

# VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE (VTI LTD)

*99, John Kennedy Avenue, Vacoas, MAURITIUS*

*Tel: (230)6966051 – Fax: (230) 6962062*

*Email: [vti@intnet.mu](mailto:vti@intnet.mu) Website: <http://www.vti.mauritius.com>*

*(MQA Approved)*

## Student Complaints Procedure

**Responsibility of:** Discipline Master/Supervisor

**Approval date:** September 2016

**Reviewed:** May 2018

October 2019

**Next Review Date:** May 2023

**Approved by:** VTI Academic Board

## 1 General Principles

- 1.1 The Institute seeks to maintain high standards in its provision of courses, services and facilities to students. The Institute has established its student complaints procedures to deal with legitimate complaints from students in a fair, prompt and efficient manner.
- 1.2 Complaints will be addressed informally or formally through a three stage process. Stage I: Formal Resolution of Complaints by the School/College or Service Department; Stage II: Formal Resolution of Complaints by the VTI Complaints department; and Stage III: Complaint Review by the Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor or the Manager (Student Experience).
- 1.3 All complaints will be dealt with without recrimination, and no student will be disadvantaged on account of raising a complaint. Students may complain individually or collectively, where appropriate. Complaints will be investigated objectively. **However, anonymous complaints will not be accepted.**
- 1.4 Students should normally make a complaint within the timeframe specified in each complaint stage. The Institute will only consider complaints outside the timeframe at its absolute discretion and where there is a valid reason for the delay.
- 1.5 All complaints will be dealt with constructively, and the student will be informed of the outcome. Where a complaint is upheld, the Institute will make an appropriate response including taking any necessary corrective action. Means of redress include an explanation of actions taken or planned and written or oral apologies. Where the complaint outcome includes an offer for the student, it should be accepted or declined within **15 working days from the date of the offer.**
- 1.6 All complaints will be dealt with in confidence with the proviso that any person about whom a complaint is made shall be supplied with a copy of the complaint. A student may be asked to attend an interview with the member of staff investigating their complaint.
- 1.7 A record of complaints received from students and the means of resolution will be kept by the Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor and reported annually to the Academic committee as part of the Institute's monitoring and quality assurance processes. No information that will identify any individual will be available within the report.
- 1.8 A student may seek advice when making a complaint and may be accompanied by another student or a representative, in any meeting that takes place in connection with a complaint they have lodged. However, under no circumstances may the student be represented by an external organisation. Under no circumstances shall the costs be re-claimable save for expenses in exceptional cases.
- 1.9 For students under the age of 18 additional support may be provided.
- 1.10 Students bringing complaints in relation to the behaviour of staff may be supported by Student Services where appropriate in line with the Guidelines on Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour.
- 1.11 Where a complaint made by a student is believed to be frivolous, vexatious or motivated by malice, the Institute reserves the right to take disciplinary

action against the student for breach of the Code of Conduct. This will be investigated as a potential breach of Section 3.2. of the Code:

Respect other members' basic rights to work and live in a safe, secure environment, free from anxiety, fear, intimidation and harassment.

- 1.12 The Institute reserves the right to withdraw the student's complaint if the complainant is not engaging with the complaint investigation process for more **than 20 working when requested.**
- 1.13 Advice on whether the complaints procedure applies and how it operates may be sought from the Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor or their nominee,.
- 1.14 Where a complaint is upheld, the Institute will reimburse the student upon production of receipts for incidental expenses (e.g. travel and subsistence) that have been necessarily incurred by the student in the resolution of their complaint. If a complaint is not upheld the student will be informed of the reason(s) for that decision. The Institute may in its discretion reimburse the student upon production of receipts for incidental expenses necessarily incurred by the student in putting forward their complaint if satisfied that the complaint was made in good faith.

## **2 Scope of the Complaints Procedure**

- 2.1 This procedure is designed to deal with complaints arising from:
  - i) provision of academic services described in the Institute's publications including teaching, content of courses and support for learning
  - ii) incorrect or misleading information about services provided by the Institute
  - iii) provision of other Institute services described in literature published by the Institute
  - iv) inappropriate behaviour of members of staff
  - v) inappropriate behaviour of a student.
- 2.2 The student complaints procedure does not cover the following:
  - i) ~~any matters relating to examination and assessment procedures or academic appeals. Information regarding the Appeals System~~
  - ii) disciplinary issues. Information regarding breaches of the Code of Conduct.
  - iii) admissions procedures prior to enrolment as a student of the Institute . Information regarding complaints about the Admissions Process .
  - iv)** complaints about the Students'. Information '
  - v) complaints about student accommodation that is not Institute owned and/or controlled. I

2.3 Where a student makes a complaint about the behaviour of another student or about unacceptable behaviour of Institute staff, the Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor shall consult as appropriate and determine the correct student or staff procedure or policy to be followed. Where appropriate the complaint will be referred under the staff or student disciplinary procedures. Such determination shall be final. Students should refer to the **Guidelines on Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour**.

2.4 This procedure applies to all students of the Institute unless students are studying courses in other institutions, which are sub-contracted or validated by the Institute. These students should use the procedures that are in place in that institution. Once the student has exhausted the procedures in place at their institution, they may request a review of the complaint by the Institute (See Stage III below).

