Feedback and Complaints Management Policy and Procedure

Quality Area 2: VET Student Support
Standard: 2.7

1. Purpose

This policy outlines George Brown College (GBC')s commitment to providing a fair, transparent and accessible process for students and stakeholders to provide feedback or lodge a formal complaint. It ensures that all complaints are addressed promptly, without prejudice, and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. Feedback and complaint outcomes are used to inform continuous improvement.

2. Rationale

Under Standard 2.7 of the Outcome Standards, RTOs are required to operate a feedback and complaints management system that is accessible, procedurally fair, and used to inform continuous improvement. This policy ensures procedural fairness, clear timeframes, and well-documented outcomes in a system that encourages open communication and systemic quality review.

GBC values student feedback as a driver of quality improvement and acknowledges that complaints may arise. By establishing a structured, transparent and supportive approach, GBC ensures students can express concerns without fear of disadvantage and that responses are fair, proportionate and constructive

3. Policy Statement

GBC is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience and promoting a culture of open feedback. All students, staff, employers, and third parties are encouraged to provide positive and critical feedback and are entitled to have their complaints managed professionally, confidentially, and without fear of reprisal. This policy ensures that:

- A culture of open communication exists where feedback and complaints are welcomed and viewed as opportunities for learning and continuous improvement. No student will be penalised or treated unfairly for raising a concern genuinely and in good faith.
- Feedback and complaints can be made regarding any aspect of GBC's operations, including third parties.
- All complaints are managed in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. The person lodging the complaint will not suffer any disadvantage as a result.
- Reasonable timeframes are applied to all stages of the complaints process.
- Clear and accessible information about the complaints process is provided to all students and stakeholders.

- All complaints are documented, and outcomes are communicated to all relevant parties.
- Feedback and complaints are analysed to identify trends and inform continuous improvement.

GBC applies the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness in all complaints and feedback processes. This means:

- All parties have the right to be heard and respond to information presented;
- Complaints are managed without bias by staff not directly involved in the matter;
- Affected individuals are informed of potential adverse decisions and given an opportunity to respond;
- Students and staff are protected from victimisation for lodging complaints in good faith;
- Internal and external appeal options are available.

4. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All current and prospective students
- All staff members, including trainers, assessors and contractors.
- Employers and industry stakeholders.
- Third parties delivering services on behalf of GBC.

5. Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of RTO operations.
Feedback: means any verbal, written or electronic communication from a student or stakeholder that provides opinions, suggestions, or observations about the RTO's services, courses, facilities, staff, or systems. It may be positive, negative, or neutral and is typically provided outside of a formal complaints process.
Natural Justice: A legal principle supporting the right to be heard and to an impartial decision.
Procedural Fairness: Ensuring fair and transparent handling of complaints where all parties are given an opportunity to present their case.

6. Responsibilities

Director/Principal Executive Officer: Oversight of the complaints system, ensuring compliance with the Standards.
Compliance Officer/GM: Day-to-day management of feedback and complaints, including documentation, communication of outcomes, and trend analysis.
Staff Members: Must refer any complaint received to the General Manager and cooperate with investigations.
Students and Stakeholders: Responsible for submitting complaints or feedback in good faith using the appropriate channels.

7. Procedure

Complaints and feedback mechanisms are made visible on GBC's website, student handbook, and orientation materials.

Students and stakeholders may provide feedback or lodge complaints through various channels, including online forms, email, in person, or during class evaluations. Complaints can relate to training quality, staff conduct, facilities, third-party services, or any other area of concern.

Information about the feedback and complaints process is available in accessible formats upon request, including large print, Braille, and audio. Interpreters and culturally safe support options are also available as needed to ensure equitable access to the process.

A complaint does not need to be formally documented by the complainant in order to be acted upon. All complaints, including informal feedback and formal written complaints, are documented and reviewed.

All complaints are subject to triage to determine urgency and risk upon receipt. This involves assessing the nature and potential risk of the complaint.

- High-priority complaints include those involving threats to health, safety, child protection, discrimination, sexual harassment, or bullying.
- These matters are immediately escalated to the Compliance Manager or Director (as appropriate) and responded to within 24–48 hours.
- Complaints assessed as lower risk will follow the standard resolution pathway. Triage decisions and actions are recorded in the Complaint Management Register

Students may request assistance to lodge a complaint. Language support, disability access services, or cultural safety support may be provided on request. Complainants have the right to be accompanied by a support person, such as a friend, advocate or interpreter, at any meeting or discussion related to the complaint. There is no cost to the complainant for participating in this way.

Staff who are the subject of a complaint will be provided with full details of the allegation, afforded the opportunity to respond, and supported throughout the process. Procedural fairness applies equally to staff and students

Once a complaint is received, the General Manager acknowledges receipt within two (2) working days and resolved within ten working days where possible. Where delays occur, complainants are provided updates at least fortnightly with reasons and revised timeframes.

All parties have the right to be heard and to respond. Complaints are reviewed by impartial staff not involved in the original matter.

An impartial investigation is commenced, and the parties involved are afforded the opportunity to present their views. A resolution is generally reached within ten (10) working days. Outcomes of complaints may include actions such as reassessment, refunds, apologies, provision of additional support, amendments to learning resources, staff training, or updates to policy or procedure. Remedies must be authorised by the Compliance Manager or CEO and documented in the Complaints Register.

Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed in writing with reasons and an updated timeframe.

