

Complaint Management Policy

Area of College	Member Engagement and Support
Document Writer	Manager, Member Services
Document Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Approved by	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
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References/Legislation	ISO 10002:2018 Quality management - Customer satisfaction - Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations
Associated RACP Documents	 Complaint Management Procedure; Code of Conduct; Fraud and Corruption Policy; Reconsideration Review and Appeals Process By-law; Privacy Policy; Risk Management Policy; Whistleblower Policy
Applicability	Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand

Note: This is a controlled document within the RACP Policy Framework. The Framework covers all RACP policies, procedures, by-laws, terms of reference, guidelines, forms and so forth. Any new documents or amendments of existing documents or changes to approver, owner or area of college should be done in accordance with the RACP Policy Framework and Document Control (RACP Policy Framework) Procedure.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) implemented a policy in 2017 to ensure management of feedback and complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. The resulting complaint management system is intended to:

- make it easy for people to provide feedback and make complaints;
- enable the RACP to assess and respond to complaints in a fair and timely manner; and
- enable the RACP to analyse feedback and complaints to identify and implement improvements to business processes and systems.

A review in 2021 updated the policy and supporting procedures to expand upon escalation, risk assessment, and reporting to the Board.

In 2023, as part of the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (NHPO) report, several recommendations were made relating to complaints management. These recommendations were either for all medical Colleges or were specific for the RACP. The recommendations have resulted in a revised complaints management policy, implemented in 2025.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out the process by which the RACP manages and responds to complaints in a fair, timely and impartial manner.

3. SCOPE

This Complaint Management Policy applies to members of the RACP and the general public with respect to Level 1 complaints.

A Level 1 complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the RACP about the RACP's products, services, or employees that requires a response or resolution and is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. It can relate to:

- a decision the RACP has or has not made
- · a product or service the RACP has or has not provided
- the behaviour of the RACP's employees and/or its members.

This policy does not apply to Level 2 complaints which are defined as:

- reports under the <u>Code of Conduct</u> (for members including Board Members)
- a RACP employee grievances (dealt with under the Working Together Policy)
- matters dealt with under the <u>Reconsideration Review and Appeals Process By-law</u>
- matters relating to any act or practice of the RACP in relation to the individual's personal information held by the RACP (refer to the RACP's Privacy Policy)
- areas outside of the RACP's control or authority (e.g., entitlement to Medicare benefits, workforce issues, workplace matters, or issues that should be taken to the relevant regulator)
- breach of standards at an accredited setting
- reports concerning misconduct, improper circumstances, or a breach of any law under the <u>Whistleblower Policy</u>. Whistleblower complaints need to be sent to an Eligible Recipient (including the Whistleblower Protection Officer at wpo@racp.edu.au) to be classified as a whistleblower matter.

Complaints received by the RACP will be logged, acknowledged and forwarded to the relevant team in the RACP to be managed according to either this Complaint management policy or under the RACP policies and procedures referred to above.

The RACP does not investigate complaints relating to:

- eligibility for Medicare benefits
- workforce and employment-related issues, excluding training matters relating to RACP education and training
- physician clinical practice healthcare services

Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of organisations that handle complaints not handled by the RACP.

4. COMPLAINT HANDLING PRINCIPLES

This policy adopts the complaints handling principles as recommended under ISO 10002:2018 Quality management - Customer satisfaction - Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations.

4.1. Commitment

We are committed to providing a complaints management process that is fair, transparent and resolves complaints in a timely manner.

4.2. Transparency and Accessibility

We ensure that information on how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be managed is readily available to all persons, is easy to understand and that it is easy to lodge a complaint.

The RACP will regularly advise a complainant of progress in resolving and responding to their complaint and advise the complainant in writing of the outcome of our consideration of their complaint.

4.3. Responsiveness

We will log all complaints we receive under this policy on the RACP's customer relationship management (CRM) system. The RACP will acknowledge receipt of a complaint and notify the complainant of the timeframe for providing a full response.

In some cases, no further action will be taken by the RACP beyond the acknowledgement of receipt. In such cases, the complainant will be notified where no further action will be taken by the RACP.

4.4. Capacity and Timelines

Where possible, we will attempt to resolve complaints at first contact. Where this is not possible, the RACP aims to resolve all complaints within 30 days. In the instance that a more complex complaint may take longer than 30 days to resolve, the complainant will be advised of the estimated resolution timeframe and will be provided with an update at least monthly as the complaint resolution progresses.

