



# Customer complaints management

## Audience

Department-wide

**Implementation Date:** 11/06/2018

**Version:** 1.1

## Purpose

This policy supports the department's obligations to implement a customer complaints management system that complies with the Australian Standard on complaints management (AS/NZS ISO 10002:2014 – Guidelines for complaints management in organisations).

## Policy statement

The Department of Education (DoE) is committed to effective complaints management by managing complaints in an accountable, transparent, timely and fair manner, in compliance with the department's Customer Complaints Management Framework, policy and procedure.

## Principles

DoE's customer complaints management principles are aligned to the guiding principles as set out in the Australian Standard on complaints management.

Principles	What this means for DoE
<i>Customer focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everybody has a right to complain, including children, and to not be adversely affected by their complaint.</li> <li>All customers making a complaint are treated with respect.</li> <li>DoE 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 complaints process is free and accessible for all customers, including children.</li> <li>The department clearly displays information about how and where a complaint may be made on the department's website and at frontline service delivery locations.</li> <li>The department will provide all reasonable assistance and support to make it easy for all customers, including children, to make a complaint.</li> <li>Complaints can be made anonymously.</li> </ul>
<i>Responsiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints are acknowledged and responded to fairly, reasonably and in a timely manner.</li> <li>Feedback is provided about the progress of complaints, the outcome reached and the reasons for the department's decision, any recommendations, review options and any available external review mechanisms.</li> <li>The department has trained staff to manage complaints, with all staff aware of the customer</li> </ul>



	<p>complaints framework, policy and procedure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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>DoE responds to complaints in a fair, objective, unbiased and timely manner, and respects the confidentiality of personal information.</li> <li>The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are applied to all complainants.</li> <li>If the complainant's conduct when making a complaint is seen to be unreasonable, the department may implement strategies to manage the conduct.</li> </ul>
<i>Accountability, continuous improvement and prevention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The department uses formal, documented processes to manage complaints, with policy, procedures and practices reviewed annually to ensure relevance and effectiveness.</li> <li>Processes are in place to gather and record information to identify trends and issues, to improve the performance of the department's complaints management system, and report to the Executive Management Board (EMB) to inform risk management, strategic and operational planning.</li> <li>The department will publish annual complaints information according to section 219A of the <i>Public Service Act 2008</i> (Qld).</li> </ul>
<i>Staff training and support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The annual staff awareness plan is developed to support the delivery of complaint management information to all staff.</li> <li>Staff involved in managing complaints receive specific complaint management training and complete annual refresher training.</li> </ul>

## Requirements

### 1. Customer complaints within the scope of this policy

Complaints managed in line with the Customer Complaints Management Framework and this policy are those where the customer expresses dissatisfaction about the service or action of the department, or its staff, and the customer is directly affected by the service or action of the department. Examples include:

- a) a decision made, or failure to make a decision, by a public service employee of the department
- b) an act, or failure to act, of the department
- c) the formulation of a proposal or intention by the department
- d) the making of a recommendation by the department
- e) the customer service provided by a public service employee of the department.

#### 1.1 Customer complaints outside the scope of this policy

The following types of complaints are excluded and managed according to relevant legislation and related policies and procedures:

- complaints under *Education and Care Service Act 2013* (Qld)
- complaints related to appeals processes under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (Qld)
- complaints handled under the Education and Care Service National Law (Qld)
- complaints (grievances) by departmental employees about their employment (*Public Service Act 2008* (Qld) and Public Service Commission Directives)
- complaints that are assessed as a public interest disclosure (*Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* (Qld))
- complaints involving corrupt conduct (*Crime and Corruption Act 2001*(Qld))

- complaints related to appeals that are internally reviewable by the department and then externally reviewable by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

## 2. The department's complaints handling approach

The department aims to resolve complaints quickly at the frontline or the point where the complaint is received. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint they may request an internal review. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome after internal review, they may seek an external review.

The department will use formal, documented processes to manage complaints. This will ensure the department achieves its objectives to:

- manage complaints in a consistent, systemic and responsive way
- mitigate risk by identifying trends, causes and implementing effective solutions
- empower departmental staff to resolve complaints promptly, effectively and efficiently.

