

Subject: Policies and Procedures

Title of Policy: Complaints Handling

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Approved by: Kristina Shead –
Head of Operations

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Version	Release Date	Change	Approved	Revision Date
1.1	Feb 2024	Review of Policy and Procedure	Kristina Shead	Feb 2025

Purpose:

Provide a fair and transparent complaint handling process.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any negative feedback about services or staff which has not been resolved locally. A complaint may be received in any form and does not need to be formally documented by the complainant in order to be acted on. Complaints may be made by any person but are generally made by students and/or employers.

Early resolution of complaints

In all cases, issues that arise during training and assessment that are the source of frustration or are in dispute, should be resolved at the time they occur between the persons involved. It is often the case that complaints can be avoided by proper communication and respect between persons involved.

Relationship to continuous improvement

The complaints handling process may expose weaknesses in the training and assessment system that can flow into the continuous improvement system as opportunities for improvement. Complaints received from stakeholders will be treated respectfully and seen as opportunities for improvement.

Complaint handling principles

A written record of all complaints is kept by Patrick's College Australia including all details of lodgement, response, and resolution. The complaints register within RTO Data is to be used to record the details of the complaint and to maintain a chronological journal of events during the complaint



handling process. Records relating to complaint handling are stored securely to prevent access to unauthorised personnel.

- A complainant is to be provided with an opportunity to formally present his or her case at no cost.
- Each complainant may be accompanied and/or assisted by a support person at any relevant meeting.
- The complaints policy is publicly available. This means that the complaints policy and procedure is published on Patrick's College Australia and in the Student Handbook.
- The handling of a complaint is to commence within seven (7) working days of the lodgement of the complaint and all reasonable measures are taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.
- The complainant is to be provided with a written response to the complaint, including details of the reasons for the outcome. A written response must be provided to the complainant within fourteen (14) days of the lodgement of the complaint.
- Complaints must be resolved to a final outcome within sixty (60) days of the complaint being initially received. Where the college CEO considers that more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint, the Director of Education must inform the complainant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required. Complaints will be handled as soon as possible. A timeframe to resolve a complaint within thirty (30) days is considered acceptable. A complainant will be provided with regular updates to inform them of the progress of the complaint handling. Updates will be provided to the complainant at a minimum of four (4) weekly intervals.
- Patrick's College Australia will maintain the enrolment of the complainant during the complaint handling process.
- Decisions or outcomes of the complaint handling process that are found in the favour of the student shall be implemented immediately.
- Complaints will be handled in the strictest of confidence. Patrick's College Australia staff or representative are not to disclose information to any person without the permission of the college CEO. A decision to release information to third parties can only to be made after the complainant has given permission for this to occur. This permission should be given using the Information Release Form available from administration staff.
- Complaints are to be considered and handled to ensure the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are applied at every stage of the complaint handling process. This means that the complainant is entitled to be heard with access to all relevant information and with the right of reply. The complainant is entitled to have their complaint heard by a person that is without bias and may not be affected by the decision.
- Finally, the decision must be made based on logical evidence and the decision-maker must take account of relevant considerations, must act for a proper purpose and must not take into account irrelevant considerations. Further guidance on principles of natural justice and procedural fairness

can be accessed at the following link: [Principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness](#)

Review by external agency

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the handling of the matter by the college, they have the opportunity for a body that is independent of Patrick's College Australia to review his or her complaint following the internal completion of complaint handling process. In these circumstances the CEO will advise of an appropriate party independent of Patrick's College Australia to review the complaint (and its subsequent handling) and provide advice to the college regarding the recommended outcomes. This advice is to be accepted as final and advised to the complainant in writing.

A complainant who remains not satisfied with the process applied by the college, following review by an independent party, may refer their grievance to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). ASQA's Online Complaint platform called Asqaconnect can be accessed [by clicking here](#). Students are to be advised that ASQA will require the student to have exhausted all avenues through the college's internal complaints handling procedure before taking this option.

Complaints Handling Procedure

Matters that cannot be resolved at the time they occur should be referred to Patrick's College Australia's CEO for review. The following procedure is to be followed when a complaint form is received:

- A Complaints Form is received by the college and is immediately recorded into the Complaints and Appeals Register.
- Complaints which are received in other forms such as phone or email are detailed on a Complaints and Appeals Form by the person (staff member) receiving the complaint and then recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register.
- The Complaints and Appeals Form is forwarded to the CEO to review the matter and make a recommendation as to how to respond to the matter. The CEO may choose to consult with the complainant, with others within the college, or relevant agencies external to the college, in determining their recommendations.
- The CEO may choose to make inquiries about the matter or may task another person to research the matter against relevant policy.
- The CEO will commence their review of the complaint within seven (7) working days from the date the complaint was submitted.
- The CEO will finalise their response to the complainant and provide the complainant a response as soon as possible but no later than fourteen (14) working days from when the complaint was submitted.
- The CEO will communicate the response to the complainant personally either during a meeting or via the telephone. Complaint responses are not provided to the complainant via any third-party or via

electronic communication such as e-mail. The CEO will seek feedback from the complainant about their level of satisfaction with the complaint outcome and advise the complainant of their options if they are not completely satisfied with the outcome.

- Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint handling, the CEO will arrange for the complaint to be considered by an appropriate independent third-party (LEADR). The independent third-party (LEADR) is then required to respond with their recommendations within fourteen (14) days of their review being requested.
- A complainant who remains not satisfied with the process applied by Patrick's College Australia following review by an independent party may refer their grievance to the Australian Skills Quality Authority, via ASQA's online complaint platform called Asqaconnect, which can be access by [clicking here](#). Students are to be advised that ASQA will require the student to have exhausted all avenues through SPIE internal complaints handling procedure before taking this option.
- The response to the complainant must include information that demonstrates that the matter was thoroughly reviewed and what actions and outcomes have been identified as a result of the complaint.
- Opportunities for improvement that were identified as a result of the complaint will be recorded on the Continuous Improvement Register and submitted for the next Management meeting. The CEO may, at his or her discretion, follow-up with the complainant after consideration by the Management Team to inform the complainant of the improvement actions identified.
- The Complaints and Appeals Register will be always kept up to date to accurately reflect how the matter was responded to and the duration from the date the complaint was received to the date the complaint was resolved.

Complaints Handling Process

