



QUEENSLAND  
**ACADEMIES**  
Health Sciences Campus

# Complaints Management Policy



## Introduction

Educational success is underpinned by effective partnerships between parents, students and the Academy. The notion of working in partnership is central to our Academy philosophy and a significant part of an effective relationship is openness and trust. We need open communication so that any issues that impede the learning or concern the welfare of a student can be addressed.

Complaints about harm or risk of harm, to a student must be dealt with in accordance with the [Student protection procedure](#).

This policy supports the Department of Education's obligations to implement a complaints management system that complies with the Australian/New Zealand Standard on complaints management (AS/NZS ISO 10002:2014 – Guidelines for complaint management in organisations). Additionally sections 219A(1)-(2) of the [Public Service Act 2008 \(Qld\)](#) requires the department to establish and implement a system for dealing with customer complaints.

## Principles

The principles of complaints management at QAHS are aligned to the guiding principles as set out in the Australian/New Zealand Standard on complaints management.

| Principles                              | What this means for the department                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <i>Customer focus</i>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our customers, including children, have a right to complain and to not be adversely affected by their customer complaint.</li> <li>All customers making a complaint are treated with respect.</li> <li>Our actions and decisions consider, and are compatible with, the human rights of our customers.</li> <li>The department proactively seeks and receives feedback and complaints from customers.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>Accessibility and transparency</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The department's customer complaints process is free and accessible.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Responsiveness</i>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer complaints are acknowledged and responded to fairly, reasonably and in a timely manner.</li> <li>Customers are kept informed about the progress of their complaint, and advised about the outcome reached, reasons for the department's decision, and any review options available.</li> <li>Customer complaints are recorded and tracked, and timeframes for resolution are monitored.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>Objectivity, fairness and equity</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer complaints are managed objectively, without bias and in a way that is compatible with, and properly considers human rights.</li> <li>The department respects the confidentiality of personal information about the complaint and others involved in the complaint.</li> <li>Natural justice and procedural fairness are embedded in customer complaint management activities.</li> <li>If the complainant's conduct is unreasonable, the department may implement strategies to manage the conduct so the customer complaint can be productively resolved and staff welfare and wellbeing is protected.</li> <li>The department clearly displays information about how and where a customer complaint may be made on the department's website and at frontline service delivery locations.</li> <li>The department provides all reasonable assistance and support to make it easy for all customers, including children, to make a customer complaint.</li> <li>Customer complaints can be made anonymously.</li> </ul> |

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| <i>Accountability, continuous improvement and prevention</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The department uses formal, documented processes to manage customer complaints.</li> <li>• Departmental resources are regularly reviewed to ensure relevance, accuracy and effectiveness.</li> <li>• Customer complaints are recorded and data is regularly analysed to understand performance and drive improvement.</li> <li>• Data is regularly reported internally and externally to ensure visibility of customer complaints trends and meet legislative reporting obligations.</li> </ul> |
| <i>Staff training and support</i>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The department trains staff to manage customer complaints in accordance with, the department's customer complaints framework, policy and procedures.</li> <li>• A centralised departmental complaints coordinator is available to provide advice, support and guidance to staff involved in customer complaints management.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |

## Complaints Management Procedure

Queensland Academy Health Sciences is committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

If a complaint is with a student's teacher or relates to an issue concerning the student's experience at the Academy, an appointment should be made with that teacher as soon as possible. The information about the problem should be given to the teacher. The teacher should communicate all he/she knows about the incident or problem. Together, both parent/carer and teacher should then take steps to resolve the problem at this level. The teacher will make a record of the concern or complaint and report the meeting and any outcomes to their supervisor. An issue can be raised with any member of the Academy staff. Executive Services should be contacted to make an appointment to see the relevant person.

When making a complaint or raising a concern, it is in the best interest of complaint resolution to ensure that:

- complete and factual information is provided in a timely manner;
- the complaint is delivered in a non-threatening and non-abusive manner; and
- frivolous or vexatious complaints, or include deliberately false or misleading information are not made

If a complaint is made about a staff member, the staff member will be informed of the complaint and offered the right of reply. A support person can also participate throughout the process such as the assistance of an advocate, interpreter or a third party (as agreed between you and the Principal) when raising a concern or complaint.

All members of the QAHS community are encouraged to deal positively and sincerely with concerns and complaints as they are raised.

## Process for managing concerns and complaints

There are generally four key phases in managing a concern or complaint, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a concern or complaint outcome.

### Phase 1 - Receiving and clarifying the complaint

All members of the Academy staff can receive concerns or complaints. The concern or complaint should be stated calmly, clearly and courteously.

When a staff member receives a verbal complaint, they should:

- listen carefully to the issues raised
- ask clarifying questions to ensure they clearly understand the nature of the complaint
- summarise the main points raised

- work out an action plan in relation to: what actions should be taken and when the next contact should be made
- resolve the complaint as soon as is possible
- document the issue

When appropriate the staff member may:

- explain a relevant Academy policy or procedure as related to the concern or complaint raised
- access the support of another party in investigating the complaint or forward the concern or complaint to a more appropriate person

If a verbal concern or complaint is not resolved, the concern or complaint can be expressed in writing and forwarded to the Academy for action. In general, if it is advised that a written complaint will be issued, the member of staff will take no further action until the written complaint is received. If appropriate for the nature of the complaint, it will be forwarded to the Principal.