If the matter cannot be resolved internally, GBC provides access to an external independent mediator at low or no cost to the complainant. All complaints are documented in the Complaints Register, and outcomes are communicated in writing to all involved parties.

The following are appropriate external agencies:

- In relation to consumer related issues, the person may refer their complaint to the Office of Fair Trading.
- In relation to the delivery of training and assessment services, the person may refer their complaint to the National Training Complaints Service via the following phone number: 13 38 73 or visit the website at https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-training-complaints-hotline
- For complaints about non-compliance or regulatory breaches by the RTO. Australian Skills Quality Authority at the following website https://asqaportal.asqa.gov.au/Make-a-Report//?from=tip-off
- For matters relating to privacy, the person may refer their complaint to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner via the following details: https://www.oaic.gov.au/individuals/how-do-i-make-a-privacy-complaint or call on 1300 363 992

All complaint records are maintained securely in the Complaint Management Register.

- Records include complaint details, communications, decisions, actions taken, and outcomes.
- Documents are stored in a secure, access-restricted system for a minimum of five years, in accordance with regulatory and privacy requirements.
- Only authorised personnel (e.g. Compliance Manager, CEO) may access these records

The root cause of complaints is identified where applicable, and necessary improvements are made to policies, procedures, training or services. Where appropriate, follow-up contact is made with the complainant to confirm satisfaction with the outcome and to ensure the matter is fully resolved.

Complaints are reviewed quarterly as part of GBC's Continuous Improvement Plan.

Procedure Summary Table

Step	Action	Responsible	Timeframe
1	Receive feedback or complaint via any channel (verbal, written, email, form)	Any staff member	Ongoing
2	Acknowledge receipt of complaint and advise of next steps	Compliance Officer or Student Services	Within 3 working days

3	Triage complaint to identify urgency and escalate if high risk (e.g. safety, wellbeing, discrimination)	Compliance Officer or delegated officer	Within 1 working day for urgent matters
4	Offer support to student if required (e.g. advocate, interpreter)	Student Support Officer	As needed
5	Investigate complaint fairly and objectively	General Manager or Compliance Officer (not involved in the original matter)	Within 10 working days (or longer with written explanation)
6	Communicate outcome to student, including reasons and options for appeal	Compliance Officer	Within 2 working days of decision
7	Record and file all complaint documentation securely	Compliance Officer	Immediately upon finalisation
8	Review complaint trends and refer to Continuous Improvement Register if systemic issues are identified	General Manager	Quarterly or as issues arise

8. Policy Implementation

This policy is implemented through:

- Staff training and induction to ensure awareness and understanding of feedback and complaints procedures.
- Clear and accessible publication of the policy on GBC's website and in the Student Handbook.
- Integration with GBC's continuous improvement processes to ensure complaint trends inform strategic actions.
- Allocation of responsibilities to ensure all staff are aware of their role in managing and responding to complaints.
- Regular reviews of the complaints register to identify systemic issues and drive policy refinement.
- Internal audits and reviews to monitor adherence to policy and procedure and to assess the effectiveness of the complaints handling system.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of the feedback and complaints system is monitored through regular review of complaints data, student feedback, and CI actions. As part of this process, GBC conducts root cause analysis to determine whether complaints arise from isolated incidents, systemic issues, or policy/procedure gaps. This involves reviewing patterns and trends, consulting with relevant stakeholders, and mapping complaints to possible underlying causes such as communication breakdowns, training design, staff conduct, or operational processes. Outcomes of this analysis are used to inform targeted improvements and are documented in

the Continuous Improvement Register. Annual reporting to the governing body includes trends, risks and recommendations for improvement.

Complaints data and management practices are included in the GBC's internal audit schedule and reported annually to the governing body. Reporting includes resolution timeframes, satisfaction data (where available), and the effectiveness of implemented improvements.

Document Control

Document Title	**Feedback and Complaints Management Policy and Procedure**
Approved By	Preeti Singh
Date Approved	25/06/2025
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Standards/Legislation	2.7
Version	1.0

Version Control

Version #	Changes	Approval By	Approval Date
1.0	**Initial version**	**PEO**	**25/06/2025**

Associated Documents

Policy

Appeals and Review of Decisions (Standard 2.8)
Continuous Improvement Policy

Forms

Complaints Register
Continuous Improvement Register
Feedback and Complaints Form
Student Handbook

CRICOS Addendum - Feedback and Complaints P&P (Standard 2.7) and Appeals P&P (Standard 2.8)

1. Purpose of the Addendum

This addendum ensures that GBC meets additional obligations relating to addressing complaints and appeals. These obligations include requirements to ensure overseas students have access to a fair, transparent, and prompt complaints and appeals process that does not affect their enrolment during resolution.

2. Applicable National Code Standard

National Code Standard 10

3. CRICOS-Specific Obligations

In addition to meeting Standards 2.7 and 2.8 of the *Standards for RTOs 2025*, CRICOS providers must:

- Provide international students with documented procedures for complaints and appeals.
- Ensure students are not penalised or disadvantaged for lodging a complaint.
- Maintain enrolment during the internal and external appeal process unless extenuating circumstances apply.

4. Recordkeeping Requirements

The following CRICOS-specific records must be maintained:

- Complaints and Appeals Register
- Acknowledgement and Outcome Notifications
- Records of External Referrals (if applicable)

5. Reference to CRICOS Policy Suite

Further operational procedures for implementing these requirements can be found in GBC's CRICOS Policy and Procedure Manual. This includes forms, checklists, and workflow steps specific to international student administration.