



Policy	#3-31
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Administrator Responsible:	Vice President, Students & Community Engagement

STUDENT COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

POLICY STATEMENT

North Island College (NIC) is committed to a responsive learning environment in which student voices are heard and their concerns addressed in a timely and transparent manner.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- Students are provided with a framework to bring forward concerns about grades, decisions or actions that they believe to be unfair.
- Students are informed of the dispute resolution procedures available to them and about the supports available to facilitate their access to these procedures.
- Student complaints are addressed in a timely and fair manner that is both communicative with, and protective of, all parties.

SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy relates to student complaints with the exception of those related to Code of Ethical Conduct Policy #1-20, Human Rights Policy #2-08, Instructional Accommodation and Accessible Learning Services Policy #3-17 and Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Policy #3-34.

PRINCIPLES

1. NIC is committed to a supportive complaint process and encourages student self-advocacy.
2. Students must attempt to resolve concerns through communication (verbal or written) with the respondent as the first step in any resolution process.
3. All parties have the right to a fair and unbiased process.
4. Interim measures may be taken for a variety of reasons and do not indicate a finding of wrong doing.
5. Complainants and respondents will conduct themselves respectfully throughout and subsequent to the complaint process. Disrespectful, intimidating, or retaliatory behaviour are themselves violations of the [NIC Community Code of Academic, Personal and Professional Conduct \(3-06\)](#), or other applicable policies.
6. The complaint process is confidential for both the complainant and the respondent; however, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. The requirements of the *Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.B.C. 1986, c. 165 apply.
7. This policy shall not be used to infringe on academic freedom as it relates to course content and/or delivery.

DEFINITIONS

Anonymity

Withholding of one's name.

College Community

College Community members include:

- a) Students currently enrolled in or applying to be enrolled in a course or program of studies at the College
- b) all employees of NIC
- c) contractors and third parties required by contract to comply with NIC policies and procedures
- d) members of the NIC Foundation and donors
- e) members of advisory tables and committees
- f) members of the Board of Governors
- g) all other persons granted access to NIC property and resources.

Complaint Advisor

The director of student affairs, or designate, whose role is to support students and employees and act as an unbiased guide to the complaint process for all parties. The complaint advisor is not a decision-maker with regard to the complaint itself.

Complainant

A student who brings forward a formal complaint.

Confidentiality

Non-disclosure of particular information.

Instructor

The individual or team responsible for providing instruction and/or evaluation.

Investigation

Information gathering, fact-finding and assessment processes used to determine the nature and circumstances of an alleged incident or incidents.

Mediation

Mediation is a process in which the parties to a dispute, with the assistance of a neutral third party (the mediator), identify the disputed issues, develop options, consider alternatives and endeavor to reach an agreement. The mediator has no advisory or determinative role in regard to the content of the dispute or the outcomes of its resolution but may advise on or determine the process of mediation whereby resolution is attempted. The mediation process does not automatically replace any formal investigative process but may be seen as a viable alternative, particularly in cases where the appropriateness and possible success of an investigative process is in doubt.

NISU

North Island Students' Union

Respondent

The person who is the subject of the complaint and who is responsible for engaging in the complaint process. Should the complaint concern a policy or a department, the complaint advisor will identify the responsible respondent.

Support Person

A person who may be present during meetings at the request of either party. This person will not participate or provide comments during meetings. Complainants and respondents can choose their support person as long as that person is not in a conflict of interest.

Student

A person the Registrar recognizes to be enrolled in or applying to be enrolled in a course or program of studies at the College.

GUIDELINES

1. Effort must be made to seek an informal resolution through dialogue or in writing. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, the student may then proceed with a formal complaint.
2. The complaint advisor will assist with the complaint process as needed as an unbiased guide to the process. The complaint advisor is available to assist and advise as requested by a complainant and/or respondent.
3. All formal complaints must be submitted to the complaint advisor using the form in Appendix C
4. Students may contact a NISU advocate at any stage in the complaint process and may seek support before initiating communication with the respondent. Complainants have the option to have a representative from NISU serve as their support person.
5. Employees have the option to have a representative from their respective unions present at meetings with the complainant.
6. The timelines set out in this policy will only be extended should specific circumstances justify the extension. A determination as to whether extensions are justified will be at the sole discretion of the complaint advisor.
7. When the complainant is unable to directly contact the involved party (for reasons of intimidation, health, scheduling, etc.), the complaint advisor may be called on to facilitate the communication and will ensure the respondent is aware of the allegations. Further, the complaint advisor may be asked to support the informal resolution process through mediation.
8. Except in cases of a demonstrated and unmitigable risk to student safety or the learning environment determined by the dean, in consultation with the department chair and instructor, the student is expected to continue their studies, practica or other related educational activities throughout the complaint process.
9. All parties will be provided with support or accommodations as available/required to ensure full and equitable access to this policy and procedure.
10. Complaints may be withdrawn at any time. Once withdrawn, a complaint is deemed resolved and will not be re-opened; nor will a fresh complaint on the same issue be accepted.
11. Complaints of a sensitive or complex nature, as determined by the complaint advisor, may be directed to the relevant administrator for a response.

