

POLICY
STUDENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS
(06.001)

POLICY

Northland Polytechnic shall operate procedures for resolving student concerns and complaints, which are accessible, appropriate and fair.

PURPOSE

To ensure student concerns and complaints are dealt with fairly and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This policy applies to all Northland Polytechnic programmes and student services except for matters that are provided for by other Northland Polytechnic policies

COMPLIANCE OBLIGATIONS

- *Privacy Act 1993*
- *Bill of Rights Act 1990*
- *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016*

DEFINITIONS

- *Advocate*
The person who assists a party to a complaint and guides them through the process. The role will usually include:
 - Observing that the process is followed; and
 - Advising the complainant regarding process and options

An advocate will be a Student Advisor, or their nominee; or any person nominated by the complainant
- *Complaint*
A written expression of dissatisfaction where the student seeks some form of redress or change in a situation; where the student considers that there has been a direct and significant adverse impact on him/her, which requires a formal process of resolution.
- *Complainant*
The student making a complaint, or a person making a complaint on their behalf
- *Concern*
A student seeks improvement in a situation where the student considers appropriate standards have not been met. The student perceives that the impact on him/her has not been large and it is likely that resolution can be obtained by direct, informal consultation with the people concerned.

- *Investigator*
A person or team of people appointed by the Student Complaints Officer to investigate a complaint
- *Mediation*
The process by which the participants, together with the assistance of a neutral person or persons, systematically review the complaint to develop options, consider alternatives and reach a consensual agreement that will accommodate their needs.
- *Party to a complaint*
Parties to a complaint include the complainant, Northland Polytechnic, any person complained about, the chair of any Northland Polytechnic board or committee complained about, and the manager of any Northland Polytechnic department complained about.

Responsibility Office of the Chief Executive
Approval Date July 2018
Next Review July 2021

OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS

Policy: *Anti-Harassment and Bullying (04.014)*
 Policy: *Equal Educational Opportunities (05.002)*
 Policy: *Academic Appeals (09.002)*
Northland Polytechnic Regulations
Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi
Investigation Process/workflow

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PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

1.0 PRINCIPLES

Application of the principles listed below is fundamental to the implementation of the procedures and guidelines contained in this policy:

- 1.1 Processes shall be transparent and fair.
- 1.2 Decisions shall be made without bias.
- 1.3 Confidentiality shall be maintained.
- 1.4 Concerns and complaints shall be taken seriously and acted on promptly.
- 1.5 All parties to a complaint are entitled to an advocate.
- 1.6 Complainants shall not be disadvantaged for making a complaint
- 1.7 Parties to a complaint shall be kept informed of progress of any investigation.
- 1.8 Parties to a complaint shall have the opportunity to read/see and respond to evidence collected in an investigation before a decision is made.
- 1.9 All parties to a complaint shall be notified of the decision and the reasons for the decision and their options regarding the decision including review and appeal.
- 1.10 The complaints process will be applied in a culturally appropriate way.

2.0 CONCERNS

- 2.1 Every attempt must be made to resolve a concern at the earliest opportunity with those most directly involved.
- 2.2 Where a complainant does not feel safe raising a concern with those most directly involved, or a concern is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, they may raise the concern to a complaint by following the complaints process.
- 2.3 Student Advisors are available to assist students in expressing and resolving concerns.
- 2.4 All concerns shall be reported to the Student Complaints Officer monthly.

3.0 COMPLAINTS

- 3.1 A complaint must be made in writing by:
 - Submission of Concern/Complaint/Academic Appeal form (found on the NorthTec website); or
 - Email concernsandcomplaints@northtec.ac.nz; or
 - Letter to the Student Complaints Officer
- 3.2 The complainant must state their name and contact details, the nature of the complaint, outline the steps already taken to address the issue, and the resolution sought.
- 3.3 To ensure that complaints can be resolved efficiently, a complaint must be lodged as soon as possible after the event being complained about occurring.

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3.4 The **Student Complaints Officer** acknowledges receipt of a complaint within three working days by the preferred method as selected by the complainant or in the same manner as the complaint was made.

The **Student Complaints Officer** assigns a Student Advisor to meet with the complainant to explain the process.

3.5 The **Student Complaints Officer** appoints a person or team to investigate the complaint, notify the parties to the complaint of the investigation, and monitor the progress of the investigation. Where the complaint relates to staff conduct, the investigation will be conducted with the support of Human Resources.

