

Outcome 9: Grievance procedures

09

 [Link to outcome 9 in the Code](#)

Signatories must ensure that all international students have access to proper and fair procedures for dealing with grievances.

The intent of this outcome is to ensure transparent, accessible, and effective processes are in place to resolve any grievances students may have.

Navigating these guidelines

Under 18 year old and/or under 10 year old students

Headings specific to under 18 year old and/or under 10 year old students are highlighted in blue.

Icons are used throughout the document to help signatories locate information:



'Star icon' signals suggestions for good practice



'Arrow icon' draws attention to website resources.

Good practice for dealing with grievances

Act early: formal complaints are the tip of the iceberg

The process for dealing with student grievances often begins long before a formal complaint is made.

Proactive pastoral care from the earliest stages of the international student lifecycle can prevent minor issues building to become major ones that can cost your organisation time, money, and reputation.

Ensuring that your organisation complies with outcomes 1–8 of the Code is your best chance of avoiding having to actively go through the processes outlined here at outcomes 9 and 10. Hold discussions with your international students in a less formal context, earlier, and capture issues before they become complaints. The processes outlined in outcomes 6–7 will assist you with this.

In the event that your organisation does have to deal with a formal grievance, having robust procedures in place will ensure that the experience is as quick and painless as possible for all involved. Effective grievance procedures can even become a meaningful source of business 'intel' for your organisation if you are open to feedback and embrace the process as an opportunity to listen to your student 'customers' and improve services as required.

Ensure both you and your international students have appropriate advocacy and support

Going through a formal complaint process is a difficult experience for all parties.

For an international student, it is incredibly challenging to go through the process in a foreign country, culture, and language.

For this reason, it is important to ensure the international student in question has enough advocacy and support.

Consider engaging with an external advocacy service or building community networks to identify and source independent people who can act as advocates for the international student if and when necessary. Community networks can include but are not limited to church groups, cultural support groups, etc.

It may not be appropriate for a staff member to act as the advocate, for example when the allegations involve another student or staff member.

In a grievance situation where two or more students are involved, it is important to ensure that each student has a separate advocate or support person.

International students who have gone through a grievance process may also need additional pastoral care follow-up after the dispute has been resolved. Consider meeting with the student and, if relevant, their parents/guardians, after the event to check that they have been able to resume student life.

For signatories, the challenges of communicating across cultures and languages, sometimes in the heat of criticism and unwanted media attention, can require the advice, advocacy and support of peak bodies and other organisations. Consider joining a peak body or other relevant organisation to ensure that you have appropriate support, information, and media training to navigate challenging circumstances before they arise.

Accept that every situation is unique and multi-faceted

Understand and account for the fact that each grievance situation is unique and will often include several issues. Your process may need to cover a mix of continual issues, rather than each individual issue. Accept that it will not be possible to preempt every international student grievance in advance. Be prepared to learn from things that go wrong – look at what happened, where there may be gaps, and where you might be able to make changes in future.

32. Process

32(I)(a) and 32 (I)(b)

Effective internal process for addressing grievances and international students are informed about that process

You must develop and implement an effective internal process for addressing grievances and ensure that your students are informed about it.



Suggestions for good practice:

- consider when the process starts – formally and informally (i.e. you are required under outcome 5 to give international students information about your grievance procedures during orientation. Is that the beginning?)
- make your process easy to understand – think about a flow chart, or step-by-step instructions, in plain English, as well as in other languages if possible
- have an ESOL teacher review the copy to ensure that it is written in ‘plain English’ appropriate for speakers of English as a second or other language
- involve international students in the development of your process and in its review
- develop your process in consultation with your international student staff
- include clear direction on who to go to for support
- advise international students to approach the staff member closest to the problem in the first instance (with an advocate, if appropriate)
- identify different complaint types and the person to whom each type of complaint would be addressed
- include photographs and locations of appropriate staff for ease of identification for students
- include your process in pre-enrolment packs and explain the process at orientation (keep it simple and positive)
- tell students about the process both verbally and in writing
- display the grievance procedure information in prominent places around your campus
- let students know that they have a right to an advocate, and make sure advocates have institutional knowledge (policies, procedures, people) and are able to listen without prejudice to the student’s point of view
- let students know that they may bring another support person with them (such as a friend or family member of homestay parent) during any stage of the process
- refer students to their students’ association if appropriate
- integrate a process for managing complaints about the education agents you commission
- inform your agents of your grievance procedures and the external process for making a complaint to NZQA or the DRS
- put the outcome of any complaints in writing
- check that international students are confident they can access and understand the information provided about the grievance procedures at your organisation
- document your complaints, gather feedback on the effectiveness of your process, and develop ways of integrating these into your internal review process so you can continually improve.

32(2)**Advising students of recourse to the DRS / Code administrator**

While not limiting an international student's access to an external process, you should take measures to work through the issues that are most appropriately dealt with internally before referring an international student to an external appeal body.

Advise your international students that they can contact NZQA or iStudent Complaints if their complaint is not resolved through your internal process:

- NZQA receives and investigates international student complaints relating to an alleged breach of the Code. Information on how to make a complaint can be found on [NZQA's website](#). NZQA has also developed a student-focused [brochure](#) with contact information which can be provided to international students
- **iStudent Complaints** is the International Student Contract Dispute Resolution Scheme established by the New Zealand Government. iStudent Complaints receives and resolves international student financial and contractual disputes with providers.