



Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

Bedford College is committed to providing quality training and assessment in accordance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (SRTOs 2015). As such, Bedford College is required to have a policy and processes in place to manage and respond to allegations involving the conduct of staff, learners and third party training and assessment providers who provide services on behalf of Bedford College.

This policy is based on providing and maintaining training and assessment services that are fair and reasonable and afford a forum where issues or inadequacies can be raised and resolved. This process provides opportunity for complaints to be recorded, acknowledged and dealt with in a fair, efficient and effective manner.

The object of this policy is to ensure that Bedford College staff act in a professional manner at all times. This policy provides clients with a clear process to register a complaint. It ensures all parties involved are kept informed of the resulting actions and outcomes.

2. Policy Statement

Bedford College acknowledges the clients' right to lodge a complaint when they are dissatisfied with the training and /or assessment services and experiences that they have been provided by Bedford College.

Bedford College will ensure that clients have access to a fair and equitable process for expressing complaints, and that Bedford College will manage the complaint with fairness and equity.

In doing so, Bedford College:

- a) has written procedures in place for collecting and managing complaints in a constructive and timely manner;
- b) ensures that these procedures are communicated to all staff, third party partners and clients;
- c) ensures that all necessary documentation and resources are in place to enable clients to submit a complaint;
- d) ensures that each complaint and its outcome is recorded in writing; and
- e) ensures that customer complaints and their outcomes are fed into continuous improvement initiatives.

3. Definitions

Bedford College defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the service or training we have provided. It is distinct from feedback where a client, student or other person or agency gives advice or comment on what the organisation does or the service delivered.

Natural justice and procedural fairness are used to ensure that decision making is fair and reasonable. It underpins the rights of all parties to be heard and informed without bias.

Appeals are regarded as a formal request for a change in or a confirmation of a decision. Appeals can be made in regards to an assessment decision or in regards to the initial outcome of a complaint. This policy covers both academic and non-academic matters. Academic matters include those which relate to:

Academic Matters

- Student progress
- Assessment (See Assessment Appeal Policy)
- Course content, or
- Awards in a VET course or study.

Non-academic Matters include those related to:

- Enrolment in a course
- Personal information about the student which is held by Bedford College.

4. Policy Principles

4.1 Principles

In managing complaints, Bedford College will ensure that:

- a) The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaint process.
- b) The complaints policy is publicly available.
- c) There is a procedure for making a complaint.
- d) Complaints are treated seriously and dealt with promptly, impartially, sensitively and confidentially.
- e) Complaints will be resolved on an individual case basis, as they arise.
- f) All clients have the right to express a concern or problem and/or lodge a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the training and assessment services that they have been provided (including through a third party) or the behavioural conduct of another learner.
- g) All complaints are acknowledged in writing and finalised as soon as practicable.
- h) The complaint resolution procedure is based on the understanding that no action will be taken without consulting the complainant and respondent, using a process of discussion, cooperation and conciliation.
- i) The rights of the complainant and respondent will be acknowledged and protected throughout the complaint resolution process, including the conduct of separate interviews initially.
- j) In the interest of confidentiality, the number of people involved in the resolution process will be kept to a minimum.
- k) Final decisions will be made by the Principal, Bedford College or an independent party to the complaint.
- l) The complaint resolution procedure emphasises mediation and education while acknowledging that in some instances formal procedures and disciplinary action may be required.
- m) If the complaints process fails to resolve the complaint or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, the matter will be referred to an independent third party for review, at the request of the complainant. All costs incurred for the third party review will be advised to the complainant.
- n) If the complaint will take in excess of 60 calendar days to finalise Bedford College will inform the complainant in writing providing the reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required. The complainant will also be provided with regular updates on the progress of the complaint.
- o) Victimisation of complainants, respondents or anyone one else involved in the complaint resolution process will not be tolerated.
- p) All complaints will be handled as Staff-In-Confidence and will not affect or bias the progress of the client in any current of future training.

4.2 Types of Complaints

A complaint may include allegations involving the conduct of:

- a) Bedford College, its trainers, assessors or other staff; or
- b) A third party providing services on behalf of Bedford College, its trainers, assessors or other staff; or
- c) A learner of Bedford College.

5. Bedford College Responsibilities

The Principal of Bedford College is the Complaints Resolution Officer. The Principal may delegate responsibility for the resolution of the complaint if necessary.

