



## NATIONAL COMPLAINTS CODE

National Code of Good Practice for Responding to Complaints about Vocational Education and Training Quality State/Territory Training Authorities, the Australian National Training Authority and the Australian Government seek to:

- Listen to the views of vocational education and training (VET) consumers
- Address any concerns VET consumers may have
- Constantly improve the quality of VET products, services and policies

To help achieve these aims, State/Territory Training Authorities, the Australian National Training Authority and the Australian Government have made a commitment to meet the following complaints handling principles and service standards within their own organisations and to champion them throughout the VET system.

Complaints include any expression of dissatisfaction with the quality of VET products and services. The National Complaints Code has been endorsed by the Australian Government, State and Territory Ministers with responsibility for VET.

VET consumers who have grievances with their training organisation are to lodge their complaint directly with that organisation in the first instance.

Registered Training Organisations (RTO) are required under the Australian Quality Training Framework standards to have policies and procedures in place for dealing with customer complaints in a constructive and timely manner, including appeals procedures. For overseas students studying VET in Australia, the provisions of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act and related State/Territory legislation apply.

### **Fair:**

The rights of VET consumers are recognised, including the right to be heard and the right to an impartial decision. The complaints process will be free of charge. Privacy will be maintained and anonymity where requested. VET consumers will not be discriminated against as a result of making a complaint. Complaints will be considered in a transparent, equitable, objective and unbiased manner. The complaints handling process will reflect the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. Complainants have the right to appeal and will be advised of further avenues of review, including review by the relevant Ombudsman, Commissioner, Council or Review Tribunal.

### **Accessible:**

The complaints handling process will be readily accessible to VET consumers. A variety of methods for lodging a complaint will be offered, including by telephone, electronically and in writing. Some types of complaints may need to be lodged in writing for legal or other reasons and this will be explained to the VET consumer. The complaints handling process will cater for VET consumers with special needs, such as

consumers with limited English language or literacy skills and those with a disability. Friends, family and organisations may assist a VET consumer to make a complaint and may complain on behalf of a VET consumer.

**Visible:**

The processes for lodging, handling and responding to complaints will be well publicised to staff, VET consumers and VET providers. The processes will be publicized through a variety of methods, which may include posters, brochures, customer service charters and websites. The complaints processes will be explained to each complainant.

**Comprehensive:**

All genuine complaints will be taken seriously. The relevant circumstances and information surrounding a complaint will be investigated to the level warranted by the severity of the complaint. Where anonymity has been requested, the need to protect the complainant's identity may impact on the level of the investigation. Legislative requirements, the amount of time that has elapsed before a complaint is lodged and the level of detail provided in complaints lodged anonymously or by third parties may also impact on the complaints handling process. The complaints handling process will be sufficiently resourced and underpinned by internal procedures that reflect good practice service standards and principles. This will include procedures for handling complaints alleging official misconduct by departmental officers, fraud or the misappropriation of government funding. Where a complaint falls outside the scope of the Training Authority or the Australian Government department, the VET consumer will be referred to the most appropriate, alternative avenue for resolving their complaint. Linkages will be maintained between organisations to smooth the referral process and to aid the consideration of complaints that raise cross-jurisdictional issues, including complaints about VET providers that operate in more than one State/Territory.

**Responsive:**

The complaints handling process will be responsive and target timeframes for handling complaints will be established and monitored. The target timeframes will include acknowledging all genuine complaints within two weeks of receipt. Responses will be specific and personalised. The complainant will be informed of any decisions that are taken in response to their complaint, including the reasons for those decisions. Fair and reasonable remedies will be offered where appropriate.

**Accountable:**

There will be appropriate monitoring and reporting of complaints received, actions taken and the operation of the complaints handling process. The complaints handling process will be reviewed regularly.

**Constructive:**

Preventative and corrective action will be taken to eliminate the root causes of complaints and to improve the quality of VET products, services and policies. Findings will be shared across jurisdictions and used to inform the various State, Territory and National VET agendas.

More information

- Talk to your local training organisation
- visit [www.training.com.au](http://www.training.com.au)
- contact the relevant State/Territory Training Authority, the Australian National Training Authority or the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training National Training Complaints Hotline on **1800 000 674**