



AUSTRALIAN  
DENTAL COUNCIL

# Complaints management framework

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## 1. Purpose

The Complaints Management Framework provides a summary of how complaints are managed by the Australian Dental Council (ADC).

Complaints can be received by the ADC from people internal, and external, to the organisation for a variety of reasons. This framework is designed to guide employees, Board and Committee members and people external to the ADC who have a complaint to easily access and understand the relevant policies, and to take the first steps needed to resolve their complaint.

The Complaints Management Framework does not cover concerns relating to the accreditation of programs or appeals against the outcome of an initial assessment, or a written or practical examination.

## 2. Overview

Part of our commitment to providing exceptional service is having a mechanism to raise a complaint about actions, behaviours, processes, policies, or systems at the ADC that have fallen short of our expected high standards.

In most instances where this occurs, issues and concerns can be resolved immediately and informally by speaking directly to the person(s) involved. For the occasions where complaints cannot be resolved in this way, a formal complaint may be made.

The Complaints Management Framework has been developed to support a person wishing to progress a formal complaint.

### 2.1 Safe, inclusive, and respectful workplaces.

Ensuring we have a workplace that is safe, inclusive, and respectful is a cornerstone of achieving a culture where our people can be at their best. It also ensures the ADC can deliver the high standards of service and responsiveness that we pride ourselves on.

We have an expectation that our employees and other workplace participants will always act respectfully and have the right to be treated with that same level of respect by our colleagues, customers, stakeholders, or other people we interact with. We are proactive in encouraging positive behaviours at the ADC and take a zero-tolerance approach to abusive or offensive behaviour, discrimination, bullying and harassment.

## 2.2 Legislative compliance

The ADC and its employees will comply with all relevant legislation and legislative requirements. This includes (but may not be limited to):

### Federal

- Age Discrimination Act 2004.
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984.
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- Fair Work Act 2009.

### Victorian

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2005.
- Disability Act 2006.
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004.
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001.
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

## 3. Scope

A complaint, under the definition of this framework refers to an expression of dissatisfaction about an act or omission that has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur that sits within the responsibility of the ADC to address.

The Complaints Management Framework provides an overview of how complaints and grievances are managed under the following ADC policies:

- Code of Conduct
- Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Recruitment and Selection policy
- Poor Performance and misconduct policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Grievance Policy.

### Out of scope

We acknowledge that minor complaints, such as data errors or customer service concerns may be made and resolved informally. While these concerns do not fall within the scope of this framework, the ADC is committed to considering them as part of our commitment to customer service and continual improvement.

The Complaints Management Framework does not cover concerns relating to the accreditation of programs or appeals against the outcome of an initial assessment, or a written or practical examination.

Complaints about dental practitioner assessment outcomes are addressed via the [ADC Assessments and Examinations verification, review and appeals policy](#). More information regarding this process can be found [on our website](#).

Complaints about accreditation decisions are addressed through the [‘Program accreditation appeals policy.’](#) If you have a concern about an accredited program you want to raise, please refer to the [ADC Concerns about accredited programs policy.](#) More information about this process can be found on *the* [ADC website.](#)

## 4. Complaints Management Principles

The ADC's complaints management principles, as identified in table 1 below will be applied in the management of all complaints received by the ADC.

Table 1: Complaints Management Principles

Principle	How this will be applied at the ADC
Commitment to our values	The ADC is a values-driven organisation. All parties to a complaint have the right to expect these values to be applied at all stages of the complaint process.
Safety and wellbeing	The wellbeing of ADC employees, complainants and respondents is at the centre of our approach to managing complaints.  Every effort will be made to provide support to people who have made a complaint and to those who may be subject to an investigation. The confidentiality of all parties to a complaint will be strictly observed.
Inclusion	Everyone has the right to raise an issue, concern or complaint with the ADC. Multiple options and formats for submitting a complaint will be available to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability and people who do not speak English as a first language can make a complaint in a way that minimises stress and is culturally appropriate and accessible.
Respect	The ADC will treat all complaints and complainants with respect and courtesy. Respectful behaviour is also expected from complainants and people against whom a complaint has been made. Offensive and/or abusive behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated from any person.
Encouraging reporting	The ADC encourages reporting of any behaviour that does not align with our values.
Fair Treatment and the right to be heard	The principles of natural justice will be applied to all complaints. This means that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. we will ensure that all parties to a complaint are given adequate information and time to participate or respond meaningfully.</li> <li>2. we will give all people affected or implicated an opportunity to present their point of view and respond to facts presented; and</li> <li>3. we will address complaints in an equitable and unbiased manner.</li> </ol>
Continuous improvement	We will commit to reviewing processes, policies and procedures that are subject to a complaint with a view to improving future interactions with the ADC.