### **3 Informal resolution of complaints**

3.1 Most complaints will normally be resolved informally by an appropriate member of staff.

3.2 The informal complaint may be made orally or in writing, normally within 10 working days of the incident or action from which the complaint arises, or in any event as soon as possible.

3.3 The member of staff to whom the complaint is made will investigate or refer the complaint. A response will be made to the student via email, normally within 5 working days.

3.4 If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of this informal resolution of their complaint, then they should follow stage I, II and III procedures described in the formal complaints procedure below.

3.5 If a student requires advice or wishes to discuss the matter before making a formal complaint, they should consult their personal tutor, or a student representative.

### **4 Stage I: Head of School/College or Service Department**

4.1 The Stage I complaint should be made oral/ or in writing, preferably by completing an appropriate form, normally within 10 working days of the incident or action from which the complaint arises, or the outcome of the informal resolution.

The following details must be provided:

- a full statement of the complaint
- brief details of the steps already taken to resolve the complaint informally
- reasons for the student's dissatisfaction with the attempts to resolve the complaint informally
- what remedy the student is seeking
- a copy (not original documents) of any documentary evidence the student wishes to submit
- the student's name and the Institute student ID number
- full contact details for the student (including preferred method of contact, (e.g. email)
- whether the student has representation and if so whom

The complaint should be addressed to the

Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor  
VTI,VACOAS

or [institute.vti@intnet.mu](mailto:institute.vti@intnet.mu)

- 4.2 The Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor's nominee will determine whether all the necessary information has been provided and may contact the student requesting additional details and evidence. In all cases, the receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days.
- 4.3 The Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor's nominee will forward the complaint to the Head of School/College or Service Department who will investigate the complaint using the information provided by the student in their written statement of the complaint. The School/College or Service Department will send a formal written response to the student, detailing the investigation, within 10 working days of the full complaint being received by the Institute. The response sent to the student must be copied to the Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor and all relevant parties (including the Students' Union where applicable).
- 4.4 In instances where it has not been possible to resolve the complaint within 10 working days for a legitimate reason, the relevant area investigating the complaint shall write to the student and inform them of:
- the name of the person investigating their complaint
  - the reason for the delay
  - the date by which the student will be notified of the outcome

The letter sent to the student must be copied to the Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor and all relevant parties [where applicable].

## **5 Stage II: VTI Complaints department**

- 5.1 The Stage II formal complaint should be made in writing by completing an appropriate form, normally within 20 working days of the outcome of the Stage I resolution.

The following details must be provided:

- a full statement of the complaint
- a copy of Stage I formal complaint and a copy of the Stage I outcome letter.
- detailed reasons for the student's dissatisfaction with the Stage I outcome.
- what remedy the student is seeking
- a copy (not original documents) of any documentary evidence the student wishes to submit
- whether the student has representation and if so whom

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- 5.2 The Complaints and Compliance Officer will determine whether all the necessary information has been provided and may contact the student requesting additional details and evidence. In all cases, the Complaint department will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days.
- 5.3 The Complaints and Compliance officer will investigate the complaint using the information provided by the student with their complaint form. A formal response, detailing the investigation, will be sent to the student in writing within 25 working days of the full complaint being received by the Institute . The response sent to the student must be copied to all relevant parties (Union where applicable).
- 5.4 In instances where it has not been possible to resolve the complaint within 25 working days for a legitimate reason, the Complaints department will write to the student and inform them of:
- the name of the person investigating their complaint
  - the reason for the delay
  - the date by which the student will be notified of the outcome

The letter sent to the student must be copied to the Institute Supervisor/Discipline Master and all relevant parties (where applicable).

## **6 Stage III: Complaints Review**

- 6.1 If a student has reason to believe that their Stage II complaint has not been handled fairly, objectively or in accordance with the procedures described above, they should request a review of their complaint. A Stage III complaint constitutes a review and not a re-investigation of the complaint. The request for a review must state the grounds on which the review is sought and should be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence.

Valid grounds for the review of the Stage II investigation outcome are as follows:

- there were procedural irregularities in the investigation of the complaint;
  - fresh evidence can be presented which could not reasonably have been made available with submission of the Stage II Form; or
  - the outcome of the investigation was not reasonable in all the circumstances, in which case the detailed reasons for the student's dissatisfaction with the Stage II investigation and the outcome should be provided.
- 6.2 The Stage III Review request should be made in writing by completing an appropriate form, normally within 15 working days of the outcome of the Stage II formal resolution.

The following details must be provided:

- a full statement of the complaint including the valid grounds for the review as detailed above.
- a copy of Stage II formal complaint and a copy of the Stage II outcome letter.
- what remedy the student is seeking.

- a copy (not original documents) of any new documentary evidence that was not available during Stage II complaint investigation
- whether the student has representation and if so whom.

The complaint should be addressed to the  
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- 6.3 The Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor will review the handling of the complaint in the light of the student's written statement unless he/she was part of the original investigation. In this case, the complaint review will be referred to the Manager
- 6.4 The Institute Discipline Master/Supervisor may confirm or rescind an earlier decision in the light of this report. A written reply will be sent to the student within 20 working days of receiving the request for the review.
- 6.5 In instances where it has not been possible to review the complaint within 20 working days for a legitimate reason, the student will be informed of the reason for the delay and the date by which they will be notified of the outcome.

## **7 Referral to the other authority Office**

- 7.1 If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the review of their complaint, they may refer their case to the authority Office for external review.