



QGSSSA COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

This policy applies to complaints received from sources external to the Association (eg: general public). For disputes and protests, namely between member schools, refer to QGSSSA By-Law 8 'Disputes and Protests'.

INTRODUCTION

QGSSSA values the feedback it receives from its stakeholders and the community. Responding to both affirmative and negative feedback demonstrates the Association's commitment to open communication with the Association's community and general public. Complaints about any aspect of the Association's operations, service or personnel will be handled responsively, openly and in a timely manner, with the aim of resolving any complaint via an articulated process and respecting the confidential nature of such matters. Complaints are treated as constructive suggestions that may be used to improve standards and may prevent cause for further complaint.

PURPOSE

This policy applies to complaints received from sources external to the Association (e.g. general public). Complaints from members of the QGSSSA schools' communities should be directed to the relevant member school in the first instance.

This policy will endeavour to:

- Improve the level of stakeholder satisfaction with QGSSSA
- Recognise, promote and protect stakeholders' rights, including the right to comment and complain
- Provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints Ensure that the complaint handling process is transparent and comprehensive.

PRINCIPLES

Responsiveness

Complaints need to be resolved openly and responsively. It is expected that all complaints will be acknowledged and resolved in a timely manner. The process and timeframes for resolution will vary depending on the nature, complexity and timing of the issue.

Fairness

The process needs to be fair to both the complainant and the person/s against whom the complaint is being made. All parties must be protected from victimisation, discrimination or retribution. The process shall be based on the complainant's right to:

- Be heard
- Have their complaint treated seriously
- Be informed of the processes of complaints handling
- Be informed of the Association's decision and reasons for that decision

The person, member school or section of the Association about whom the complaint is made shall have the right to:

- Be advised of the identity of the complainant and the complaint
- Collect sufficient details to enable them to gather information and prepare a response to the complaint
- Have the opportunity to respond to the person investigating the complaint and have their response taken seriously
- Be informed of the processes engaged in the complaints handling
- Be informed of the decision and reason for the decision.

It is important that those handling complaints should be independent of the issue of the complaint. If a conflict of interest arises, the Board will arrange for an independent member to continue with the process and hear the complaint.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To protect confidentiality and privacy, people involved in handling complaints resolution must ensure that information is restricted only to those who genuinely need to know in order to deal with the complaint. Some information about the specific complaint may need to be disclosed to others during its resolution. The complainant needs to be informed of this.

PROCESSES

It is important that the initial process of handling complaints is supportive and utilises positive conflict resolution skills. Each complaint should be treated on the information available and actions that are appropriate to the individual complaint. Anonymous complaints will not be recognised or dealt with under this policy. Complaints considered by the Board to be of a mischievous nature may not be taken forward at the discretion of the Executive.

Procedure for raising a concern or making a complaint

QGSSSA acknowledges that concerns and issues exist that may be resolved informally without the need to follow a formal complaints process. In such cases complainants are encouraged to initially raise issues or concerns informally with the relevant person at the time of the issue arising. Discussing the issue of concern immediately and face-to-face may clarify the situation and resolve any misunderstandings satisfactorily. In the event that this does not resolve the issue, the complainant should then contact the relevant school. If there is still a concern then the person making the complaint should bring it to the attention of the Executive Officer or the Board. Should a complaint be made against the Executive Officer or a member of the Board other than the President, this complaint should be put in writing and addressed to the President. If it is about the President, it should be addressed to the Treasurer.

Positive resolution of a complaint should aim to:

- Seek resolution at the level at which the complaint is made
- Gain agreement of the parties
- Consider all relevant information and views of all parties
- Consider the Association's policies
- Complainants should be told the process for complain resolution and an indication of how long it will take to deal with a complaint
- Complainants should be kept informed of progress in resolving the complaint where relevant
- It is expected that written complaints be acknowledged within 7 days of receipt. The proposed timeframe required to resolve the complaint should be indicated to the complainant as early as possible in the process and may vary according to the nature, complexity or timing of the complaints.

Record Keeping

All complaints that cannot be resolved informally will be recorded by the QGSSSA personnel handling the complaint and kept on the relevant file/s. Details will include:

- The nature of the complaint
- Dates and names of parties concerned
- Action taken and outcome