Details concerning the scope of the Complaints Policy are to be clearly displayed throughout the organisation and contained within the Staff Induction Process, Client Handbook and the Bedford College website.

6. Process

6.1 Informal Complaint (Grievance)

Informal complaints usually relate to minor disputes of difficulties that can usually be resolved without independent assessment or assistance. These are defined as grievances. If a client has a complaint/grievance, they are encouraged to speak immediately with the trainer/assessor to resolve the issue.

If the trainer or training coordinator feels that the issue is above their understanding, skill set or responsibilities they will need to involve the Member of the Executive Team.

It is important the trainer/training coordinator establishes a timeline in relation to when a decision/action will be taken in relation to the complaint. The length of time to remedy an issue will often vary depending upon the issue. However, all staff need to attempt to resolve issues as quickly as possible to ensure the matter is addressed in a timely fashion, and to prevent the complaint from escalating unnecessarily.

If the complainant is not satisfied that the issue has been resolved they will be required to complete a Complaints Lodgement Form, to lodge a Formal Complaint. Bedford College will then investigate the complaint and advise the complainant of the outcome.

6.2 Formal Complaint

Formal complaints shall follow the process below:

- a) Complaints are to be made in writing within 7 working days of the incident using the Complaints Lodgement Form and provided to the Principal, Bedford College. (Complaints Lodgement Forms can be found on Novacore (Bedford's intranet) or may be downloaded from the College' website at: <https://www.bedford.edu.au/about/downloads>)
- b) A submitted Complaint Lodgement Form will constitute a formal complaint from the client. Further details of the complaint can be provided by the client verbally.
- c) The Principal Bedford College may delegate responsibility for the resolution of the complaint.
- d) In the case of a complaint, the Principal Bedford College will initiate a transparent, participative investigation to identify the issues.
- e) Complaints will be processed in accordance with the Complaints flowchart - Annex A.
- f) Complaints, where possible, are to be resolved within 14 calendar days of the initial application.
- g) In all cases the final conclusion will be assessed by the Principal, Bedford College.

- h) The Client will be advised in writing of the outcome of their complaint, within seven (7) days of resolution.
- i) If the outcome is not to the satisfaction of the Client, they may seek an appointment with the Principal Bedford College.

7. Appeal to Outside Authority

This Complaints process does not preclude the student seeking redress in other forums outside the Bedford College process. For example, the complainant may wish to take the matter further by selecting the appropriate body from among such bodies as the Office of Fair Trading (02-4925000), the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (1-300-366700), the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1-300-656419) or the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW (02-49264300) *OR* an external body may be appointed by Bedford College.

The external body used for VET Student Loan appeals is the VET Student Loans Ombudsman <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/about/vslo> (except in matters relating to the re-crediting of a student's FEE-HELP balance). Reviews of decisions relating to the re-crediting of a student's FEE-HELP balance are heard by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (see Refund Policy for details).

The external body used in the case of International Students is:

Overseas Student Ombudsman

International students may lodge a complaint with:

Overseas Student Ombudsman

GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601.

Telephone: 1300 362 072 within Australia. Outside Australia call +61 2 6276 0111 or email

ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Government Funded Courses (Smart and Skilled)

State Training Services (STS) will assist with complaints relating to Smart and Skilled training.

Information on Smart and Skilled Consumer Protection can be found at [Smart and Skilled](#)

[Consumer Protection for Students](#) or telephone: 13 28 11 or go to [State Training Services Centres](http://www.training.nsw.gov.au/about_us/sts_contacts.html)http://www.training.nsw.gov.au/about_us/sts_contacts.html

8. Access & Equity

The Bedford College Access & Equity Policy applies. (See Access & Equity Policy)

9. Records Management

Records of all complaints and their outcomes are maintained securely.

Records of complaints include:

- a) How the complaint was dealt with;
- b) The outcome of the complaint;
- c) The timeframes for resolution of the complaint;
- d) The potential causes of the complaint; and
- e) The steps taken to resolve the complaint.

All documentation from Refund processes are maintained in accordance with Records Management Policy. (See Records Management Policy)

10. Monitoring and Improvement

All complaints practices are monitored by the Principal Bedford College and will be discussed at Management Review Meetings with areas for improvement identified and acted upon.

(See Continuous Improvement Policy)

ANNEX A: Complaints Process

