

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Code and Number	E.1.13
Title of Document	Student Grievance Handling - Academic and Non Academic

POLICY

Australian College of Nursing Ltd (ACN) is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system which is easily accessible to all complainants. ACN aims to:

- Develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works;
- Set in place a grievance handling system that is client focussed and helps ACN to prevent grievances from recurring;
- Ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality;
- Ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against nor victimised;
- Ensure that there is a consistent response to grievances.

A grievance can be defined as a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of ACN's services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters, such as:

- the enrolment, induction/orientation process;
- the quality of education provided;
- academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study;
- handling of personal information and access to personal records;
- the way someone has been treated.

These grievance procedures are designed to ensure that ACN responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

2. Coverage

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term "complainant" applies to both current students of ACN and persons seeking to enrol with ACN.

Complainants are entitled to access the grievance procedures set out in this policy regardless of the location of the campus of ACN at which the grievance has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence.

3. Before an issue becomes a formal grievance

Complainants are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. There are staff available to assist the resolution of issues at this level. Complainants may raise an informal grievance by contacting Administration in person or by phoning (02) 9745 7500 or 1800 265 534, and asking to speak to Manager Customer Services. Even though it is not mandatory for complainants to raise a grievance informally, it is highly recommended.

4. Procedure

This procedure can be utilised by complainants to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study. Grievances of a non-

academic nature cover all other matters including grievances in relation to personal information that ACN holds in relation to an individual.

During all stages of this procedure ACN will take all steps to ensure that:

- the complainant and any respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against;
- the complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case and each party to a grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings;
- a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided if so requested by the complainant or a respondent;
- where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, ACN will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome;
- A complainant shall have access to the internal stages of this grievance procedure at no cost. Costs for an external appeal will be shared equally by ACN and the complainant.

4.1 Stage one – formal grievance:

Formal grievances must be submitted in writing marked to the attention of the Manager Customer Services and sent to: complaints@acn.edu.au.

Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged in writing within five working days and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the grievance handling process as soon as practicable.

The Manager Customer Services, or their nominee, will then, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve.

Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request or by a face-to-face interview with the complainant. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview the complainant or respondent may ask another person to accompany them.

The Manager Customer Services, or their nominee, will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and will provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within twenty working days of receipt of the grievance. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance.

4.2 Stage two – internal appeal:

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with the Executive Manager (who is senior to the original decision maker) within twenty working days of receiving notification of the outcome of their formal grievance. The Executive Manager will appoint an appropriate person or committee to consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within ten working days.

Where possible such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to these interviews.

Following the consultation, the Executive Manager, or their nominee, will provide a written report to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within twenty working days of receipt of the appeal. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

4.3 Stage three – external appeal:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal then an independent mediator can be requested through the Resolution Institute. Complainants can contact the Resolution Institute directly as follows:

Address: Level 1, 13-15 Bridge Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: 02 9251 3366 **Freecall:** 1800 651 650

Fax: 02 9251 3733 **Email:** leadr@leadr.info

Costs of such mediation will be shared equally by ACN and the complainant. As a guide mediator's costs would be \$385 for the first four hours (or part thereof). Subsequent hours would be \$137.50 per hour. It is common for most disputes to be resolved within the initial four hour allocation.

ACN will give due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review of the grievance and the Executive Manager will ensure that they are fully implemented within 30 days of receipt of the recommendations.

5. Further action

If a grievance still remains unresolved after the external dispute resolution process, the complainant may decide to refer the matter to an external agency such as The Anti-Discrimination Board or The Office of Fair Trading.

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

6. Enrolment status

Where a current student chooses to access this policy and procedure, ACN will maintain that person's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

7. Record keeping & confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the Manager Customer Service. These records will be maintained at 1 Napier Street, Deakin ACT 2600.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by ACN's *Privacy and Personal Information Procedures*.

8. Approval, publication and training

This Policy and Procedure will be made available to students and persons seeking to enrol with ACN through publication in the Student Handbook and on ACN's website.

For the purposes of communicating to and training staff, it will also be included in the Staff Handbook and form part of the staff induction process which will be facilitated by the Executive Director.

Ratified by Board: 19 February 2016

Responsibility for Review	Education Management Committee
Ratification	Board
Date of Issue	February 2016
Date Last Reviewed	
Date Next Review Due	February 2018