



COMPLAINTS HANDLING AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Describe the Australian Trades College WA (ATC WA) policy in relation to the handling of complaints and the resolution of disputes;
- Define what constitutes a 'complaint' and a 'dispute';
- To ensure that complaints lodged at the Australian Trades College WA are resolved in a prompt and efficient manner;
- To promote the highest standard of professionalism in dealing with our community;
- List the legislation to which this policy is relevant to and complies with;
- Specify other internal documents relevant to this policy; and
- Describe whom the policy relates to.

Definitions

A '**complaint**' can be defined as the expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the College's education and training. It may be of a general nature, or specifically relate to particular staff, a certain part of the organisation, a policy or decision. Any person may lodge a complaint. A complaint must contain sufficient detail to enable it to be addressed and recorded.

A complaint may be made about the provision of education or the conduct of an ATC WA employee. Employees who are the subject of a complaint are to be informed of the substance of the complaint

A complaint may take the form of an '**appeal of assessment**' where a student believes the decision made by a staff member is incorrect or the judgement has not been made in accordance with the assessment plan.

A '**dispute**' is the expression of an unsatisfied complaint against action taken by staff acting on behalf of the College. A dispute may be general in nature or relate to particular staff or part of the organisation and it may be lodged by any person, other than staff of the Australian Trades College WA acting in their official capacity who have other channels through which to make complaints.

Policy Statement

The Australian Trades College WA will make every attempt to promptly resolve disputes and complaints lodged in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. The Australian Trades College WA takes responsibility for managing the resolution of any disputes or complaints lodged and will do so confidentially, with fairness and sensitivity.

The ATC WA is committed to resolving complaints at the College level wherever possible and recognises a community member's right to complain and to have their complaint dealt with seriously. When a decision is made about a formal complaint, the decision itself and the reason for the decision will be made available to all parties directly involved in the complaint.

Where the Chief Executive Officer and the College staff cannot resolve a complaint in the first instance, the complaint will be referred to an independent Board made up of employers, parents and College staff for review and recommendation. Complaints and disputes that are unable to be resolved at the Board level will be referred to an independent and professional dispute resolution service.

The Board, after questioning and listening to the complainant and the Chief Executive Officer, may be able to find a solution. If this is not possible, and the parents wish to take the matter further, the Board could consider seeking the advice of an independent arbitrator.

Complaints made against the CEO will follow a similar process of that detailed above, with the exception that the complaint should be made in writing addressed to the Chairman of Australian Trades College WA Ltd Board. The Chairman of the Australian Trades College WA Board will discuss the matter with the CEO and provide the relevant documentation.

The Chairman of the Australian Trades College WA Ltd Board will respond to the complainant, notifying them that the matter is being reviewed, asking them if they wish to add anything further and providing a date by which they may expect a response.

Key Information

The *Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution Policy* and the associated *Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution Strategies and Procedures* will be available on the ATC website. The ATC makes a genuine commitment to ensuring that information about the *Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution Policy* and associated procedures are readily available to staff, students and parents associated with the College.

The Chief Executive Officer reserves the right to reject a complaint which is in his/her opinion vexatious, trivial, without substance or does not warrant further action taking into account the provisions of this policy.

A complaint can be verbal (in person or over the phone) or written (in a letter, email or fax). If the complaint is verbal, a form (*ATC Complaint Recording Form*) may be given to, sent to or filled in with the complainant to ensure adequate detail of the complaint is recorded.

In line with the College's philosophy of continual improvement, where a complaint results in the identification of changes that should be made to College processes, those changes will be made.

A complaint is only required to be recorded when it is a specific complaint about some aspect of the College's operation, is not a policy interpretation question and requires more than a single action to be dealt with.

A complaint can be made to the College by or on behalf of an individual, group or government agency that concerns any aspect of the College's operation.

The complainant may withdraw their complaint at any time in the process, preferably in writing. Where this is not possible, the Chief Executive Officer will sign and date a complaint that has been withdrawn. A verbal complaint may be withdrawn verbally and a notation made to reflect this.

Principles that govern this policy are:

Complaints will be dealt with responsively and confidentiality will be preserved.

Procedural Fairness: The principles of procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of complaint handling. This includes:

- giving the complainant the opportunity to put their case forward
- offering reasonable assistance to the complainant to enable the complaint to be made and to know the complaint handling procedures
- informing the respondent of the substance of the complaint investigation process including outcomes
- handling the complaint process confidentially
- determining complaints as quickly as possible and advising the complainant and the respondent of the outcome of the investigation
- assessing the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and determining the complaint fairly
- providing the complainant with details of the determination and reasons
- informing the complainant and the respondent of any avenue for review / appeal

Anonymous Complaints: If a complainant chooses to remain Anonymous, the complaint may not be acted upon.

Further information on the Complaint Handling process and procedures are available in the *Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution Strategies and Procedures*

Policy Number :	ATCWA36
Policy Created :	20/9/06
Policy Custodian:	CEO
Approved By :	ATC Board
Revision Date :	20/09/2010
Related Policies / Procedures/ Documents :	<i>ATC WA Complaint Recording Form ATC WA Complaints Database ATC WA Complaint Handling Strategies and Procedures Australian Standard 4269 AISWA Complaint Procedures</i>