3.6 When appointing an Investigator, the **Student Complaints Officer** will take in to consideration any particular needs of the complainant, the skills of potential appointees, and any other relevant circumstances. This specifically includes willingness to address complaints according to Tikanga Māori.

The **Student Complaints Officer** may appoint an independent person to investigate or review a decision regarding a complaint and its resolution when there is the potential for a conflict of interest.

3.7 The **Investigator** investigates the complaint consistent with the principles in Section 1 and compiles a report including a recommended decision and a proposed resolution. The Investigator provides the Student Complaints Officer with the report, and all investigation documentation, including the signed agreement to the recommendations and decision from the appropriate director or delegate.

3.8 The **Student Complaints Officer** forwards the Investigator’s report together with any responses from parties to the complaint to the **Office of the Chief Executive** for a decision regarding the complaint and its proposed resolution.

3.9 The **Office of the Chief Executive** formally notifies parties to the complaint of the outcome within 25 working days of receipt of the complaint and includes advice regarding options available if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome. The Office of the Chief Executive forwards a copy of the final letter to Student Complaints Officer.

3.10 All records relating to complaints shall be stored by the **Student Complaints Officer**.

3.11 If a person believes they have been disadvantaged because they made a complaint, they should raise this with the Student Complaints Officer. The Student Complaints Officer will arrange for the circumstances to be investigated, and ensure that no further disadvantage occurs. Intentionally disadvantaging a person because they made a complaint is regarded as serious misconduct.

4.0 RECONSIDERATION

4.1 Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome the following options are available:

- Request mediation - inform the Student Complaints Officer in writing who shall arrange for an independent mediator

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- Refer the complaint to New Zealand Qualifications Authority or the Ombudsman. Information on this process is available here: <http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/> and here <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/make-a-complaint/>
- International students may refer the complaint to New Zealand Qualifications Authority. <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/make-a-complaint/>
Information on this process is available here: <http://www.istudent.org.nz/>

5.0 TIMEFRAMES

- 5.1 Concerns shall be resolved as quickly as possible and in not more than 10 working days.
- 5.2 Complaints shall be made as soon as possible after the incident.
- 5.3 Complaints shall be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt by the **Student Complaints Officer**.
- 5.4 Parties to the complaint have 5 working days to respond to the investigator's report and evidence.
- 5.5 The decision about the complaint can be expected within 25 working days of receipt of the complaint. Where there is a delay, all parties to the complaint shall be notified of the delay, the reasons for the delay and the date a decision can be expected.
- 5.6 Where there is no further communication from the complainant, the matter shall be closed after six months.

