

Student and Community Members Complaints Procedures

Associated Policy

These Complaints Procedures have been developed and are to be used in conjunction with the Student and Community Members Complaint Policy.

Scope

CIT students and other interested or affected parties have a right to make a complaint and to have that complaint handled in a timely and efficient manner. Complaints provide feedback and evidence as to the adequacy of CIT's governance arrangements and performance. This information allows CIT to apply a continuous improvement approach that reduces the likelihood of repeated negative outcomes.

A complaint made to CIT in accordance with this procedure does not supersede or replace any complaint made by a complainant to independent authorities such as law enforcement or other regulatory bodies.

Academic Appeals are not within the scope of this policy. Please refer to the Academic Appeals Policy. For CIT staff complaints/workplace issues please refer to Resolving Staff Workplace Issues Policy.

Procedures

These procedures outline the essential elements of complaint management at Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), including roles and responsibilities of individuals who manage complaints.

CIT categorises complaints using a 3 Level model:

Level 1 - Complaint received and immediately resolved (within 3 working days) to the complainants' satisfaction by CIT front line staff or their immediate supervisor.

Level 2 – An unresolved Level 1 complaint, or a Level 1 complaint that relates to a serious or safety related issue that is internally reviewed and investigated.

Note – a complaint that relates to serious or safety related issue is one which may include but not be limited to, complaints of a criminal nature, complaints relating to threats, personal safety or harm etc.

Level 3 - An unresolved Level 2 complaint that is directly or indirectly referred to an independent external body for review and decision.

Lodging, receipt and recording complaints

Consistent with the policy principle of promoting and enabling complaints to be made to CIT, any complaints made to CIT may be made in writing by the complainant or their representative or advocate. A Level 1 complaint may be made verbally to frontline staff, staff are encouraged to still make written records of any Level 1 verbal complaint and the resolution/outcome in the CIT EDRMS TRIM Complaints Register (or CIT Complaints Case Management System) within 30 days of receipt of the complaint. In determining if a complaint should be recorded staff should have regard to the severity of the complaint,

if it is likely or possible it may escalate. If the complaint and the subsequent management of that complaint reaches Level 2 of the CIT complaints handling procedure, that complaint must then be acknowledged as having been received by CIT within 10 days and recorded in writing in the CIT EDRMS TRIM Complaints Register (or CIT Complaints Case Management System).

The CIT Form to be used to make and lodge a written complaint is available at

https://cit.edu.au/contact/complaint_form.

All Complaint Forms are to be sent to: CITOfficeoftheChiefExecutive@cit.edu.au

Three level model of complaint handling

Level 1 – Front line complaint management – Early resolution

It is in the interests of CIT and the complainant that most complaints are addressed by front line first point of contact staff or their immediate supervisors (known as early resolution). For example, a complaint may be made to frontline staff or their immediate supervisor who is able to resolve the complaint easily, within a timely manner and to the satisfaction of the complainant with no further action required (unless the frontline staff member or their supervisor feels it is necessary to provide feedback to the relevant CIT Policy Owner for any suggested amendments to be made to reduce the likelihood of another similar complaint).

Note - Front line staff are defined as all CIT staff who come into contact directly with CIT students or members of the community. The term 'front line staff includes but is not limited to education and student support staff.

For certainty, the CIT Student Concerns system and relevant management processes and responses are defined as Level 1 complaint management.

Unresolved Level 1 complaints must be escalated to Level 2 by the student, frontline CIT staff or their supervisors (including complaints not able to be resolved within 3 working days).

Level 1 complaints that relate to a serious or safety related issue must be escalated to Level 2 by the frontline staff member or their supervisor.

To enable CIT frontline staff and immediate supervisors to manage complaints at Level 1, these staff must be trained by CIT People Branch and CIT Audit Risk and Corporate Governance Branch in the application of the CIT Complaints Policy and Procedure, mental health first aid, enabling and managing story telling by the complainant and referral to support services to assist the complainants.

Level 2 – Internal review, investigation, Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) or a combination thereof

Management of all Level 2 complaints will be overseen by the Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance.

Upon receipt of a Level 2 complaint the Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance will assess the complaint and undertake the following actions as required on a case-by-case basis:

Acknowledgement of receipt

The Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within legislative and regulatory timeframes or 10 days (whichever is the lesser).

Internal Assessment

The Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance will review the complaint and assess whether, and if so how, the complaint can be dealt with by CIT. This assessment will consider issues such as:

- The nature, complexity, seriousness and urgency of the matters alleged
- The complaints desired outcome
- Whether there is utility in taking the matter further
- The adequacy of the information provided
- The options available to address the complainant's concerns
- The appropriate level at which the matters alleged or complained about can be addressed by CIT.

Should the Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance assess that a complaint meets the criteria of a Public Interest Disclosure, the complaint will be referred and managed in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Policy - [Public Interest Disclosure Policy : Canberra Institute of Technology \(cit.edu.au\)](#) by the Senior Executive Responsible for Business Integrity Risk (SERBIR) and recorded as a Level 3 complaint that has been referred for external review.

Internally facilitated resolution

The Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance or an assigned staff member talks with the complainant (or an agreed independent conciliator talks with both representatives of both parties) to see if a mutually acceptable resolution can be achieved. This may include facilitating a discussion between the frontline staff member or supervisor and the complainant.

Internal investigation

Investigating allegations that raise significant issues or risks for either CIT or the complainant. Depending on the circumstance investigations may be undertaken by a complaint manager assigned by the EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance, Professional Standards Unit or an external organisation that provides internal investigative services to CIT.

