

POLICY
STUDENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS
(06.001)

POLICY

Northland Polytechnic Limited will 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 Limited programmes and student services except for matters that are provided for by other Northland Polytechnic Ltd 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; or where the student considers that there has been a direct and significant adverse impact on him/her that requires a formal resolution process.
- *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. Mediation may occur during the investigation and can be part of an appeals process.
- *Party to a complaint*
Parties to a complaint include the complainant, Northland Polytechnic Limited, any person complained about, the chair of any Northland Polytechnic Limited board or committee complained about, and the manager of any Northland Polytechnic Limited department complained about
- *Significant concern*
A concern that may lead to a formal complaint, involves a large number of students, involves fees or other financial matters, or involves bullying or harassment

Responsibility	Office of the Chief Executive
Approval Date	July 2018
Next Review	July 2024

OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS

Policy: *Anti-Harassment and Bullying (04.014)*
 Policy: *Privacy (04.020)*
 Policy: *Equal Educational Opportunities (05.002)*
 Policy: *Academic Appeals (09.002)*
Northland Polytechnic Limited 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 will be transparent and fair.
- 1.2 Decisions will be made without bias.
- 1.3 Confidentiality will be maintained wherever possible.
- 1.4 Concerns and complaints will be taken seriously and acted on promptly.
- 1.5 All parties to a complaint are entitled to an advocate.
- 1.6 Complainants will not be disadvantaged for making a complaint.
- 1.7 Parties to a complaint will be kept informed of the progress of any investigation.
- 1.8 Parties to a complaint will have the opportunity to read/see and respond to the interim findings and proposed recommendations of an investigation before a decision is made.
- 1.9 All parties to a complaint will 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 The Student Services Team and the International Pastoral Care Coordinator are available to assist students in expressing and resolving concerns.
- 2.4 All concerns that may lead to a formal complaint will 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 web form (found on the Student Portal); or
 - Email to Student Complaints Officer: concerns@northtec.ac.nz; or
 - Letter to the Student Complaints Officer, Private Bag 9019, Whangarei Mail Centre 0148
- 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.

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- 3.3 The Student Services Team and the International Pastoral Care Coordinator are available to assist students in expressing and resolving complaints.
- 3.4 To ensure that complaints can be resolved efficiently, a complaint must be lodged within three months of the event being complained about occurring. At the discretion of the **Student Complaints Officer**, this time limit may be waived.
- 3.5 The **Student Complaints Officer** acknowledges receipt of a complaint within three working days by the preferred method 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 and provide support throughout the process.
- 3.6 The **Student Complaints Officer** appoints a person or team to investigate the complaint, notifies the parties to the complaint of the investigation, and monitors the progress of the investigation. Where the complaint relates to staff conduct, the investigation will be conducted with the support of the People Operations Team.
- 3.7 When appointing an Investigator, the **Student Complaints Officer** will consider any particular needs of the complainant, the skills of potential appointees, and any other relevant circumstances. This specifically includes a willingness to address complaints according to Tikanga Māori.
- 3.8 The **Investigator** notifies the complaine of the content of the complaint.
- 3.9 The **Investigator** investigates the complaint consistent with the principles in Section 1 and compiles a report including the findings and recommendations.
- 3.10 The **Investigator** notifies all parties of the interim findings and proposed recommendations.
- 3.11 The **Investigator** provides the Student Complaints Officer with the report, proposed resolution, and all investigation documentation, including the signed agreement to the recommendations and decision from the appropriate director or delegate.
- 3.12 The **Student Complaints Officer** reviews the documentation and forwards the Investigator's report to the **Office of the Chief Executive** for a decision regarding the complaint and its proposed resolution.
- 3.13 The **Office of the Chief Executive** formally notifies the complainant of the outcome within twenty-five 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 the Student Complaints Officer for filing in the student's record.
- 3.14 The **Student Complaints Officer** notifies all other parties of the outcome.
- 3.15 All records relating to complaints will be stored by the **Student Complaints Officer**.
- 3.16 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.

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4.0 RECONSIDERATION

- 4.1 Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the complainant may:
- Appeal the decision by informing the Student Complaints Officer, in writing, advising the grounds for the appeal.
 - 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 Disputes Resolution Scheme: <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 will be resolved as quickly as possible within ten working days.
- 5.2 Complaints will be made as soon as possible after the incident (refer to Section. 3.3).
- 5.3 Complaints will be acknowledged within three (3) working days of receipt by the **Student Complaints Officer**.
- 5.4 The interim findings and proposed recommendations are notified to all parties. The Investigator must receive final feedback on the findings and proposed recommendations within a timeframe to ensure the investigation is completed within the expected 25 working days.
- 5.5 The decision about the complaint can be expected within 25 working days of receipt of the complaint. Where there is a delay, the **Student Complaints Officer** will notify all parties to the complaint of the delay, the reasons for the delay and the date a decision can be expected.
- 5.6 The complainant is required to notify the Student Complaints Officer if they are dissatisfied with the final outcome and wish to take the matter further.
- 5.7 Where there is no further communication from the complainant, the matter will be closed after twenty working days.