Principle	How this will be applied at the ADC
	We will also identify opportunities for training or improved complaint handling practices as part of our commitment to improving service and business operations.
Transparency	Information about how a complaint can be made will be easily available to all employees, customers and stakeholders on the ADC website.
Responsiveness	We will acknowledge, investigate and respond to all complaints as quickly as possible.

## 5. Categories of complaints

This framework addresses three complaint categories: employee complaints, customer complaints and complaints about corrupt, unethical, or illegal conduct (whistleblower complaints.) [Appendix 2](#) of this framework provides guidance and direction for the best person to raise a complaint with consideration for the nature of the complaint and parties to the complaint.

Complaints about examination outcomes and complaints about the accreditation of programs are not covered by this framework. Please refer to the '[Out of Scope](#)' section of this policy for guidance on how to address these complaints.

### 5.1 Employee Complaints

Employee complaints are complaints made about matters affecting employment.

[Appendix 1](#) outlines how employee complaints will be managed and addressed by the ADC.

For more detailed information regarding roles, responsibilities, definitions and policy rules, please refer to the relevant ADC policy.

### 5.2 Customer Complaints

Customer or stakeholder complaints are complaints from customers about the responsiveness, level of service or behaviour of an ADC employee or workplace participant that is not covered by the ADC's [Verifications, reviews and appeals process](#) or the [Program accreditation appeals policy](#).

The ADC's [Complaints policy](#) outlines our approach to responding to any matter raised by a customer or stakeholder who has expressed concern or dissatisfaction with how the ADC, or an employee/ workplace participant of the ADC has carried out its work.

### 5.3 Complaints about corrupt, unethical or illegal conduct

Complaints that relate to reportable conduct under the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*, including corruption, serious unethical behaviour, illegal activity, regulatory noncompliance, questionable auditing or accounting or other serious wrongdoing are managed via the ADC's [Whistleblower policy](#).

## 6. Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer or Board

The ADC encourages you to raise a complaint and/or to report improper conduct as soon as you experience, or become aware, of it.

We do however acknowledge that it can be especially difficult to raise a complaint or concern when the complaint relates to the Chief Executive Officer and/or a member of an ADC Committee or Board.

If you do not feel it is safe or practical to make a complaint directly to the ADC, [Table 4 of Appendix 2](#) identifies several external organisations you can contact to raise a complaint and/or to seek advice and support from with the confidence that your complaint will be handled independently and discreetly.

## 7. Support for parties to a complaint

Any person can make a complaint to the ADC and assistance will be provided to ensure the complainant can participate fully in the process as required. This may include reasonable adjustments, translation services or alternative complaints processes.

Employees that require support can also contact Converge International, the ADC's Employee Assistance Program at <https://www.convergeinternational.com.au/> or by calling 1300 687 327.

## 8. Anonymous complaints

The ADC recognises the right of complainants to remain anonymous and commits to taking anonymous complaints seriously.

However, where a complainant chooses not to disclose their identity or contact details, it may limit the ability of the ADC to properly investigate the complaint and ensure it is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

## 9. False or vexatious complaints

The ADC is committed to a fair, transparent and equitable complaints process. We strongly encourage the reporting of complaints or grievances, will take all complaints seriously and will investigate thoroughly.

False and vexatious complaints, however, will be treated seriously. A person knowingly making a false or misleading complaint may be subject to prosecution under the relevant legislation. An employee making a false or vexatious complaint is considered misconduct and will be managed under the Poor performance and misconduct policy.

It is not considered a false complaint where a person genuinely believes, on reasonable grounds that a complaint is true and correct, and the complaint is found to be unsubstantiated.

## 10. Document Information

Policy Owner:	Director, People and Culture
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\*Unless otherwise indicated, this policy will continue to apply beyond the review date

## 11. Related documents

- Code of Conduct
- Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Poor performance and misconduct Policy
- [Complaint's policy](#)
- Whistleblower Policy
- Grievance Policy
- [Complaint form](#)

## Appendix 1: Employee complaints

The table below has been designed to support employees to identify the right policy, and the best starting point for resolving a complaint, or for making a formal report. If you are still unclear about your options after reading this table, please contact the Manager, HR, the Director of People and Culture or a manager you feel comfortable with for additional support and guidance.