LIMITATIONS

This policy only applies to student complaints and not decisions or processes following an appeal.

RESOURCES

The National Center for Higher Education Risk Management (NCHERM) Group, LLC

Systems-level solutions for safer schools and campuses. A Developmental Framework for a Code of Student Conduct. 2013

Student Complaint Resolution Policy – College of New Caledonia

LEGISLATIVE AND COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT REFERENCES

Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (British Columbia)

CROSS REFERENCES

[Code of Ethical Conduct Policy #1-20](#)

[Human Rights Policy #2-08](#)

[Protection of Employees from Violence in the Workplace Policy #2-10](#)

[Progressive Discipline Misconduct or Inappropriate Behaviour Policy #2-12](#)

[Community Code of Academic, Personal and Professional Conduct Policy #3-06](#)

[Student Appeals Policy #3-30](#)

[Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Policy #3-34](#)

APPENDIX A – PROCEDURES

All timelines referred to in these procedures are based on regular business days (Monday through Friday). The timelines specified are the maximum number of days allowed for each stage of the process; however, the College recognizes that a timely decision is desirable and encourages all parties to proceed without delay.

Where these timelines cannot be met due to unforeseen circumstances or during college closures, the complainant and respondent will be notified.

STEP 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

1. Within **ten (10) business days** of the incident, the complainant will communicate (through dialogue or in writing) with the respondent indicating:
 - The nature of the complaint (to help identify the type of information useful in the facilitation of the resolution process, students may find it useful to refer to the Formal Complaint form in Appendix C)
 - The requested resolution
2. Within **five (5) business days** of receiving the complaint, the respondent will provide a response to the complainant.

Supported Informal Resolution

If the complainant and respondent are unable to resolve the issue themselves, either party can request mediation from the complaint advisor.

FORMAL RESOLUTION

STEP 2

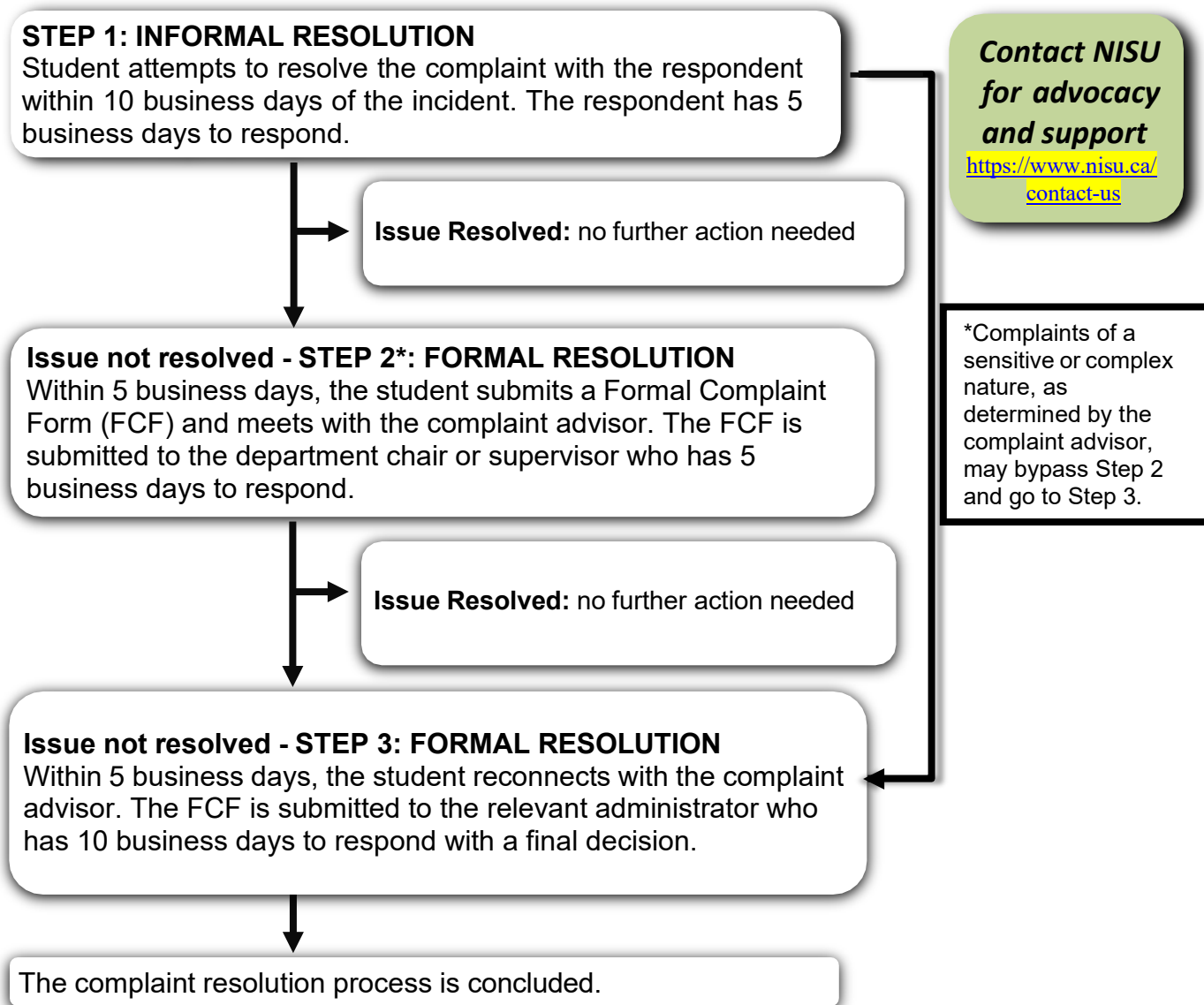
1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal resolution, within **five (5) business days** they will complete the Formal Complaint Form (Appendix C) and submit it to studentaffairs@nic.bc.ca or to the Director, Student Affairs (complaint advisor).
2. The complaint advisor will review the complaint and respond to the complainant. The complaint advisor will advise the complainant regarding the appropriate recipient of the complaint (see table below) and offer supports as needed.
3. With the consent of the complainant, the complaint advisor will forward the Formal Complaint Form to the respondent and the appropriate party (including the complainant).
4. In cases of a conduct-related or complex issue, the complaint advisor may recommend moving directly to Step 3.
5. If not directly moved to Step 3, the referred person (see chart below) will provide a written response to the complainant within **five (5) business days** of receiving the complaint.