When a complaint is initiated via email it may be advisable to have a conversation by phone or arrange a meeting to ensure that full details are provided and the situation is clearly described.

It should be noted that a concern or complaint raised anonymously may limit the Academy's capacity to adequately manage the situation or fully investigate the issues raised.

If the complaint relates to a report about harm (whether physical/ emotional/ sexual) of a student under 18 years, or the matter relates to possible criminal activity, the matter must be immediately reported to the Principal or the Principal's supervisor advising them of all the particulars known (in relation to sexual abuse, as prescribed in regulation 76AA of the Education General Provisions Regulation 2000).

## **Phase 2 - Deciding how to handle the complaint**

When a staff member receives a complaint, they will

- begin the process of making an assessment about the concern or complaint
- determine whether they require support to deal with the issue as a concern or a complaint

The teacher may refer the concern or complaint to their line manager or Principal for addressing.

The Principal may then:

- take no further action
- attempt to resolve the concern or complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation
- refer the concern or complaint to the relevant internal or external agency as required (certain serious matters must be referred to Education Queensland's Central Office, District Office or the police)
- initiate an investigation of the concern or complaint, within the school, if further information is required

The Principal has final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to school management issues under his/her jurisdiction. The concern or complaint can however be referred to another staff member in the school for action (for example, the Deputy Principal, Business Services Manager or nominated staff member).

If the concern or complaint relates to departmental policy, or a departmental policy position, the complaint should be given to the relevant district or regional office. If the concern or complaint is in relation to official misconduct, student protection, staff grievances or a perceived breach of privacy, the complaint is directed to the Workforce Standards and Performance Unit and the Legal Services Branch. The Principal ensures that records are kept of a complaint and any referral of a complaint for either internal or external review.

**Phase 3 - Finding out about the concern or complaint**

In this phase the person managing the concern or complaint will gather all the necessary facts about the concern or complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned. A key principle in understanding any concern or complaint is to understand the context and causes. All relevant information should be provided to assist the Academy deal with the situation

Academy staff may need to talk to other people in order to get a complete picture of the situation. They may begin to explore options to resolve the concern or complaint. It will assist the situation if all parties have an open mind to possible resolutions to the matter, to determine the best outcome. Any information provided will be treated confidentially where possible, however if investigation by an external agency is required, information may be passed on.

Academy staff will investigate concerns and complaints by:

- collecting and analysing information relevant to the matter
- working collaboratively with all people involved
- finding the facts relating to the matter
- identifying any contributing factors to the matter
- consulting the relevant policy on issues that relate to the concern or complaint
- documenting the investigation report or outcome

**Phase 4 - Making a decision about the concern or complaint**

In this phase the member of staff managing the concern or complaint will use the facts that have been gathered to make a decision about the way forward. The Academy will seek to address the issues raised in a manner that considers all parties involved and offers a resolution that can be agreed upon. Where appropriate to this resolution, agreed actions will be carried out and staff involved informed. This will be fully documented.

**Phase 5 - Review**

If the response to the complaint is not satisfactory, this can be discussed further with the Principal. If there is still no resolution of the matter the Principal's supervisor, the Executive Director School Improvement at the relevant district office, can be contacted.

Further review of the decision is also available from the Office of Education Queensland and the Queensland Ombudsman as described in [Education Queensland 's Making a Complaint policy document](#).

**Responsibilities****Complainant**

- cooperate in a respectful way and understand that unreasonable conduct will not be tolerated
- comply with any management strategies imposed by QAHS
- understand that if conduct is unreasonable contact may be terminated, but the complaint will still be dealt with, unless it is frivolous or vexatious.

**Staff**

- manage the complaint in accordance with the complaints management framework, policy and procedure
- act fairly, reasonably and ethically in all interactions with a complainant, including considering the complainant's circumstances
- manage complainant expectations at all stages of the process and ensure complainants understand their responsibilities
- help complainants understand reasonable and unreasonable conduct



- set boundaries and clearly explain the consequences of unacceptable conduct
- monitor complainant conduct and use suitable strategies to manage unreasonable conduct
- escalate unreasonable complainant conduct to a principal, deputy principal, supervisor or manager if support is required
- use clear but respectful language to communicate with complainants
- focus on personal health, safety and wellbeing, and seek support or debrief where required
- keep up-to-date complaints register
- maintain appropriate records to support each step in the management of unreasonable complainant conduct

**Additional responsibilities for principals or deputy principals**

- seek advice or escalate unreasonable complainant conduct matters to the regional office if support is required
- support staff to manage unreasonable complainant conduct
- ensure that even if contact with the complainant is terminated, the complaint is still addressed, unless the complaint is frivolous or vexatious
- support staff to participate in training about how to manage unreasonable complainant conduct
- give staff opportunities to debrief after managing unreasonable complainant conduct

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