Table 2: responding to employee complaints

I think my complaint is about:	Sexual Harassment	Discrimination	Bullying	Harassment	Equal employment opportunities/recruitment	Another type of grievance
<b>What is this defined as?</b>  <b>*Please refer to the relevant policy for the full definition</b>	Unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.	Discrimination occurs if a person treats, or proposes to treat, a person with an attribute unfavorably because of that attribute.	Persistent and repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker, or a group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety (physical and/or psychological and/or cultural.)	Behaviour such as telling insulting jokes, displaying offensive posters or screen savers, making derogatory comments or taunts or asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life. A one-off incident can constitute harassment.	Unfair or unequal access to employment, including promotion opportunities based on a person's protected attributes or other factors that are not related to ability to do the job, This includes a failure to apply reasonable workplace adjustments.	Any other grievance or complaint, including disputes between staff that impact on ability to deliver work outcomes.
<b>Which policy applies to this complaint</b>	Sexual Harassment Policy	Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy	Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy	Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy	Recruitment and Selection policy	Grievance policy
<b>Which policy will apply to resolving the complaint?</b>	Grievance policy	Grievance policy	Grievance policy	Grievance policy	Grievance policy	Grievance policy

I think my complaint is about:	Sexual Harassment	Discrimination	Bullying	Harassment	Equal employment opportunities/ recruitment	Another type of grievance
<b>Can I resolve this informally?</b>	Yes. It is recommended that you tell the person displaying unwelcome behaviour to stop, but only if you feel safe to do so.	Yes. It is recommended that you tell the person displaying unwelcome behaviour to stop, but only if you feel safe to do so.	Yes. It is recommended that you tell the person displaying unwelcome behaviour to stop, but only if you feel safe to do so.	Yes. It is recommended that you tell the person displaying unwelcome behaviour to stop, but only if you feel safe to do so.	Yes, but only if you feel safe to do so.	Yes, but only if you feel safe to do so.
<b>What is my first step?</b>	Keep a written record of the incident and any subsequent interaction and report the incident.	Keep a written record of the incident and any subsequent interaction and report the incident.	Keep a written record of the incident and any subsequent interaction and report the incident.	Keep a written record of the incident and any subsequent interaction and report the incident.	Keep notes of what you have experienced and contact People and Culture as soon as possible.	Tell your manager about your experience. They will be able to assist you to resolve the grievance.  If your concern relates to your manager, talk to the Manager HR, Director People and Culture or another Director you feel comfortable with.
<b>Who should I tell at the ADC?</b>	Manager HR, Director P&C or a leader you feel comfortable with.	Manager HR, Director P&C or a leader you feel comfortable with.	Manager HR, Director P&C or a leader you feel comfortable with.	Manager HR, Director P&C or a leader you feel comfortable with.	Manager HR, or if the complaint is about People and Culture, contact the CEO.	Your manager. You can also contact the Manager HR, or Director P&C.
<b>Who can I tell externally?</b>	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission  Australian Human Rights Commission	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission  Australian Human Rights Commission	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission  Australian Human Rights Commission	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission  Australian Human Rights Commission	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission  Australian Human Rights Commission	This will vary depending on the nature of your grievance. People and Culture will be able to advise you.

I think my complaint is about:	Sexual Harassment	Discrimination	Bullying	Harassment	Equal employment opportunities/ recruitment	Another type of grievance
<b>What will be done about it?</b>	For all complaints and disclosures, an initial assessment will be undertaken and if necessary, an investigation will be conducted. You will be advised of any high-level outcome but may not be given details about any action taken. This is to protect the confidentiality of all parties. Where specific action, including disciplinary action is warranted, the Poor performance and Misconduct policy will apply.					

## Appendix 2: Recommended reporting contacts

The table below provides a suggestion for the most appropriate person within the ADC to make a disclosure to with consideration for who the complaint is about.

The person listed at number 1 is the recommended initial contact point. If the person listed at number 1 is also involved the complaint, go to position 2 or position 3 on list.

Where you feel that there is no impartial or independent contact at the ADC to make a disclosure to, please refer to Table 4 to identify the appropriate external body to make a complaint with.

### Table 3: Recommended ADC reporting contacts

When referring to the below table, please note that the recommended contacts are listed in priority order. This means the first listed contact is to be the person with whom a complaint is raised unless you do not feel comfortable raising your concern with that person, or do not believe they can act independently.

