



SOCAP Australia

Complaints Professional Certification Scheme

HANDBOOK

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1 Introduction

- 1.1. The SOCAP Australia Complaints Professional Certification Scheme (the Scheme) is intended to govern the relationship of a complaint professional with participants in the complaint process, their professional colleagues and the general public so that all will benefit from high standards of practice and build on the value of the professional and industry standard.
- 1.2 The Scheme sets out minimum requirements for those working as complaint professionals and recognises that some professionals who work with particular complaint management models may choose to develop or comply with additional guidelines or requirements.
- 1.3 Where a complaint professional practises under existing regulatory, industry or legislative frameworks and there is a conflict between the requirements of the Framework and any legislation, the respective regulatory requirements will override those of the Scheme to the extent of any inconsistencies.
- 1.4 The role of the complaint professional is to manage the complaint process and ensure that issues are resolved in a timely and responsive manner to manage the end process and ensure issues are resolved for continuous business improvement.
- 1.5 A complaint professional supports constructive negotiation, working wherever possible in a cooperative and in a continuous improvement way to reach a mutually beneficial outcome.
- 1.6 A complaint professional assists complainants to identify interests and issues, develop options, consider alternatives, and where possible, make decisions about resolution.
- 1.7 A complaint professional assists their organisation to track and report systemic issues identified through the complaint process to reduce complaints and improve products and services.
- 1.8 A complaint professional must be competent and have relevant knowledge, skills and ethical understandings.
- 1.9 A complaint professional should participate in continuing professional development, and certification through the Scheme supports continuous education for the applicant and the industry.
- 1.10 A complaint professional should participate in programs of peer consultation and should help train and mentor the work of less experienced professionals and the continuing professional development in this scheme supports peer to peer development and industry development.

1.11 A complaint professional should seek regular debriefing to address matters relating to skills development, professional issues and ethical dilemmas, and to ensure the ongoing well-being of the professional.

1.12 A complaint professional must ensure that ongoing professional development is focussed on achieving and maintaining the following:

KNOWLEDGE, in areas including,
but not limited to:

- The principles, stages, and functions of the complaint process
- The roles and functions of a complaint professional
- Communication styles and negotiation techniques, particularly in the context of complaints
- How to begin, conduct and terminate a complaint process
- Procedural fairness
- Language and cultural differences that may affect the complaint process
- The needs of disadvantaged or vulnerable persons
- Mental distress and its effect on behaviour
- Power imbalance and its effect on negotiations
- The internal rules, products and systems of the professional's organisation and how the complaint process relates to internal structures
- Referral options, pathways and process alternatives
- Case management, reporting, and data capture techniques that track complainants, complaints and systemic issues of the organisation
- The legislative, regulatory and industry frameworks that govern complaints
- Legal ramifications and other risk factors that may be present in the complaint process

SKILLS, in areas including,
but not limited to:

- Communication, including listening, questioning, reflecting and summarising
- Tone of voice and demeanour
- Connecting with customers and colleagues
- Problem solving
- Flexibility with process

- Analysis and systems thinking
- Issues diagnosis and identifying 'root' causes and interests
- Resourcefulness
- Negotiation
- Matching a complainant with effective referrals and pathway options
- Responding appropriately to those who speak different languages, the disadvantaged and the vulnerable
- Identifying when a complainant may intend harm to self or others
- Recognising when the complainant or the organisation is acting in bad faith
- When and how to terminate the complaint process
- Self-awareness and self-management; social awareness and social management (i.e. emotional intelligence)
- Resilience and self-care
- Respect for self and others
- Patience

ETHICAL UNDERSTANDINGS, in areas including, but not limited to:

- Neutrality and impartiality
- Transparency and fairness
- Conflicts of interest and bias
- Balancing the needs of the customer with those of the organisation
- Cultural differences and the vulnerable and disadvantaged
- Confidentiality, privacy and reporting obligations
- Withdrawal from and termination of the complaint process
- Anonymous complaints
- Unethical or illegal conduct of the professional's organisation

2 Certification

- 2.2 The Complaints Professional Certification Scheme applies to any SOCAP Australia member seeking to be recognised by SOCAP Australia as a ‘complaint professional’. Those recognised and certified under this scheme may use the post nominal ‘SOCAP Complaint Professional’ or ‘SOCAP CP.’
- 2.3 Applicants for certification must be of good character and possess appropriate personal qualities and experience to conduct a complaint process competently and professionally.
- 2.4 To gain certification as a SOCAP Complaint Professional, applicants must meet the competencies identified in the SOCAP Australia Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Complaint Professionals (see SOCAP Australia website www.socap.org.au).
- 2.5 Certification must be renewed every TWO (2) years.
- 2.6 To maintain certification applicants must show they have attained 100 points of continual professional development (CPD) learning in the TWO (2) year period.
- 2.7 Workplace demonstration of the learning competencies, as identified in the SOCAP Australia Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Complaint Professionals, forms part of the Scheme’s assessment criteria.
- 2.8 Workplace demonstration will be assessed upon applicant’s Supervisor/s References used within this Scheme.