Internal review

The Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance or an assigned staff member may review the decision of the frontline staff member or immediate supervisor, or the outcome of any internal assessment or investigation of the complaint. As a result of an internal review. The Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance may overturn previous decision, conduct a separate investigation, and apply remedies to conduct systemic issue reviews.

Reporting and systemic issues management

The Audit, Risk and Corporate Governance team will assess complaints to identify, manage and periodically report systemic issues inherent in CIT's overall operations and services to the CIT Executive Management Committee (EMC) quarterly with a copy provided to the CIT Academic Council and CIT Board every 6 months. This reporting must include but not be limited to:

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- Nature of complaints
- Services which complaints are made
- Practices about which complaints are made
- Response time
- Demographic (people, service, college, department etc)
- Referral source
- Staff resources analysis
- Action taken (includes remedies/determinations/results)

Trend analysis

All decisions and actions taken in response to these reports must be recorded to ensure a continuous improvement approach to quality and compliance with the *Standards for RTOs* and any other legislative and regulatory requirements.

CIT Board, CIT Board Members and Ministerial Complaints

Complaints addressed to, or relating to the CIT Board, Board Members or the Minister will be referred by the Executive Branch Manager Audit, Risk and Corporate Governance to the Executive Branch Manager, Governance and Policy for review and actioning in accordance with the CIT Students and Community Member Complaint Procedure. These complaints are categorised as a level 2 complaint under the framework.

Level 3 – External assessment, investigation, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) or review

Level 2 internal assessment, investigation, conciliation, or review of complaints may not result in matters being addressed satisfactorily.

When a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of an internal assessment, investigation, review or process, referral to an external complaint management mechanism by the Executive Branch Manager, Audit Risk and Corporate Governance may be appropriate. The Executive Branch Manager, Audit, Risk and Corporate Governance may elect to undertake the following options:

External Assessment

Complaints regarding CIT may be referred to external accountability bodies by the complainant or CIT. These bodies have been established by government to receive complaints from individuals or organisations such as CIT. Dissatisfied complainants should be referred to these bodies which include but are not limited to:

- ACT Human Rights Commission
- ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Australian Skills Quality Authority
- ACT Integrity Commission

Externally facilitated ADR

Sometimes an independent third party can help resolve an escalating dispute. CIT uses the services of professional mediators (accessed via the ACT Government Solicitor) in such situations. The mediator through a formal face to face process of discussion, helps the parties to clarify issues and reach a solution acceptable to both sides.

External Investigation

The external accountability organisations that oversee CIT (described above) have the authority and capacity to investigate allegations that are within their jurisdiction, at their discretion although their investigative powers may differ.

Note – due to the nature of disputes possible, outcomes of these processes can produce new issues and different circumstances may necessitate a return to an earlier stage of the dispute resolution process.

Performance and Evaluation

The Executive Branch Manager, Audit, Risk and Corporate Governance will perform evaluation of student complaints management and performance on a quarterly basis with a copy provided to the CIT Academic Council and CIT Board every 6 months (see also *Reporting* and *Systemic Issues* above). The Executive Branch Manager, Audit, Risk and Corporate Governance will incorporate complaints handling into CIT Business Planning and Risk Management arrangements. The Executive Branch Manager, Audit, Risk and Corporate Governance may also elect to conduct audits of CIT complaints management activities and records as part of the evaluation. These performance evaluations will be provided to the Executive Management Committee (EMC), CIT Academic Council and CIT Board with all decisions and actions taken in response to these reports recorded to ensure a continuous improvement approach to quality and compliance with the *Standards for RTOs* and any other legislative and regulatory requirements.

References

- Student and Community Members Complaints Policy
- Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015
- Australian Standard - Guidelines for Complaints Management in Organizations AS 10002:2022
- Australian Standard – Complaints Handling AS 4269 – 1995
- Resolving Workplace Issues Policy
- Academic Appeals Policy
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- International Students on Students Visas compliance with ESOS Act Policy

Appendix A – Complaints Checklist

Complaint Event	Responsible officer/action required	Timeframe
Level 1		
Level 1 Complaint received by CIT front line staff or immediate supervisor	Front line staff or immediate supervisor – resolve immediately or escalate to Level 2	Immediately if possible, but not normally longer than 3 working days
Level 2		
Level 2 Complaint received by CIT on CIT Complaints Form via email or hard copy	EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, review and assess the complaint and undertake one or more of the following actions: <input type="checkbox"/> Internal review and assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Internally facilitated resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Internal investigation <input type="checkbox"/> Internal review <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic issues management <input type="checkbox"/> Performance reporting	Timeframe to be set by EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance depending on complaint management course of action selected.
	EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance (or assigned complaint manager) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant in writing and advise the proposed course of action and the expected timeframes involved depending of the course of action to be taken.	As per timeframes set by EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance above
	EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance may depending, on the circumstances, direct that an investigations be undertaken by a complaint manager Professional Standards Unit or an external organisation that provides internal investigative services to CIT.	Timeframe to be set by EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance and complaint manager/investigator
	EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance (or assigned complaint manager) will advise complainant in writing on outcome of their complaint, any action taken in response to complaint and any avenues for external review if unsatisfied with outcome.	Immediately upon completion of the courses action selected above by the EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance.
Level 3		
Level 3 Complaint received by CIT (from external accountability body such as the Human Rights Commissions) as an unresolved Level 2 complaint seeking external review.	The EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance will accept receipt of any referral from an external accountability body or a request made to CIT to refer a unsatisfied outcome from a Level 2 complaint to an external accountability body. The EBM Audit Risk and Corporate Governance will engage the ACT GSO to assist CIT with Level 3 complaints as required.	Determined by external accountability bodies and their processes.