seriously;
- anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits;
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard;
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible;
- all parties to a complaint will be appropriately supported;
- reasonable updates regarding the progress of the complaint and its handling will be provided to interested parties to the complaint;
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented; and
- complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging a complaint and they will not suffer any other reprisals

The Complaints Management procedure outlines the process for how Australian Trade College North Brisbane handle complaints when received. Reasonable deviation from the procedure, under direction from school management personnel or the school's Board, may be appropriate to achieve successful resolution of a complaint in some instances, however the fundamental parameters applicable to all complaints are:

- Complaints will be acknowledged as received within one working day of receipt.
- Records will be made of all complaints and retained in a location appropriate to the circumstances and the parties involved, considering the confidentiality and sensitivity of the matter.

- Informal resolution of complaints is preferable and will be sought in the first instance where possible and appropriate.
- Where a complaint is unresolved at the immediate level of responsibility, it may escalate through the school's organisational structure. The Grievances and Appeals section of this policy provides further information on escalation of a complaint that remains unresolved.
- Complainants will be advised of the outcome of their complaint within reason and in accordance with legislative guidelines such as the Privacy Act.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SCHOOL

Australian Trade College North Brisbane has the following roles and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- appropriately communicate the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents/carers and employees;
- ensure that the Complaints Handling procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents/carers;
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling procedures;
- ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint;
- take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them;
- appropriately implement remedies;
- appropriately train relevant employees;
- keep records;
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time;
- monitor and report to the school's Governing Body on complaints;
- report to the school's insurer when that is relevant; and
- refer to the school's Governing Body immediately any claim for legal redress.

ALL PARTIES TO A DISPUTE

The complainant and respondent both have the following roles and responsibilities:

- apply and comply with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises
- expect that the complaint will be dealt with as follows:
 - fairly and objectively
 - in a timely manner
 - using procedural fairness wherever practicable
 - with confidentiality and privacy maintained as much as possible
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- act in a non-threatening manner
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

EMPLOYEES

Employees receiving complaints have the following roles and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required
- provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint
- provide the complainant with a copy of the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- maintain confidentiality
- keep appropriate records
- to forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, as appropriate
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant or any person associated with them.

TIPS ON HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Receive and acknowledge the complaint with empathy and tact but do not lay blame, admit liability, become defensive or make judgments.

- Identify yourself and your position if not already known.
- Answer each call in a positive and courteous way.
- Listen to what the speaker is saying.
- Write down the complaint, if possible, as it is being made. If circumstances do not permit immediate recording, write down the details as soon as possible. Do not rely on memory.
- Record the time, date, means (e.g. phone) and location where the complaint was made.
- Record what has been said including all traceable detail e.g. name, dates.
- Make sure you have clearly understood the complaint by repeating back your understanding of the situation.
- Obtain the name and contact details of the complainant, if they are willing to provide.
- Explain what action you intend to take e.g. the matter will be referred to 'name and position', the matter will be handled according to our Complaints Handling Policy.
- Meet any promised deadlines.
- If you can resolve the complaint immediately and it is appropriate then please do so.
- Advise the Principal by emailing a record of the complaint including the details required for recording on the Complaints Register where required.

IMPLEMENTATION

Australian Trade College North Brisbane is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the school, including by the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.

Australian Trade College North Brisbane is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related procedures.

Australian Trade College North Brisbane will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the school Board on complaint handling at the school.

Australian Trade College North Brisbane will act to encourage students, parents/carers and employees to contribute to a healthy school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

For the purpose of this policy, a grievance or appeal is defined as any type of problem, concern, dispute or complaint raised by a student, parent/carer, employee or general member of the

community which is related to the school, the school environment or school operations and which cannot be resolved through normal day to day communication.

The Complaints Management section of this policy is to be applied. If the complaints process does not produce a satisfactory result at the initial level in which it is received, the complainant is entitled to escalate the matter to the next level of supervision/management. If this escalation does not result in a satisfactory outcome, the employee or student is entitled to continue escalating the matter one level of supervision/management at a time, until it reaches the Principal.

In a situation where the matter is escalated to the Principal and cannot be resolved, the complainant is entitled to ask for the matter to be referred to MRAEL Ltd's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for consideration and if deemed necessary, resolution. If the matter still cannot be resolved, the complainant is entitled to ask for the matter to be referred to Australian Trade College North Brisbane's Board of Directors. However, in these circumstances, the board will only deal with the matter where the complainant presents his or her case to them in the presence of the CEO and the Principal.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017
Australian Education Regulations 2013
Fair Work Act 2009
Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

RELATED SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

Behaviour and Student Welfare Policy
Complaints Handling Procedure
Disability Policy
Enrolment Anti-Discrimination Policy
Privacy Policy
Sexual Harassment Policy
Staff Grievance Policy
Student Code of Expectations
Work Health and Safety Policy
Workplace Harassment Policy