4.5. Objectivity

The RACP will take all reasonable steps to ensure that each complaint is treated objectively and in an equitable way whereby:

- We ensure all parties involved in the complaint understand the complaint handling process.
- RACP Staff carry out the complaint process in a transparent but confidential manner and have no conflict of interest.
- All affected parties have an opportunity to be involved in the process.
- All parties are treated respectfully during the process.
- Decisions and reasons for resolutions are communicated clearly.
- Complainants will not be disadvantaged for making a complaint and any reprisals will be dealt with accordingly either under the appropriate RACP process or referred to an external agency if required.
- Complainants are entitled to be assisted by a support person, e.g. a family member.

4.6. Information Integrity

We will capture all complaints accurately including resolution time to resolve. This data will be used to provide a monthly report to the RACP Senior Leadership Team (SLT) so they can review resolution times and common themes and identify where improvements and opportunities could be made to improve member satisfaction.

4.7. Confidentiality

Personal information that identifies an individual will be managed in accordance with the RACP Privacy Policy.

The RACP will accept anonymous complaints either verbally via the RACP <u>Member Support Centre</u> or in writing via the complaints form at racp.edu.au/complaints. The RACP will record these complaints and will, at its discretion, consider what action it may take based on the information that has been provided.

4.8. Customer Focused and Improvement

We are committed to delivering high quality services and regard feedback and complaints about our services and performance as means of monitoring and improving service delivery to members, as well as enhancing organisational effectiveness and efficiency.

4.9. Accountability

Our SLT actively promotes a culture within the RACP that values effective complaint resolution. This includes reviewing reports on complaints received and resolved, and where appropriate, implementing improvements to RACP products, services, and delivery. The SLT will actively assist employees when required to resolve complaints in a timely manner and ensure all employees are trained appropriately to manage complaints. The SLT member will be accountable for resolution of complaints relevant to their area of responsibility.

All RACP employees will treat people making complaints with respect, record all complaints on the RACP's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, resolve complaints in a timely manner and on first contact if possible and assist implementation of improvements to the complaint management system and/or the products and services delivered by the RACP.

4.10. Competence

Our employees are trained and empowered to resolve complaints promptly and professionally.

5. COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESS

5.1. Who can make a complaint under this policy?

- A member of the RACP:
- A member of the public.

5.2. What constitutes a complaint under this policy?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the RACP about the RACP's products, services, or employees that requires a response or resolution and is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. It can relate to:

- a decision the RACP has or has not made
- a product or service the RACP has or has not provided
- the behaviour of the RACP's employees and/or its members

5.3. Refusing to investigate a complaint

We may reasonably refuse complaints where:

- a person involved in a complaint behaves in a threatening or harassing manner toward employees
- the complaint is false or lacking in evidence
- the complaint is malicious
- a significant period of time has elapsed since the matter in question has taken place
- the complaint has already been handled and previously resolved
- in the case of an anonymous complaint when it is not possible to contact the complainant for further information because there are insufficient details in the original complaint
- the complaint is already being handled under a different process or policy

5.4. How to make a complaint under this policy

We accept complaints via phone or writing.

You can either call the Member Support Centre, complete the form on our website or write to us at either:

In Australia:

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Attn: Member Support Centre (Complaints) 145 Macquarie St Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

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In Aotearoa New Zealand:

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Attn: Member Support Centre (Complaints) Level 10, 3 Hunter Street Wellington 6011

If a complaint can't be resolved on a call, we may ask you to put your complaint in writing using the complaints form on the RACP website.

RACP employees and members are expected to be respectful and polite when handling complaints. If a person making a complaint behaves in a threatening or harassing manner toward any RACP employee, the RACP may decline to further investigate the complaint.

5.5. Information required from complainant

You should make your complaint as soon as possible. The following details are required when lodging your complaint:

- Your name
- Your email address
- MIN (if you are a member)
- Phone number
- What the complaint relates to (e.g. CPD, basic training)
- The date the matter you are complaining about occurred
- Details of complaint including any supporting documents
- The outcome you are seeking to achieve

5.6. Anonymous complaints

You can make an anonymous complaint using a pseudonym or an anonymised email address. You can also do this either verbally by phoning the Member Support Centre or by ticking the 'Anonymous' box on the complaint webpage, which will allow you to submit your complaint without providing any identifiable information.

Anonymous complaints will be handled the same way as identified complaints; however, we are not able to provide progress reports if contact details are not provided. It may also be impractical to resolve an anonymous complaint if additional information is required.

5.7. Receipt of a complaint

All complaints are logged on our CRM and the complaint will be allocated a unique case number.

If we cannot resolve your complaint on first contact, you will be advised of the expected timeframe and next steps for resolving your complaint.

For written complaints we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and your complaint case number within five business days by email.