3 Applying for certification as a SOCAP Complaint Professional

- 2.9 Applicants can apply to be assessed and registered under the SOCAP Complaints Professional Scheme to be a certified Complaint Professional in a number of ways depending on the length of industry service of the applicant.
- 2.10 All applicants must reach a total of 100 credit points to be assessed for certification under this scheme.
- 2.11 To maintain certification, all registered and certified SOCAP Complaints Professionals must renew their certification every TWO (2) years by undertaking a further 100 credit points of continuing professional development (CPD) points within the two year period for re-assessment and recertification to occur.
- 2.12 CPD points can be tallied from core and elective units (see below). Items marked * are compulsory units.

Category A (40 points each)

- Supervisor reference*
- SOCAP Complaint Handlers Ethics Course*
- Training course attendance and successful completion – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia
- Conference attendance and certificate of attainment – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia

Category B (20 points each)

- On the job training
- Mentoring of workplace activity/team/individual – up to 10 hours within two years
- In house training
- SOCAP Community of Practice attendance

Category C (10 points each, with no more than 30 points to be chosen from this category in each renewable period)

- Reading material
- Community activities
- Online Community activities
- Peer Reference

Cumulatively in each one year of the two year renewable period applicants must undertake a total of 15 hours of CPD taken from the above categories.

Initial certification based on industry service

3.5 For applicants with Less than 12 months in Complaints Management

Criteria marked * are core units and must form part of the applicant's application assessment for this entry level of certification

Category A (40 points each)

- Supervisor reference*
- Customer Service and Complaints Management 101 Workshop attendance and successful completion (provided by SOCAP Australia*)
- SOCAP Australia Ethics for Complaint Handlers* (included in the Customer Service and Complaints Management 101 workshop)
- Training course attendance and successful completion – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia
- Conference attendance and certificate of attainment – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia

Category B (20 points each)

- Peer Reference*
- On the job training
- Mentoring of workplace activity/team/individual – up to 10 hours within two years
- In house training
- SOCAP Community of Practice attendance

Category C (10 points each, with no more than 30 points to be chosen from this category in each renewable period)

- Reading material
- Community activities
- Online Community activities

TOTAL 100 points

3.6 For applicants with more than 12 months in Complaints Management

To be accredited initially all applicants must meet the following criteria:

Criteria marked * are core units and must form part of the applicant's application assessment for this level of certification

Category A (40 points each)

- Supervisor reference*
- SOCAP Australia Ethics for Complaints Handlers*
- Training course attendance and successful completion – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia

- Conference attendance and certificate of attainment – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia

Category B (20 points each)

- Peer Reference
- On the job training
- Mentoring of workplace activity/team/individual – up to 10 hours within two years
- In house training
- SOCAP Community of Practice attendance

Category C (10 points each, with no more than 30 points to be chosen from this category in each renewable period)

- Reading material
- Community activities
- Online Community activities

TOTAL – 100

3.7 For applicants maintaining their certification

To maintain and renew certification all applicants must meet the following criteria:

Criteria marked * are core units and must form part of the applicant’s application assessment for this level of certification

Category A (40 points each)

- Supervisor reference*
- Training course attendance and successful completion – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia
- Conference attendance and certificate of attainment – coursework matched to the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Professional Complaint Handling provided by SOCAP Australia or external provider, if approved by SOCAP Australia

Category B (20 points each)

- SOCAP Australia Ethics for Complaints Handlers Refresher*
- On the job training
- Mentoring of workplace activity – 10 hours in two years
- In house training
- SOCAP Community of Practice attendance

Category C (10 points each, with no more than 30 points to be chosen from this category in each renewable period)

- Peer Reference
- Reading material
- Community activities
- Online Community activities

TOTAL – 100

4 Demonstration of competencies

- 4.1 Each applicant will be expected to provide, along with the attainment and completion of training courses, conference attendance, and attendance at complaints professionals community and industry specific events, their application of knowledge, skills and ethical understandings of their competencies in their workplace.
- 4.2 This will be achieved through the provision of workplace references identified in the Application Criteria (above) as Supervisor Reference, and Peer Reference (for Entry Level initial Scheme application only).
- 4.3 The applicant will provide written references from a supervisor (and a peer, where this is applicable) who have known them for more than one year to the effect that they are of good character, meet the competencies and display emotional intelligence
- 4.4 The Supervisor's Reference will rate the Knowledge, Skills and Ethical Understandings of the applicant's competencies and give examples of how these competencies have been demonstrated in their workplace. (A Supervisor Reference Template, and a Peer Reference Template forms part of the Complaints Professional Application form).
- 4.5 Applicants must disclose any serious criminal conviction which may influence their capacity to meet the competencies of the framework and demonstrate these in the workplace.
- 4.6 Applicants must comply with any relevant legislation, professional standards and any other requirements that may be relevant to them.

