



Complaints Management Policy

Definition of complaint according to the Australian Standard *Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations AS ISO 10002-2006*

“Any expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products, or the complaints handling process itself”.

The Curriculum Council’s aim is to provide a superior service to their clients with the goal of continuous improvement. The organisation recognises that continuous improvement is linked to customer feedback. We therefore welcome all feedback and appreciate the right of a customer to complain where they are dissatisfied with a product or service offered or provided.

It is the policy of the organisation to have a process available to all clients whereby their complaints can be heard and effectively resolved in a consistent and just manner and will provide management with the opportunity to analyse feedback with the aim of improving services.

Preamble

The Government announced its Whole of Government Complaints Management Strategy through Premier’s Circular 2004/04, (Attachment A) issued on 11 March 2004.

This strategy outlined the requirement for all agencies to:

- have in place a complaints management system that complies to the principles of **AS 4269**; and
- have a direct link on the front page of their website to information assisting people to make a complaint about the agency.

At meeting number 9/2004 (August 16/2004) the Curriculum Council Corporate Executive endorsed the above policy and the following procedures.

Implementation of the process described in this International Standard **AS ISO 10002-2006** can:

- provide a complainant with access to an open and responsive complaints-handling process,
- enhance the ability of the organisation to resolve complaints in a consistent, systematic and responsive manner, to the satisfaction of the complainant and the organisation,
- enhance the ability of an organisation to identify trends and eliminate causes of complaints, and improve the organisation’s operations,
- help an organisation create a customer-focused approach to resolving complaints, and encourage personnel to improve their skills in working with customers, and
- provide a basis for continual review and analysis of the complaints-handling process, the resolution of complaints, and process improvements made.

General

It should be recognised that the Curriculum Council does not have a history of receiving many complaints as defined, nevertheless, we are required to comply with the Premier’s Instruction. With this in mind it is recommended that we have a system that is simple and administered through the records section so that the process can be monitored and recorded. We have found that this centralised approach has enabled the organisation to properly monitor, report and comply in other areas such as Purchasing and Freedom of Information.

Types of complaints

- **Verbal (either counter or telephone)**

Clients sometimes verbally express their concerns about a service or lack thereof, eg being put through to the wrong extension, being asked to wait on line too long, however, their intention is not to register a formal complaint. Most times these types of conversations are the clients informing us we can do better. Sometimes they are right and other times they have misunderstood the process. These types of conversations usually conclude with both parties being satisfied. This would not be defined as a 'complaint or concern' and should not be registered.

Where the client's concerns are evident to staff the following question should be asked: "**We have a formal 'complaints' process. Do you wish me to register your concerns as a formal complaint?**" Where the answer is "Yes" then the appropriate 'Verbal Complaints Management Form' (Attachment B – TRIM: 2007/3655) should be completed by staff and forwarded to records for registration and action as necessary.

- **Written Complaints**

All incoming correspondence needs to be registered through the records section. The recommended process once received by records is:

- 1) Complaint registered in Trim's Complaints Register.
- 2) Records section sends an acknowledgement letter to complainant (TRIM: 2008/26522) which must be sent within 5 days in accordance with the Standard).
- 3) Written Complaint Management Form (2008/26502); complaint document and a copy of the acknowledgment letter are placed by Records on the Complaints file (CR/0076) and forwarded to the CEO.
- 4) CEO nominates responsible Officer for resolution of complaint.
- 5) The response is presented to the CEO for approval.
- 6) The approved response is sent to the complainant and a copy of the response is placed on the Complaints file.
- 7) The file is forwarded to the Records section to update the Register.
- 8) Copy of the complaint and response, if required, are placed on the appropriate subject file.

- **Website**

The link to the Complaints Management policy and forms can be easily accessed on the Curriculum Council website.

Appeal

If you are dissatisfied or aggrieved by Curriculum Council's response to your official complaint, you can apply to the agency for an internal review of its decision.

To apply for an internal review, you must lodge a written appeal with the agency within 30 days after being given notice of the decision.