For complaints via phone, you will receive an email within five business days acknowledging your complaint and confirming your complaint case number.

We aim to resolve all complaints within 30 days. Complaints of a more complex and/or serious nature may take longer to resolve. In this instance, we will send you regular updates on the progress of your complaint, at least monthly.

5.8. Redirection of complaints

The RACP may determine that your complaint is better dealt with under a different policy. If this is the case, you will be notified in writing. All relevant information will be transferred to the RACP employee to whom the complaint has been redirected.

In some instances, the RACP may refer the complaint directly to an external body such as WorkSafe or other regulatory body.

5.9. Withdrawal of a complaint

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any time by notifying the RACP in writing. Regardless, the RACP may decide to investigate or otherwise act on the complaint.

5.10. Complaint process

All written and verbal complaints will come through the Member Support Centre team for logging on the CRM. The team will provide a written acknowledgment of receipt of your complaint.

Complaints will be logged as either Level 1 or 2 complaints as defined in section 10 of this policy. Level 1 complaints will follow the process as per this policy. Level 2 complaints will be logged and then handled under their respective pathway e.g. the Whistle-blower Policy.

If a complaint cannot be resolved on first contact, the complaint will be sent to the Complaints Officer. The Complaints Officer will then review and allocate your complaint to the appropriate team for handling.

The team handling the complaint will provide the Complaints Officer with the estimated timeframe for resolution of your complaint.

The Complaints Officer will notify you of the estimated resolution timeframe and your case number.

The Complaints Officer will be responsible for monitoring the team handling the complaint and ensuring the complainant is kept up to date and the complaint is resolved in the specified timeframe.

All email correspondence pertaining to your complaint will copy in complaints@racp.edu.au.

Where an RACP employee is the subject of a complaint, the complaint will not be allocated to that RACP employee. In this instance, the complaint will be allocated to another RACP employee.

Within ten business days from receipt of the complaint, the investigating RACP employee must:

- review the complaint documentation;
- seek any additional information from the complainant, advising a specified time;
- discuss the complaint with all relevant RACP employees;
- seek to mediate or determine the complaint as necessary.

If a complainant does not respond to a request for information within the specified time, the RACP will investigate the complaint on the available evidence provided by the complainant.

The investigating RACP employee may make a recommendation and consult with their

manager as to the outcome of the complaint.

A complaint of a more complex matter may be escalated to a member of the SLT.

The investigating RACP employee is responsible for ensuring implementation of any actions within the advised time frame to the complainant.

RACP Board members must and will not become involved in the complaints process at any point in accordance with good independent decision making and the international standard on complaints handling upon which this policy is based (ISO 10002: 2018). Further, RACP Board Director involvement would represent a legal risk to the organisation.

5.11. Possible outcomes

RACP aims to help RACP employees understand and learn from their experiences and preventing similar issues in the future. We use insights from complaints to recommend ongoing improvements and enhancing services.

Outcomes from complaints may include:

- a written or verbal apology
- recommendation for change e.g. adjustments to RACP products, services, procedures or processes in response to the complaint
- resolving the issue directly with the relevant party
- issuing a refund if applicable
- referral to an external agency for formal investigation
- no further action due to:
 - Issue already addressed
 - Time and evidence constraints: The events happened too long ago, or necessary evidence is no longer available
 - Better suited Organisation: Another organisation is more appropriate to manage this complaint

5.12. Resolution of complaints

Once we resolve your complaint, you will be advised of the resolution in writing. The resolution will include:

- any actions we undertook to investigate
- the outcome of our investigation
- the reasoning behind our outcome decision
- any remedies that will be or have been implemented
- options for review, where applicable
- advise there is the opportunity to lodge an appeal within five business days

5.13. Appeals

If you're not happy with our resolution of your complaint, you can request an appeal.

Your appeal must be made within five business days of you being notified of the resolution of their original complaint. An appeal must be lodged in writing to complaints@racp.edu.au.

An appeal is conducted under the management of a member of the SLT or the Chief Executive Officer.

There is no cost to make an appeal.

An appeal must be made on the basis that the original complaints handling process or outcome is unsatisfactory.

On receipt of the appeal the RACP will:

- log the appeal on the CRM system
- confirm receipt of the appeal to the complainant within five business days and provide a case number
- notify the investigating RACP employee for the original complaint that an appeal has been received
- allocate the appeal to a member of the SLT or the Chief Executive Officer
- suspend any action that was associated with the outcome of the original complaint
- confirm estimated time to complete the appeals process to the complainant.

