

Complaints Handling Policy

Title	Complaints Handling Policy
<p>1. Objective</p>	<p>To maintain a high standard for handling external complaints that is fair, courteous and respectful of the privacy of complainant(s), strengthen data about complaints and minimise the risk of stakeholder complaints escalating.</p>
<p>2. Scope</p>	<p>This policy applies to all ACARA employees, executives and affiliates including staff who receive, manage and or investigate formal external complaints about ACARA services and ways of doing business.</p> <p>Complaints not covered by this policy include those relating to decisions made by courts or tribunals.</p> <p>ACARA will not accept or action complaints relating to matters that are very old (and which cannot be readily investigated), have been previously dealt with or finalised, are outside its jurisdiction or which are vexatious or frivolous.</p> <p>Complaints from ACARA employees or their representatives are to be dealt with in accordance with ACARA's Grievance Resolution Policy (2015). Public interest disclosures by ACARA staff or service providers (including former staff or service providers) are to be dealt with under ACARA's Public Interest Disclosure Act (2013) procedures.</p>
<p>3. Statement</p>	<p>3. Complaints Handling Policy</p> <p>3.1.1 This policy is intended to ensure ACARA's commitment to providing a high quality complaints handling process and applies to all formal, external complaints about ACARA services and ways of doing business.</p> <p>3.1.2 <i>Complaints</i> are defined as any expression of dissatisfaction or grievance made to staff by a complainant in writing in relation to ACARA business, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. For the avoidance of doubt, this excludes disagreements about Education Council or government policy positions. For the purpose of this policy, <i>complaints</i> are referred to as those complaints which have been registered as formal complaints in accordance with this policy.</p> <p>ACARA is committed to:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a fair and transparent approach to handling complaints received by ACARA • respect for complainants' privacy • a high-quality complaints handling process that uses complainant's feedback as key to improving ACARA's service quality.
<p>4. Accountability</p>	<p>4.1 Roles and responsibilities</p> <p>4.1.1 Communications and Strategic Relations (C&SR) team is responsible for correspondence tracking and therefore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registering complaints received in the correspondence tracking system; and • allocating the complaint to the complaint-handling manager. <p>4.1.2 The complaint handling manager (Board Secretariat, unless the executive manager's involvement is required), is responsible for coordinating the complaint resolution process internally and is the contact for external complainants and complaint making bodies. The complaint handling manager is also responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledging receipt of complaints • determining who the final decision maker should be (in consultation with the CEO, where appropriate) and preparing a final letter in ACARA's record management system for signature by that person • seeking advice from executive team or the CEO, where necessary to resolve a complaint • acting as a timely, consistent and helpful liaison point for complainants • combining their knowledge of complaint resolution with the expertise of other ACARA staff and managers to provide effective outcomes for complainants • finalising details in ACARA's complaints register, following resolution of the complaint • monitoring when the 45-day deadline falls for each complaint and ensuring the deadline will be met • monitoring trends in complaints and reporting these internally as appropriate. <p>4.1.3 The allocated decision-maker (member of the executive) is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting with the investigation of the complaint if needed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making recommendations to resolve the complaint if needed signing off on the final written response. <p>4.1.4 The complainant is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing information as requested by ACARA’s officers clarifying information provided where necessary interacting with ACARA in a helpful way that is conducive to resolving a complaint.
<p>5. Related policies/agreements/legislation</p>	<p><i>Grievance Resolution Policy 2015</i></p> <p><i>Privacy Act 1988</i></p> <p><i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i></p> <p><i>ACARA’s Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Act 2013</i></p> <p>The Commonwealth Ombudsman can investigate complaints about actions and decisions of Australian Government agencies to see if they are wrong, unjust, unlawful, discriminatory or unfair.¹</p> <p>The Ombudsman also seeks remedies for those affected by administrative deficiency, and acts to improve public administration generally. Information relating to making a complaint via the Commonwealth Ombudsman is available at www.ombudsman.gov.au/making-a-complaint</p> <p>All ACARA staff will be made aware of the relevant parts of these acts and legislation on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>6. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements (if applicable)</p>	<p>All formal complaints must be made in writing (including via email) to ACARA.</p> <p>Complainants’ personal details or details of their complaint will not be divulged to third parties unless ACARA has obtained the written consent of the complainant(s).</p> <p>Recorded complaints will also be monitored for any ongoing trends by management and efforts made to resolve any ongoing issues.</p> <p>This policy will be reviewed every three years.</p>

¹ The Ombudsman advises that ‘we will generally not investigate a complaint unless you have already complained directly to the department or agency concerned and you remain dissatisfied’ (www.ombudsman.gov.au/about/what-we-do/service-charter)

7. Related procedures or guidelines	ACARA's Code of Conduct (2014) ACARA Complaints Handling Procedures
8. Implementation	This policy will be implemented across ACARA on an ongoing basis through training and or induction programs organised by the Human Resources team, and by inclusion on the ACARA intranet (policy and procedures).
9. Policy administration	
9.1 Approval authority	Senior Management Group
9.2 Policy sponsor	As above
9.3 Policy first issued (date)	November 2010
9.4 Current version issued (date)	January 2017
9.5 Policy review date:	January 2020

Policy variations/amendments		
Date	Variation description	Responsible officer:
November 2010	Version 1.0	Board secretary
April 2011	Version 1.1	Board secretary
April 2014	Version 1.2 (rewrite)	Board secretary
January 2017	Version 2.0	Board secretary