## 3. Complainant rights and responsibilities

The department acknowledges the customer's right to:

- complain
- be treated with respect and courtesy
- be treated equitably and fairly
- be informed of the conduct that is expected of them.

The department will always seek to address a complaint if it concerns a valid issue. However, if complainant conduct is seen to be abusive, threatening, trivial, unreasonable, or is making inappropriate demands on the department's time and resources, staff and managers will assess the level of risk and any other relevant factors to determine the action to take. Staff safety and wellbeing is paramount and unreasonable complainant conduct will not be tolerated.

## 4. Reporting

A consistent set of complaints categories will be used to report on complaints received. The categories will improve the performance of the department's complaints management system by helping the department to identify trends and issues. Customer complaints will be included in quarterly reporting to EMB to inform activities such as risk management and strategic and operational planning.

The department will publish the following complaints information for each financial year according to section 219A of the *Public Service Act 2008* (Qld):

- a. the number of complaints received by the department in the year
- b. the number of those complaints resulting in further action
- c. the number of those complaints resulting in no further action.

## 5. Monitoring and review

The complaints management system will be reviewed annually with results reported to EMB. The review will consider feedback from customers, including from annual satisfaction surveys, staff feedback, the results of annual internal audits and any external audits, changes in policy, legislation or organisational structure.

## Definitions

<b>Customer Complaints Management Framework</b>	Outlines the department's framework for managing complaints in a consistent way by describing standards and principles to guide complaints management processes in the department.
<b>Complaints management system</b>	Encompasses all aspects of the policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an organisation for the management of complaints.
<b>Complainant</b>	Person, organisation or their representative (including clients, consumers, service users, customers, etc.) making a complaint.
<b>Complaint categories</b>	<p>The department uses the following complaint categories to record complaints at the organisational level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health and safety</li> <li>• staff and volunteers</li> <li>• services</li> <li>• policy and procedure</li> <li>• assets, infrastructure and information technology</li> <li>• procurement, fees and charges</li> <li>• third parties</li> <li>• other.</li> </ul>
<b>Complaints requiring further action</b>	<p>A complaint requiring 'further action' refers to where a complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requires further internal and/or external assessment; or</li> <li>• results in changes to departmental policies, procedures or practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Complaints requiring no further action</b>	A complaint resolved at the point of service and does not involve further action (see definition for 'complaints requiring further action')
<b>Unreasonable complainant conduct</b>	<p>Conduct is likely to be unreasonable where it involves actions or behaviours which because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the department, its staff, other service users or the complainant themselves. Examples of unreasonable complainant conduct, includes unreasonable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persistence - for example, making excessive and unnecessary phone calls or emails</li> <li>• demands - for example, demanding more reviews than provided for in the policy or demanding a different outcome without demonstrating that the original decision was incorrect</li> <li>• lack of cooperation - for example, refusing to identify the issue of complaint or providing disorganised information</li> <li>• arguments - for example, making irrational claims</li> <li>• behaviour - for example, unreasonable aggression or violence to staff or threatening harm to self and others.</li> </ul>

## Legislation

- [Public Service Act 2008 \(Qld\)](#) Section 219A
- [Crime and Corruption Act 2001 \(Qld\)](#)

- [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Education and Care Services Act 2013 \(Qld\)](#)

## Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

## Related policies

- [Customer Complaints Management Framework](#)
- [Enterprise Risk Management](#)

## Related procedures

- [Customer complaints management](#)
- [Complaints management and compliance under the \*Education and Care Services Act 2013\*](#)
- [Managing employee complaints](#)
- [Education Queensland International – Complaints and appeals process](#)
- [Education Queensland International – Deferral, suspension and cancellations of enrolment](#)
- [Enterprise risk management](#)

## Guidelines

- AS/NZS ISO 10002:2014 – Guidelines for complaint management in organisations

## Supporting information/websites

- [Making a customer complaint – Information for parents and carers](#)

## Contact

For further information, please contact:

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31/12/2017

## Superseded versions

1.0 Customer complaints management

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