Within twenty business days from the receipt of the appeal the RACP will:

- consider all the information from the original complaint;
- · consider the new information provided with the appeal; and
- investigate the appeal

The RACP must notify the complainant in writing as soon as an outcome for the appeal has been determined. The SLT member is accountable for ensuring the outcomes of the appeal are implemented in a reasonable timeframe.

There are no further appeals after the appeal process. The decision is final.

The appeals process adheres to the following principles:

- the appeal process and timeframes are clear for the complainant.
- the appeal is not being investigated and resolved by the RACP employee who handled the original complaint
- there is no conflict of interest for the RACP employee investigating the appeal
- the details of the appeal are adequately recorded on the RACP CRM system
- the complainant provides information if requested by the RACP
- the Complainant does not seek to obstruct the appeals process
- investigation and resolution of the appeal in a reasonable timeframe
- all relevant information is considered in making a decision
- the outcome of the appeal is provided in writing

5.14. Recording of complaints

All complaints and appeals are recorded on the RACPs CRM system. The following details are recorded as a minimum.

- how and when the complaint or appeal was received
- a description of the complaint or appeal
- dates of decisions and those who were notified

- records of outcomes and resolution
- names and contact details of anyone else involved in the complaint
- the outcome sought by the complainant (if advised);
- any other details and information to support the complaint.

5.15. Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information is only used where needed to investigate your complaint within the RACP and is managed in accordance with the RACP Privacy Policy.

6. REPORTING AND AUDITING

6.1. Auditing

The Manager, Member Services, Member Support Centre Team Lead and Complaints Officer monitor the management of complaints under this Policy. The Member Support Centre Team Lead and Complaints Officer also undertake a weekly audit of complaints. The audit includes:

- working with teams for updates on open complaints
- ensuring complainants are provided an update where appropriate
- ensuring complaints are resolved and closed
- checking complaints are accurately recorded on the RACPs CRM system

6.2. Reporting

The Manager, Member Services and Complaints Officer provides a monthly report to the SLT which includes:

- the total number of complaints and appeals logged that month to date;
- the time taken to resolve complaints and appeals that month including the average time;
- the number of open and closed complaints and appeals that month;
- the number and type of complaints referred to external agencies;
- any common themes from complaints and any actions that are being implemented to RACP products, services, procedures and processes in response to any complaint.

7. REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required in the event of legislative changes or requirements. The policy may also be changed as a result of other amendments. Employees and members of the College may provide feedback about this document by emailing RACPPolicy@racp.edu.au.

8. AMENDMENTS

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes to legislation, standards, or other requirements. The policy may also be changed because of amendments to other Policies.

The RACP may, without the consent of the RACP Board, make minor and moderate amendments to this policy at any time.

Employees and members of the RACP may provide feedback about this document by emailing complaints@racp.edu.au.

Version	Amendment	Date
1.0	Initial Approval	4 December 2017
2.0	Policy reviewed and updated following internal audit and discussion with stakeholders	7 April 2022
3.0	Policy reviewed by SLT	12 April 2022
4.0	Policy approved by CEO 11 May 2022	
5.0	Updated to further align with ISO 10002:2018 Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations and introduce central oversight of complaints	
6.0	Policy reviewed by: • Executive General Manager, Member Engagement & Support • Manager, Member Services • Kaitohutohu Ahurea • Manager Indigenous Strategy (Policy & Advocacy)	19 March 2025
7.0	Policy approved by the Senior Leadership team (SLT)	2 September 2025

9. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Who	Responsible for	How
Chief Executive Officer	Fostering a culture that values feedback and effective complaint resolution	 Own the Complaint Management Policy Review de-identified reports arising from complaint management and act appropriately. Support all employees to be receptive and open to receiving and responding to complaints
Senior Leadership Team (SLT	Actively promote a culture within their Teams that values receipt of complaints and effective complaint resolution	 Approve the Complaint Management Policy Support all employees to be receptive and open to receiving and responding to complaints Actively assist employees to resolve complaints in a timely manner when required Review de-identified reports on complaints received and resolved, and where appropriate, implement improvements to RACP products, services, and delivery