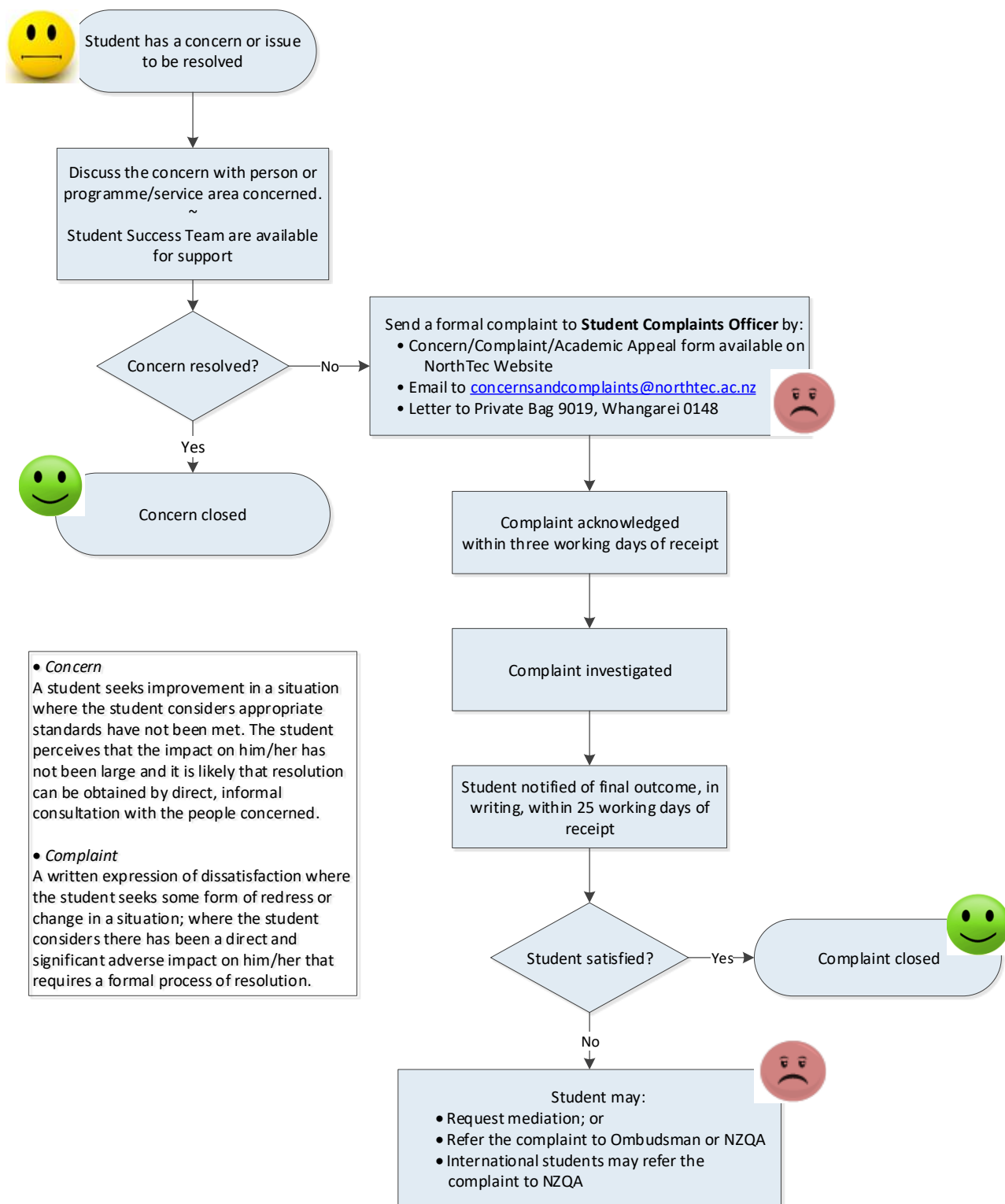
6.0 REPORTING

- 6.1 Each month, Academic Quality Committee, and Academic Board shall receive a summary of concerns and complaints. The report shall include an analysis of concerns and complaints, reporting of agreed timeframes.
- 6.2 Agreed institutional improvements shall be added to the Institutional Improvement Plan for action. The plan shall be provided to Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board monthly.

REVISION HISTORY			
Version	Description of Change	Author	Effective date
1	New - replaced <i>A01/02 Student Concerns and Complaints</i>	QMS Team	December 2008
2	Review - management structure changes	QMS Team	July 2010
3	Review - merged with <i>09.001 Academic Appeals</i>	QMS Team	May 2014
4	Review/Update of procedures and guidelines, flowchart	QMS Team	October 2015
4.1	Flowchart updated and simplified to remove internal investigation processes	QMS Team	June 2017
5	Full review of policy, procedures and guidelines, and other appendices. Academic Appeals moved to separate policy Sept 2017	QMS Team	July 2018
5.1	Added <i>Investigation Process/workflow</i> to "Other related documents"	QMS Team	-

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STUDENT CONCERNS and COMPLAINTS
STUDENT PROCESS
July 2018



Student Concern / Complaint / Academic Appeal Form

If you do not use this form, please include the following information in your letter to assist NorthTec to resolve your concern/complaint/academic appeal.

Date	
Name	
Address	
Contact Number	
Email Address	
Preferred contact option	
Programme Name	

Please choose one of the options below:

- I want to raise a concern (the first step in the concerns/complaints process)
- I want to lodge a complaint (where a concern has not been resolved)
- I want to make an Academic Appeal

Please send this form or letter to NorthTec's Student Complaints Officer

It may be handed in at a campus reception; emailed to concernsandcomplaints@northtec.ac.nz or posted to:

Student Complaints Officer
NorthTec
Private Bag 9019
Whangarei Mail Centre 0148

A NorthTec Student Advisor may support you in this process and it is recommended that you discuss your complaint with them. A Student Advisor can be contacted directly by phone on 0800 808 856 / 09 470 4123 or via email studentsuccess@northtec.ac.nz.

Please describe the details of your Concern/Complaint/Academic Appeal

Please describe how you have tried to resolve the Concern/Complaint/Appeal already

Please describe how you think your Concern/Complaint/Academic Appeal can be resolved (Outcome sought)

- Please attach additional pages or information

Student signature: _____

Date: _____

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