

## Student complaints about an education organisation

### Do you have concerns or a complaint about an education organisation?

- If you are a student (or someone representing a student), and you have a complaint about something that has affected you, this page tells you what you can do.
- If you are not a student, but you have concerns about an education organisation which you think NZQA should investigate, please refer to the [advising NZQA of concerns about a tertiary education provider](#) page instead.

### Student complaints

If you have concerns about something that has directly affected you at an education organisation, this is what you can do:

#### Raise your concerns with the organisation

If you are a student, and your concerns are related to your course or experiences at the organisation, it's very important that you give the organisation the opportunity to respond to your concerns. You may do this informally in the first instance (for example, discussing an academic issue with your tutor), but use your organisation's formal complaints procedure if that is not successful.

All education organisations must have processes for receiving and responding to student complaints, and for appealing academic results. These must be easily accessible to students, and organisations are required to be fair in implementing them.

Check your student handbook for the complaint procedure. If it's not there, ask the staff for a copy. Follow the complaint procedure carefully. It is recommended that you put your concerns in writing, and it's reasonable to expect a written response from the organisation explaining the outcome.

The organisation may offer an opportunity for you to meet with them to discuss the situation. This is often a helpful way to work through a problem, and you should be able to take someone with you for support if you wish to do so.

Students must make a genuine effort to resolve their concerns by following the organisation's formal complaint process, before making a formal complaint to NZQA.

#### Raise your concerns with NZQA

If you are a student, and you are not satisfied with the outcome of the organisation's formal complaint process, you can raise your concerns with NZQA.

An NZQA staff member will consider the information you provide, and advise you whether NZQA can accept it for investigation as a formal complaint.

NZQA might not be able to accept your complaint for formal investigation, if:

- the issue is from too long ago
- it relates to matters that fall outside of NZQA's jurisdiction
- it is already being investigated by another agency
- it is clear that the organisation has fully and appropriately dealt with the issue
- there isn't enough evidence.

If NZQA does carry out a formal complaint investigation, both you and the organisation will have the opportunity to provide information, and NZQA will write to you to advise you of its findings.

### **Raise your concerns with a different agency**

Check this list to see whether there is a different agency that may be able to help you:

<b>If your concerns relate to:</b>	<b>You could contact:</b>
A tertiary education organisation that belongs to <a href="#">ITENZ</a>	<a href="#">Quality Commission</a>
An international student's financial or contractual dispute with their provider	<a href="#">iStudent Complaints</a>
A public provider (Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, Wānanga, or Universities)	<a href="#">Office of the Ombudsman</a>
Course-related costs or travel allowances for a TEC funded course	<a href="#">Tertiary Education Commission</a>
Discrimination	<a href="#">Human Rights Commission</a>
Someone's safety being at risk	<a href="#">WorkSafe New Zealand</a> <a href="#">New Zealand Police</a>
How information about you has been stored or used	<a href="#">Privacy Commissioner</a>

### **Enquiries and advice about making a formal complaint to NZQA**

If you want to enquire about making a formal complaint or receive advice about the options available to you, please complete and submit an online enquiry form:

[Complaint Enquiry Form](#)

### **Make a formal complaint about an organisation**

To make a formal complaint about an organisation:

- 1 Download the [formal complaint form \(PDF, 99KB\)](#)
- 2 Send your completed complaint form, along with any supporting evidence, to:

The Complaints Officer  
Quality Assurance Division  
P O Box 160  
Wellington 6140

Or email a scan of your completed form, along with scans of any supporting evidence, to [qadrisk@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:qadrisk@nzqa.govt.nz).

If you need more information on the complaints process, contact NZQA on 0800 697 296.

### **What happens next?**

An NZQA staff member will consider the information you provide, and either advise you whether NZQA can accept it for investigation as a formal complaint or what else you can do to resolve your concerns.

If NZQA accepts it as a formal complaint, we will contact the organisation to explain the nature of the complaint and ask for a response. Throughout the investigation, both parties will be kept fully informed.

### **Will the organisation know that I have made a formal complaint to NZQA?**

**Generally, yes.** In order to make a fair decision, NZQA writes to the organisation to inform it that a formal complaint has been made. The letter includes a summary of the complaint and states who made the complaint. The organisation is asked to respond. This helps NZQA look at the complaint with information from all parties and make a balanced decision.

Occasionally, there are circumstances where a complainant feels there may be repercussions if the organisation is given his or her name. If you want your name to be withheld from the organisation, you must indicate this on the formal complaint form. We will discuss this with you.

### **What happens if NZQA upholds my formal complaint**

If NZQA's investigation shows that the organisation's policies and procedures have not been followed or that they were not applied fairly, you can use the information from the investigation to try to reach a solution with the organisation. If that is not possible, you can try other avenues, such as the Disputes Tribunal, Commerce Commission or the courts.

NZQA does not get directly involved in negotiations between you and the organisation for issues such as refunds or other forms of compensation. However, NZQA can require that the organisation take certain actions in accordance with the Education Act, Code of Practice or NZQA Rules.