Ombudsman

The Ombudsman's main function is to assist the people of Western Australia to resolve disputes with public sector agencies of the State and to help those agencies to be accountable for, and to improve the standard of, their administrative decision-making, practices and conduct.

Agencies should make reference to the public's right to complain to the Ombudsman in publications and documentation relating to the complaints process. Information relating to the Ombudsman is available at www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au

Corruption and Crime Commission

Allegations of conduct that could be corrupt or criminal are quite distinct from complaints against a product or service and are not intended to be resolved via this process. Allegations of this nature must be reported to the Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC). The following are contact addresses for CCC.

- Postal Address: PO Box 7667, Cloisters Square, PERTH WA 6850
- Street Address: Ground floor, 186 St George's Terrace, PERTH
- Telephone: (08) 9215 4888 Fax: 9215 4884
- Tollfree: 1800 809 000
- Email: info@ccc.wa.gov.au
- Website: www.ccc.wa.gov.au

Annual Reporting

The minimum information about complaints management to be reported in annual reports is:

- number of complaints received;
- amount of time taken to resolve complaints; and
- service improvements made as a result of complaints received.

Recordkeeping

By forwarding all complaints centrally we can ensure our register is accurate and all complaints are dealt with in a timely and reasonable manner (maximum 30 days). We will also be able to give them a consecutive number and be in a position to answer any queries that may come from a central agency.

Recommendation

The above process has worked well since its introduction in 2004 and has ensured that we have complied with the legislation. It is therefore recommended that it be continued.



Government of Western Australia
Public Sector Commission

PUBLIC SECTOR COMMISSIONER'S CIRCULAR

Enquiries To: 9219 6241
Public Sector Commission

Number: 2009-27
Issue Date: 11 March 2004
Review Date: 23 March 2011

Supersedes: Premier's Circular 2004/04

TITLE: COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

POLICY

To promote effective complaints management across the sector all agencies are required to:

- have in place a complaints management system that conforms to the principles of the Australian Standard on Complaints Handling (AS ISO 10002); and
- have a direct link on the front page of their website to information assisting people to make a complaint about that agency (those agencies with websites).

Agencies are required to review their complaints management processes against AS ISO 10002 and determine what action is needed to meet or exceed the Standard.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

These requirements form part of a broader strategy designed to increase:

- community access to complaints mechanisms;
- community knowledge of complaints mechanisms and what to expect regarding complaints procedures;
- capacity of agencies to meet an appropriate standard of complaints management, including suitable commitment and resources; and
- monitoring and evaluation of complaints processes and data received by agencies to ensure service delivery improvement.

APPLICABILITY OF POLICY

The policy is relevant to goods and services provided by all WA State Government agencies covered by the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, that is, excluding those listed in Schedule 1 to the Act, unless expressly endorsed by Cabinet.

Certain matters are not considered complaints under this system, such as matters of administrative law, appeal decisions and judicial decisions. Nor is it intended to include complaint-handling processes that are an agency's core function, for example, consumer complaints lodged with the Department of Commerce, although complaints concerning the way in which the agency exercises that particular function would be within the scope of this policy.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

AS ISO 1002 can be purchased from SAI Global Limited at:

<http://www.saiglobal.com/shop>

Address: GPO Box 5420
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Telephone: 131 242

Fax: 1300 65 49 49

A document providing guidance for good practice in implementing AS ISO 10002 is available to assist agencies to apply the principles of the Standard within the WA public sector context. *Guidance to Good Practice* contains a number of benchmarks which agencies are encouraged to comply with, such as minimum response times and a sample complaints form. It can be accessed from the list of publications at www.publicsector.wa.gov.au. Comments on the Guidance document are welcomed, and contact details to provide feedback are included.

At a whole of government level the commitment to AS ISO 10002 is also reinforced with a central website located at www.complaints.wa.gov.au which provides assistance to members of the public and agency staff regarding the complaints handling process.



M C Wauchope
PUBLIC SECTOR COMMISSIONER

Other relevant Public Sector Commissioner's Circulars:	n/a
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