Who	Responsible for	How
Managers	Actively implement a culture within their respective team that values complaints and follow the complaints management policy process.	 Ensure their teams are aware of the Complaint Management Process and implementing in their respective role Ensure their teams are trained appropriately for their role Support the implementation of improvements to RACP products, services, and delivery identified from complaints reports.
Executive General Manager, Member Engagement & Support	Effective execution of the complaint management system	Provide regular complaints reporting to the SLT, CEO and Board including suggestions for improvement to RACP products and services and any suggested changes to the complaint management system.
Manager, Member Services	Effective administration and management of the complaint management system	 Oversee the effective day-to-day application of the Complaints Management Policy Provide specialist complaints management advice and support to all areas of the RACP Centrally oversee the receipting and acknowledgement of complaints and coordinate the resolution of Level 1 complaints that cannot be resolved at first contact, including working with Governance where complaints need to be referred to external parties.
Complaints Officer	Effective administration and management of the complaint management system	 Oversee the effective day-to-day application of the Complaints Management Policy Monitors all complaints received and ensure timeframes are met and complainants are regularly updated by the team managing the complaint. Reviews contact logs to ensure all details are accurately recorded, email correspondence is captured, or phone conversations are summarised and contact logs are closed and accurately reflect the timeframe from when complaint received to when the complaint is resolved. Audit complaints each month and provide a monthly report to the SLT including recommendations for improvements to products and services. Check any outstanding complaints by running a weekly audit.

Who	Responsible for	How
All Employees	Understand and adhere to the complaints management system	 Treat all people with respect, particularly people who provide feedback or make complaints Assist people who wish to provide feedback and/or make complaints Where possible resolve complaints at first contact Document feedback in the RACP's customer relationship management (CRM) system Forward any complaints to complaints@racp.edu.au Support the resolution of Level 1 complaints by providing information and advice promptly Provide feedback to Manager Member Services on issues and trends arising from the complaint management system Assist implementation of improvements to the complaint management system and/or the products and services delivered by the RACP.

10. **DEFINITIONS**

Term	Means	
"Board"	the Board of Directors of the RACP.	
"RACP"	The Royal Australasian RACP of Physicians, ACN 000 039 047, an incorporated body limited by guarantee.	
"Fellow", "Trainee", and "Member"	have the same meaning as in the RACP Constitution	
"FRMC"	the Finance & Risk Management Committee of the Board	
"Person"	any person who may be a member of the RACP or the general public	
"Complaint"	an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the RACP's products, services, or employees that requires a response or resolution and is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.	
"Feedback"	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, to or about the RACP, about its products, services, or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.	
"Level 1 Complaint"	Complaints from a person about: a. a decision or position of the RACP (that is not covered by the Reconsideration Review and Appeals process_By-law); or b. a service the RACP has provided or not provided; or	

Term	Means	
	c. the behaviour of the RACP's employees and/or its members; or	
	d. any other matter that does not fall into the definition of a level 2 complaint.	
	Complaints under any of the following:	
	a. RACP Constitution	
	b. Code of Conduct	
"Level 2 Complaint"	c. Reconsideration Review and Appeals Process By-law	
	d. Statement on Respectful Behaviour in RACP Training Programs	
	e. Supporting Physicians' Professionalism and Performance Guide	
	f. Grievance Procedure	
	g. Working Together Policy	
	h. Site Accreditation breach of a standard	
"Employees"	Employees employed by the RACP on a permanent basis (full-time or part-time), on a fixed term contract, or on a temporary or casual basis.	

APPENDIX 1: EXTERNAL COMPLAINT PATHWAYS

Australia	Australia		
Organisation	Complaints Handled		
Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care	Matters relating to Medicare.		
Fair Work Commission	Workforce and employment-related issues.		
Safe Work Australia	Work health and safety complaints, including bullying or harassment.		
Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency	Safety concerns raised about registered health practitioners, students and unregistered people claiming to be health practitioners (all states and territories except NSW and Qld)		
	Advertising, use of protected titles, holding out (claims about health practitioner registration) and performing restricted acts (all states and territories, including NSW and Qld)		
	Complaints about health services in Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT.		
NSW Health Care Complaints Commission	Complaints about NSW health service providers, including registered and non-registered health practitioners, and health organisations.		
Queensland Office of the Health Ombudsman	Complaints about Qld health service providers, including registered and non-registered health practitioners, and health organisations.		
Australian Medical Council	Complaints about programs of study, education providers and organisations accredited or being accredited by the Australian Medical Council		
National Health Practitioner Ombudsman	Complaints about a medical college training program, assessment of a specialist international medical graduate and use or sharing of personal information.		
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner	Handling of personal information		
Australian Human Rights Commission	Discrimination and human rights breaches.		
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission	Complaints if there is a serious risk to public trust and confidence in the sector and they relate to a charity's compliance with requirements of the ACNC Act.		

Aotearoa / New Zealand	
Organisation	Complaints Handled
Medical Council of New Zealand	Conduct and competence concerns of a registered doctor or health concerns about a doctor.
Employment New Zealand	Work health and safety complaints, including bullying, discrimination or harassment.
Ombudsman New Zealand	Decisions or conduct of government bodies and officials, including matters related to health and disability services
Human Rights Commission	Sexual and racial harassment and other forms of discrimination.