5 Assessment

How the certification will be assessed

The applications for initial certification will be assessed by SOCAP Australia through the following methods:

- 5.1 Supervisor Reference - Each reference will be completed using a set template to identify and rate the applicant's skills against the key competencies as listed in the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Complaint Professionals. A SOCAP assessor will assess each reference for accuracy and validity and if required further checks will be undertaken.
- 5.2 Ethics for Complaints Handlers Course and Ethics for Complaints Handlers Refresher (for renewed applications) and achieve a pass grade to receive certification. Where this has not been achieved the SOCAP assessor will reassess the applicant.
- 5.3 Peer Reference - Each reference will be completed using a set template to identify and rate the applicant's characteristics against the key competencies as listed in the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Complaint Professionals. A SOCAP assessor will assess each reference for accuracy and validity and if required further checks will be undertaken.

Maintaining certification

How will the certification will be assessed?

The applicants who are renewing their certification will send their supporting documentation to SOCAP Australia.

- 5.4 Proof of attendance and completion of each SOCAP approved training course, whether hosted in house, internally, or via external provider.
- 5.5 For each SOCAP provided training course, all attendees will be required to complete an assessment at the conclusion of the training course during the event.
- 5.6 Supervisor reference - Each reference will be completed using a set template to identify and rate the applicant's skills and demonstration of these in the workplace against the key competencies as listed in the Australian Competency and Ethical Framework for Complaint Professionals to determine the level of skills of the applicant against the identified criteria the applicant has chosen as CPD. A SOCAP Australia assessor will assess each reference for accuracy and validity and if required further checks will be undertaken.
- 5.7 All CPD chosen criteria will be assessed by the SOCAP assessor to determine the match against Framework competencies, and can be chosen from the criteria list in the Scheme application form, and at any time can be discussed with the SOCAP Australia office to determine merit and criteria value.

5.8 Ethics for Complaints Handlers – All applicants will be required to undertake the Ethics for Complaints Handlers Refresher (for renewed applications) and achieve a pass grade to receive certification. Where this has not been achieved the SOCAP Australia assessor will reassess the applicant.

5.9 Corporate Training Option

Where an applicant is a staff member of a SOCAP Australia corporate member and training criteria may be provided by the host company, all training can be utilised as certification criteria leading to certification points to this scheme, where such Corporate workplace learning options, including on-the-job duties, in house courses, programs, seminars, workshops and experiences, have been matched to the Framework competencies and approved by SOCAP Australia prior to the applicant submitting their application. SOCAP Australia is also able to work with members to assist in the development of corporate internal course work to match the Framework, deliver course work, train in house staff trainers and deliver in house tailored options for effective certification models for each member. Call the SOCAP Australia Office for more information 02 8095 6426.

5.10 SOCAP Australia Assessors

The SOCAP Australia Complaints Professional Certification Scheme (SOCAP CP) Assessor/s have been appointed through a selection process based on consumer affairs, complaints management, dispute resolution and workplace training criteria. The selection panel comprises the SOCAP Australia Board and the SOCAP Australia Chief Executive Officer. The Selection Panel, Selection Criteria and Assessor/s are reviewed annually. The SOCAP CP Assessor is an independent operator, contracted by SOCAP Australia for the purposes of assessing the applications for certification for the SOCAP Australia Complaints Professional Certification Scheme.

This SOCAP CP Assessor process includes the:

- Authentication of application documentation through review of information, which may include additional communication including email and telephone correspondence with the applicant and/or applicant supervisor
- Assessment of demonstration of competencies through review of information, which may include additional communication including email and telephone correspondence with the applicant and/or applicant supervisor
- Referral to SOCAP Australia for Certification administration
- Referral to SOCAP Australia for review with applicant (see Application Form for *Request for Further Assessment or Application Denied*)

6 Service Fees

There is a service fee* for application and certification to the Scheme payable to SOCAP Australia and this fee is based on an applicant's SOCAP Australia membership.

Application to the scheme is available to all complaints professionals, and application and certification, will also require membership of SOCAP Australia at the same time as submission of an application for non-SOCAP Australia members. This may include additional fees and charges per application.

6.1 SOCAP Australia Individual Membership – Scheme application fee - \$165 per application.

6.2 SOCAP Australia Individual Membership – Scheme renewal fee - \$165 per application

6.3 SOCAP Australia Corporate Membership – Scheme application fee - \$165 per application.

6.4 SOCAP Australia Corporate Membership – Scheme renewal fee - \$165 per application

**Scheme service fees and charges are subject to change and each applicant should check the SOCAP Australia website and the Scheme application form for current charges prior to submitting an application.*

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