6.0 REPORTING

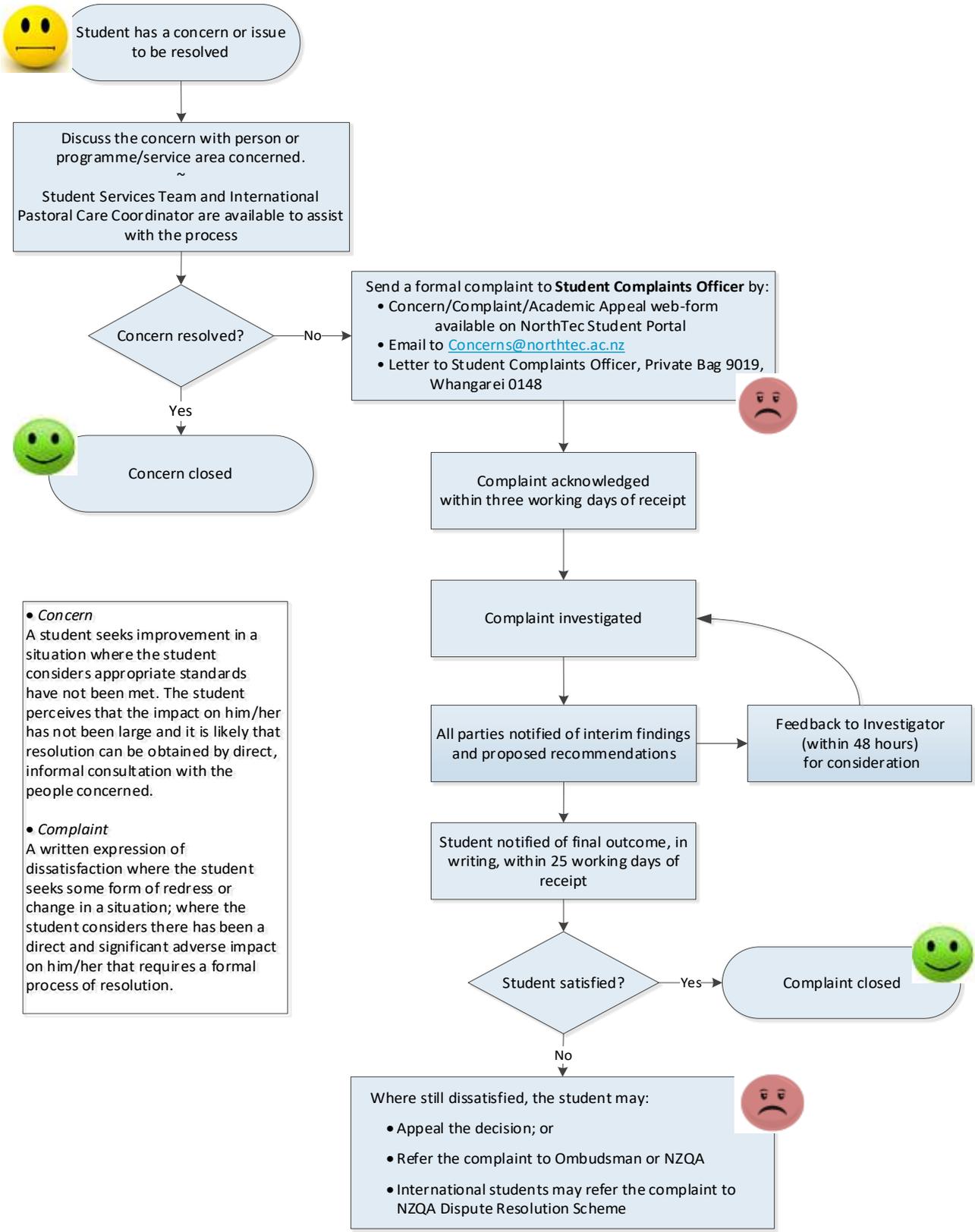
- 6.1 Each month, Academic Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Committee will receive a summary of concerns and complaints. The report will include an analysis of concerns and complaints, and reporting of agreed timeframes.
- 6.2 Reference to specific students in the monthly reports will use NorthTec student ID numbers only. Staff mentioned in the investigation reports will be referred to by their role titles.

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- 6.3 Agreed institutional improvements will be added to the Institutional Improvement Plan for action. The plan will be provided to Academic Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Committee as required.
- 6.4 Agreed Departmental improvements will be added to the Departmental Improvement Plan for action. The programme/service area will monitor the plan area as appropriate.

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	-
5.2	Minor changes to P & G to clarify the investigation process	QMS Team	October 2019
5.3	Add 'Ltd' to Northland Polytechnic	QMS Team	May 2020
6	Triennial Review: addition of definition 'significant concern'; revision of P & G to reflect current practice	QMS Team	April 2021
6.1	Change to P&G - add interim finding etc. to all parties & feedback timeframe	Complaints Team	July 2021

**STUDENT CONCERNS and COMPLAINTS
STUDENT PROCESS
May 2021**



• 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.

• Complaint
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