Self-review reports on complaints and critical incidents for English Teaching College

2023 - 2024

Complaints

A complaint is defined as '*an objection to something that is unfair, unacceptable, or otherwise not up to normal standards*'.

Retrieved from https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/complaint

ETC's Student Complaint Process - Grievance Procedures, are found in the Student Handbook. This is provided to all students studying at ETC. The Student Handbook is also on the ETC website.

Grievance Procedures are also available in every classroom and student communal area so they are easily accessible for every student to read.

Students are advised that in the event of wishing to make a complaint, they must first follow ETC's Grievance Procedures. If the complaint is not resolved by ETC then the student can make a complaint to NZQA for Code breaches or to Study Complaints Ngā Amuamu Tauira for contractual and financial disputes.

Grievance Procedures are also available in the Staff Handbook. Staff are advised that if they are not in a position to handle the grievance then they escalate it upwards so that the grievance/complaint is dealt with in a manner that is appropriate to the complainant.

The procedures are easily understandable and students are advised at orientation to seek help immediately if they have any concerns, no matter how small the problem may seem. ETC has first language support for many languages on-site or by Zoom from other campuses. These languages include; Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Han, Thai, Farsi, Arabic, German, Spanish, Russian, Polish, Swedish, Malay, and Vietnamese. If a student makes a formal complaint these are given priority and students are given a timeline of how their complaint will be managed. Where possible, ETC uses culturally appropriate natural justice aligned to the seriousness of the complaint.

To date ETC is satisfied with the effectiveness of its grievance procedures in practice. Student concerns are generally rectified and dealt with easily when they are small in nature. In the case of more serious complaints, resulting in the disciplinary process, ETC's decisions are underpinned by ETC policies and best practice. These are understandable by the parents or agents representing the student.

A review of ETC's student feedback systems reported that ETC has effective means of obtaining feedback from students. Currently ETC is working on a process whereby informal grievances may be captured, collated, analysed and addressed to redress any concerns. In this way any student grievances are acted upon at any early stage before being escalated to the status of a formal complaint. The review acknowledged that students may approach ETC staff with informal complaints or concerns. While students are offered the option of proceeding with a formal complaint it was found that students may decline this option as they do not wish to cause 'trouble'. ETC recognises that there may be a cultural component to this.

Currently ETC does not have a single repository of complaints. Instead complaints are kept by the individual managers dealing with complaints. As follow up to ETC's review of student complaints and student feedback systems, work is being undertaken to have a single repository for complaints which would store information on the different types of complaints and how the complaints were resolved.

To date the current system has worked well at ETC but it is recognised that reporting requirements for the annual Code attestation now necessitate that changes are made to provide breakdowns into the number, nature and outcome of complaints, including the learner's experience. ETC will undertake a review of its reporting procedures and implement a framework for capturing information for annual reporting purposes around complaints. In this way ETC will be in a position to identify common themes and issues. However, ETC recognises that it has to balance the requirements of the Privacy Act in providing disaggregated information by diverse learner groups so as not to identify individuals.

Upon completion of the framework ETC will provide PD to its staff to ensure consistency in capturing data and information for reporting purposes.

Critical Incidents

ETC defines a critical incident using ISANA NZ's definition:

'A tragic or traumatic event or situation affecting a student/students which has the potential to cause unusually strong emotional reactions in the school/campus community'.

Retrieved from https://isana.org.au/docs/2014/Seow_MaryAnn_NOTES.pdf

This definition encapsulates how a critical incident may be viewed by students and staff at ETC.

Significant work has gone into improvements around critical incidents and emergencies during 2024. These include:

- Increasing the First aid training given to more staff so that sufficient certified first aiders are on the staff to ensure most school or classroom LOTC trips also have first aid cover.
- Critical incident policy.
- Cloud based access to learner and staff information re emergency contacts so if one campus is affected in a natural disaster then information is available for other campuses or off campus. Staff emergency contact information is also able to be accessed off site.
- Regular fire and earthquake drills are held on each campus.
- Establishment of a Health and Safety committee with representatives from all campuses meeting to discuss any issues.
- Continued use of PeopleSafe cloud based system to record accidents and emergencies and follow up by manager.
- Establishment of confidential files within SMS to record pastoral care issues and follow up.
- Strengthening of community links for referrals of staff and students to services.
- Contract with EAP to allow staff to access confidential counselling services – personal and professional situations.

ETC has a handbook relating to critical incident management. This is updated as and when required by the Health and Safety committee or the Executive Team.

As an example, during Covid ETC displayed a high level of preparedness around critical incident management and responded immediately to any changes in alert levels ensuring that staff and students were kept safe and informed.

ETC's response to the Christchurch terror attack is viewed as an exemplar of best practice in responding to a critical incident. With a cohort of 65% Muslim students and some Muslim staff members, this was a traumatic and critical incident within the Muslim community. Many ETC students lost family and friends in the attack and it created, or added to existing, trauma. ETC provided a holistic approach to the situation by inviting Police and Red Cross onto campuses to speak directly with students about the attack and student safety. ETC's lock down procedure was reviewed and released to staff. Red Cross social workers had unlimited access to students and classes as and when required. ETC brought in a psychologist to work with groups of staff to process the event and assist with coping strategies and boundaries for people dealing with others' grief. Staff had access to confidential private counselling if needed. Advice was given regarding digital copies of the attack being shared and social media's response to the situation. Absence from classes was granted for those who did not feel safe to come out of their homes in the wake of the attack and to those who travelled to Christchurch to grieve. Contact was made with mosque leaders in our locations and advice sought and support offered.

ETC provides information on how students can access emergency and urgent assistance in the Student Handbook which is provided to all students studying at ETC. This is also available on the ETC website. Emergency instructions are also available in different languages in classrooms and student spaces. All students and staff are provided with the ETC 24/7 emergency phone number in case of student or campus emergencies. Emergency contact details are kept for all students so that in the event of an emergency next of kin/emergency contacts may be contacted. Emergency contact details are available digitally from home computers by management and

administration staff and managers' phones in case of an emergency where buildings cannot be accessed.

ETC provides information on how staff can access emergency and urgent assistance in the Staff Handbook and staff are also advised of critical incident procedures at their initial induction. Staff members are advised on how to handle emergencies in the classroom and what protocols to follow so that any emergency is handled in a timely manner.

Currently ETC uses PeopleSafe – a digital system which all staff can access and record critical incidents. This sends an email to members of the Executive Team, the Health and Safety representative and the Health and Safety consultant who review the incident and decide what action is required. The procedure is reviewed afterwards to see if any further action is required resulting in a procedural review.

PeopleSafe keeps a record of how critical incidents are resolved. Depending upon the incident, additional information is found in communications or in the Pastoral Care confidential folder.

ETC is satisfied with its management of critical incidents in practice. Staff understand and follow best practice around the required procedures. Management is always informed quickly and external advice is available and/or sought as required. Regular fire and emergency drills are undertaken. First aid kits are kept fully stocked and stocktakes are regularly undertaken.

RAM documents are filled out prior to LOTC and First Aid kits are taken on those excursions which are out of range of a First Aid kit.

Staff are aware of local, national and international incidents and the campus Director of Studies will support staff to respond appropriately should these incidents affect ETC's learners.

Following any critical incidents staff meet as a team to discuss what went well, where things could have been done better and any changes required.

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