

# COMPLAINTS & APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact [ncat@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:ncat@education.vic.gov.au)

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at the Northern College of the Arts & Technology (NCAT) so that students, parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding NCAT are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

## SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by students, parents, carers, or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the department's [Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures <https://ncat.vic.edu.au/policies-reports>
- NCAT RTO VET Complaints & Appeals Policy and Procedure

## POLICY

NCAT welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre

- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy.
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

Northern College of Arts and Technology (NCAT) is committed to:

- Providing an environment where complaints or appeals are responded to promptly, with minimum distress and maximum protection to all parties with no charge for internal nor external stages.
- Mutually acceptable resolution being reached through negotiation, conciliation and/or mediation.
- To ethical and responsible management, and a visible, accessible and fair complaints or appeals handling process with a view to achieving mutually acceptable and fair outcomes.
- Viewing complaints and appeals as providing an opportunity to review and improve its policies and practices and gain insight into levels of client satisfaction. Complaints and appeals will be viewed as opportunities for improvement.
- Adopting an ethical and professional approach to handling complaints and appeals.
- Respect for privacy and confidentiality wherever possible within the constraints of the need to fully investigate the complaint or appeal.
- Allowing parties who have used the procedures to access records relevant to their case but otherwise keeping records confidential.
- Providing information to students in a non-threatening way by providing the form on the NCAT website.

#### **Definitions:**

A *complaint* can be made about an academic matter (product) or a non-academic matter (service) provided by NCAT or about any third parties delivering services for NCAT.

*Academic matters* relate to student progress, assessment results, curriculum and qualification awards.

*Non-academic matters* include matters relating to enrolment and personal information held by the provider.

*A complaint can be made about any third parties delivering services for NCAT.*

*An appeal* is against a decision such as an assessment result or complaint outcome.

Complaints and appeals are handled through the same procedure.

#### **Complaints and concerns process for students**

NCAT acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. NCAT encourages our students to raise issues or concerns informally as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them before a formal process is undertaken.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult or a leader at the college. This can include their teacher/trainer, Year Level Coordinator, VET Coordinator, RTO Manager, Student Support Worker, Assistant Principal or Principal. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you.

You can also ask your parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: [Mature Minors and Decision Making](#).

Other ways you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:

- Downloading the complaints form from the NCAT website and emailing it to [ncat@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:ncat@education.vic.gov.au) or handing it to the general office for follow up
- Getting a complaints form from the general office and handing it to the office for follow up
- Emailing the college or the Assistant Principal or Principal directly

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI)

### Complaints process for VET students including post-secondary students

VET students, both internal and external students should in the first instance speak to their teacher/trainer. If the issue cannot be resolved then they need to contact the RTO Manager by via emailing the college, asking for an appointment via telephone (Tel 9478 1333) or by going directly to the general office. They can also download the Complaints form from the website and email it to the college [ncat@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:ncat@education.vic.gov.au) which will be forwarded to the RTO Manager for action. See NCAT RTO VET Complaints Policy and Procedure at <https://ncat.vic.edu.au/policies-reports>

### Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members

#### Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

NCAT encourages parents/carers, and members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and NCAT (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

#### Support person

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist you, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to you.

#### Raising a concern

NCAT is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the Year Level Coordinator or Assistant Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

#### Making a complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents/carers or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please email the college [ncat@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:ncat@education.vic.gov.au) or telephone 9478 1333 and ask to speak to the Assistant Principal or Principal to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. Alternatively, you can ring the office and ask to arrange a meeting with the Assistant Principal or Principal. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.

2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the [Assistant Principal/Principal] to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
4. **Timelines:** NCAT will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, NCAT may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, NCAT will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, NCAT may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, NCAT may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

## Escalation

- If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the North Western Victoria Region Phone: [1300 338 691](tel:1300338691) email: [nwvr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:nwvr@education.vic.gov.au)

NCAT may also refer a complaint to the North Western Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For matters relating to NCAT as an RTO, if after arbitration the student is still not satisfied they can also contact the VRQA or use the complaints page on the VRQA website.

<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/complaints.aspx>

For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Raise a complaint or concern about your school.](#)

## Record keeping and other requirements

To meet Department and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, to meet regulatory requirements - refer to Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes for further information

Our school also follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways

- Available publicly on school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook
- Included in enrolment packs and referred to as part of the enrolment interview process
- Annual reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student orientation and induction programs
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department's parents' website:

- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2022
Consultation	Leadership Team, school community, staff
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2024