Complaint Type	Referred To
Academic (grade/course-related)	Department Chair/Coordinator (Step 2)
Administrative	Supervisor or Department Chair/Coordinator (Step 2)
Conduct or Complex	Relevant Administrator (Step 3)

STEP 3

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Step 2, they may contact the complaint advisor within **five (5) business days** and, with the consent of the complainant, the complaint advisor will forward the Formal Complaint Form and related responses to the relevant administrator and the complainant.
2. Within **ten (10) business days** of receiving the complaint, the relevant administrator will review the complaint, the Formal Complaint Form and related responses and provide a written response to the complainant. The complaint advisor will be copied on the response.
3. The decision of the relevant administrator is final, subject to Student Appeal Policy #3-30.

APPENDIX B - COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS FLOW CHART



APPENDIX C – FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM**NIC Student Complaint Resolution
Formal Complaint Form (FCF)**

All students have the opportunity to have their concerns addressed in a timely and transparent manner. This may be related to a service you have received at the College, your academic experience or an administrative process. The complaint resolution process has several objectives:

- To ensure actions and decisions are reasonable and fair
- To find positive outcomes that lead to a thriving learning community
- To foster self-advocacy through respectful communication and interaction

Use this form if you have not been able to resolve your complaint with the respondent. This form must be completed and submitted by individual complainants.

- Write down the specifics of the complaint and the resolution you are seeking.
- Review any information (emails, websites course outline/syllabus) to ensure you have fully understood and followed any directions thoroughly.
- Book a time to meet with the respondent (if preferred, you can choose to email your complaint).
- Be respectful and open-minded in all communication.
- Consider connecting with a North Island Students' Union (NISU) advocate before the meeting. A NISU advocate may accompany you to meetings with the respondent or others involved in the complaint process.

How to Complete this Form:

- This form is fillable. If you need more space, please attach additional pages.
- Sign and date the form where indicated.
- Save a copy of the form for your records.

Submitting this Form:

- Email the form to studentaffairs@nic.bc.ca
- You will be contacted by the complaint advisor normally within two business days.
- For more information, please review the [Student Complaint Resolution Policy #3-31](#)

Note: Formal complaints should normally be filed within 10 business days of the original incident.



Formal Complaint Form

PART ONE – Student’s Complaint

Date: _____

First and last name: _____

Student ID: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Student Program: _____

Student Status:

- Prospective Student
- Withdrawn
- Currently enrolled
- Other (please specify): _____

Date of incident(s) (if applicable): _____

Name of respondent: _____

Course number/name (if applicable) _____

Location of incident(s) (if applicable): _____

Please provide details of your complaint. Include timeline, communications, persons involved and any other relevant information (attach additional pages if needed):

Have you attempted to resolve this complaint with the respondent? YES NO

**If no, please refer to the information at the top of this form.*

If yes, please describe the steps taken to resolve the issue (include dates, names etc.):

Please indicate how you would like to see this situation resolved:

Individual Declaration of the Student Completing this Form:

I hereby declare that the information on this form is correct, true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that by submitting this written complaint, an investigation may be conducted and that I may be required to provide additional information.

I understand that no adverse action will be taken for filing a legitimate complaint.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

PART TWO – Department Chair/Supervisor’s Response

Please note that the department chair/supervisor has 5 business days to respond to the complaint.

Date: _____

First and last name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Response to the complaint (attach additional pages if needed)

Once the above form is completed, please return it to studentaffairs@nic.bc.ca including the complainant and respondent.