
Complaints and Appeals Policy

George Brown College (GBC) is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system which is easily accessible to all stakeholders.

GBC 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 focused and helps GBC to prevent grievances from recurring
- Ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively, 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 'the expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of GBC's services and activities', such as the:

- Enrolment, induction / orientation process
- Quality of education provided
- Academic matters, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study
- Handling of personal information and access to personal records
- Way someone has been treated.

This *Complaints and Appeals Policy* is designed to ensure that GBC responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

Before an issue becomes a formal Complaint

All are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. There are support staff available within GBC (including a Wellness Officer) to assist students to resolve their issues at this level.

Grievance handling process for students

This Policy can be utilised by GBC stakeholders, including students enrolled and potential seeking to enrol in a course of study with GBC for a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include matters 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 GBC holds in relation to the student.

During all stages of this Policy GBC will take all steps to ensure that:

- The complainant and the respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against
- The complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case and each party to the 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 the respondent
- Where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, GBC will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome
- All records are filed in Continuous Improvement Register
- There is no cost to the complainant.

Stage one – Informal grievance

Any GBC stakeholder with a question or complaint may attempt an informal resolution by raising the matter verbally or face-to-face with GBC staff. Matters raised as such are not formal grievances, and are therefore not documented, recorded or reported unless identified by staff to whom the grievance was made as relevant to the wider operation of the college.

Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of their question or complaint are encouraged to register a formal grievance.

Stage two – Formal grievance

Using the Complaints & Appeals Form, which is available on GBC website, a formal grievance must be submitted in writing in person at GBC student services or via email to grievances@georgebrown.nsw.edu.au.

Appointed staff will receive and acknowledge the Complaints & Appeals Form and escalate it to relevant department manager.

The process commences within ten working days of the formal lodgment of the Complaints & Appeals Form along with supporting information, and all measures are taken by GBC to finalize the process as soon as practicable.

Where GBC requires more than 60 calendar days to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, it will:

- Inform the complainant in writing as to why more than 60 calendar days are required
- Provide the complainant with regular updates on the progress of the process

The relevant department manager or their nominee, will then endeavor to resolve the grievance and provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address it, including the reasons for the decision. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process within 20 working days from the outcome if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance.

Stage three – Internal appeal

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with GBC Director (who is senior to the original decision maker) again, using the Complaints and Appeals form.

An appropriate person or committee will be appointed to consult with the complainant and other relevant parties.

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 Director or their nominee, will provide a written report to the complainant advising further steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within ten (10) working days from the lodgment 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.

Stage four – External appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal, they may lodge an external appeal with the Overseas Student Ombudsman.

Contact details for the Ombudsman are:

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
Website: <http://www.oso.gov.au/>
Call: Within Australia: 1300 362 072 / Outside Australia: +61 2 6276 0111
Enquiries: Monday to Friday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Postal: Commonwealth Ombudsman, GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601

Students who wish to lodge an external appeal must complete the form online at <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/making-a-complaint/overseas-students>, using the form in the “online complaint form” link. This is a free government service.

GBC agrees to be bound by the external reviewer’s recommendations and the Director will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 working days of receipt of the report from the external reviewer.

Further action

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If a grievance still remains unresolved after the external appeal, the complainant may decide to refer the matter to the Department of Education and Training National Training Complaints Hotline on 13 38 73.

The Policy set out in this document does not replace or modify any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law.

Nothing in this policy limits the rights of individuals to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. Also, this Policy does not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

Enrolment status

Where a student chooses to access this policy, GBC will maintain the student's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

Record keeping and confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this Policy 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 GBC.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by GBC's privacy and personal information policy.