<b>Complaint/ Disclosure made against</b>	<b>Position to disclose to</b>	
CEO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Board Chair</li> <li>2. Deputy Chair</li> <li>3. Chair, FARM Committee</li> </ol>	<a href="mailto:boardchair@adc.org.au">boardchair@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:deputychair@adc.org.au">deputychair@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:FARM@adc.org.au">FARM@adc.org.au</a>
Board Chair	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CEO</li> <li>2. Deputy Chair</li> <li>3. Chair, FARM Committee</li> </ol>	<a href="mailto:CEO@adc.org.au">CEO@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:deputychair@adc.org.au">deputychair@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:FARM@adc.org.au">FARM@adc.org.au</a>
Deputy Chair	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CEO</li> <li>2. Chair</li> <li>3. Chair, FARM Committee</li> </ol>	<a href="mailto:CEO@adc.org.au">CEO@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:chair@adc.org.au">chair@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:FARM@adc.org.au">FARM@adc.org.au</a>
Board Directors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Board Chair</li> </ol>	<a href="mailto:boardchair@adc.org.au">boardchair@adc.org.au</a>
Executive Directors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CEO</li> <li>2. Board Chair</li> <li>3. Deputy Chair</li> </ol>	<a href="mailto:CEO@adc.org.au">CEO@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:boardchair@adc.org.au">boardchair@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:deputychair@adc.org.au">deputychair@adc.org.au</a>
Members of People and Culture/Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CEO</li> <li>2. Director, Assessment and Examinations</li> <li>3. Director, Corporate Services</li> </ol>	<a href="mailto:CEO@adc.org.au">CEO@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:DAE@adc.org.au">DAE@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:DCS@adc.org.au">DCS@adc.org.au</a>
Members of Corporate Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CEO</li> </ol>	<a href="mailto:CEO@adc.org.au">CEO@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:DPC@adc.org.au">DPC@adc.org.au</a>

Complaint/ Disclosure made against	Position to disclose to	
	2. Director, People and Culture 3. Director, Accreditation Policy and Research	<a href="mailto:DAPR@adc.org.au">DAPR@adc.org.au</a>
Members of Accreditation	1. CEO 2. Director, People and Culture 3. Director, Assessments and Examinations	<a href="mailto:CEO@adc.org.au">CEO@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:DPC@adc.org.au">DPC@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:DAE@adc.org.au">DAE@adc.org.au</a>
Members of Assessments and Examinations	1. CEO 2. Director, Accreditation, Policy and Research 3. Director, People and Culture	<a href="mailto:CEO@adc.org.au">CEO@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:DAPR@adc.org.au">DAPR@adc.org.au</a> <a href="mailto:DPC@adc.org.au">DPC@adc.org.au</a>

If you feel that it is not possible, safe, or practical to report your experience or complaint to an ADC representative, external organisations are available for you to report your experience. Please refer to table 4 for further information.

**If you are in immediate danger, please call Victoria Police on 000**

Table 4: External bodies for reporting

Organisation	How they can help	Contact details
Fair Work Australia Ombudsmen	<p>The Fair Work Australia Ombudsmen can provide advice or support for resolving workplace concerns.</p> <p>There is also an option to anonymously report a concern about employment conditions or disputes.</p>	<p>Phone: 13 13 94</p> <p>Website:  <a href="https://www.fairwork.gov.au/workplace-problems/fixing-a-workplace-problem">https://www.fairwork.gov.au/workplace-problems/fixing-a-workplace-problem</a></p>
Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission	<p>VEOHRC provide a confidential information and complaint process covering concerns relating to discrimination, victimisation, sexual harassment, racial or religious vilification, equal opportunity, and human rights.</p>	<p>Phone: 1300 292 153</p> <p>Website:  <a href="https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/get-help/">https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/get-help/</a></p>
Victoria Legal Aid	<p>Victoria Legal Aid provide advice, information and representation to people who may have experienced sexual harassment, discrimination, or victimisation.</p>	<p>Phone: 1300 792 387</p> <p>Website:  <a href="https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/">https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/</a></p>
Whistleblowing services	<p>The whistleblowing service is only relevant for disclosures that relate to reportable or disclosable conduct.</p> <p>Please refer to the Whistleblower process to confirm if this is relevant for your complaint.</p>	<p>Phone: 1800 730 073</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://ADC.whistleblowingservice.com.au">ADC   whistleblowingservice.com.au</a></p>
WorkSafe advisory service	<p>WorkSafe can support you for all matters related to workplace health and safety. This includes harassment, bullying and sexual harassment.</p>	<p>Phone: 1800 136 089</p> <p>Website:  <a href="https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/speak-to-advisor">https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/speak-to-advisor</a></p>