

## Gestalt Therapy Brisbane Policy No 3 Overview of Procedures for Complaints and Grievances

<b>Informal Resolution of Difference</b>		
<b>Informal Process</b>	<p>If a person has a complaint about any aspect of the training or how he or she has been treated he or she is encouraged to talk directly with the person involved.</p> <p><i>Please note a person may wish to skip this Informal Process and move immediately into the Formal Grievance Process.</i></p> <p>A Statement about handling grievances relating to the trainer-student relationship follows this overview.</p>	<p>The Director, trainer or staff member is to listen to the complaint from the person and to respond using the tools of conflict resolution. Directors, trainers and staff members are requested to work towards a resolution of the process. They may need to draw on further resources to do this.</p> <p>Towards the end of this informal process, the Director, trainer or staff member will ask the person who has made the complaint if he or she is satisfied with the resolution. If the person expressed they he or she is not satisfied the Director, trainer or staff member will invite the person into the formal Grievance Process as described in Policy No 3 GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE. A copy of this Policy will be given to the person making the complaint.</p>
<b>Formal Grievance Process as described in Policy No 3 Grievance Policy and Procedure</b>		
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Stage</b>	<p>The Complainant communicates his/her concern in writing to a staff member, trainer or Director stating that he or she has entered into a formal Grievance Procedure. The complainant will describe the nature of the grievance.</p>	<p>The Directors are informed that a complaint has been made formal.</p> <p>The complainant and the staff member, trainer or Director work towards a resolution of the process. They may need to draw on further resources to do this.</p> <p>The Directors will make every effort to make a decision within fourteen days. This decision will be communicated to the Complainant together with an invitation to take the next step in the Formal Grievance Process as described in Policy No 3.</p>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Stage</b>	<p>The Complainant submits the complaint in writing to the Chair, Academic Governance Body, Gestalt Therapy Brisbane and ask that the matter be dealt with at meeting of this committee.</p>	<p>On receiving such a letter the Chair will call for a meeting of the Academic Governance Body (AGB) within a reasonable time, normally within 30 days of receipt of the complaint. Every effort will be made to make a decision within 30 days. <i>(The GTB AGB will consider establishing a Grievance Resolution committee to handle these complaints).</i></p> <p>The Chair will communicate the decision to the complainant together with an invitation to take the next step in the Formal Grievance Process as described in Policy No 3.</p>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Stage</b>	<p>The Complainant communicates to Chair, Academic Governance Body and requests that the matter be dealt with through an external dispute resolution process by the persons appointed by the Directors for that purpose.</p>	<p>One of the following external resolution facilitators are contracted by GTB to deal with the grievance Queensland; Lyn Scott of Diamond Wing Solutions: Beth Mayne of Wynnum West. Sydney: Jon Graham <a href="mailto:jon_graham@bigpond.com">jon_graham@bigpond.com</a> Mediate Today <a href="http://www.mediate.com.au">www.mediate.com.au</a></p> <p>Complaints will be addressed within 30 days and the results communicated to the complainant together with details of the appropriate legal bodies from which he/she can seek further assistance or advice.</p>

## **Statement regarding the handling of grievances relating to the Trainer/Director-Student relationship**

Ratified by the Directors of Gestalt Therapy Brisbane August 2010

Ratified by the Directors of GTS 1 February, 2011

Gestalt Therapy Brisbane acknowledges that the most common form of complaint that will emerge for the Institute will result from a breakdown in the relationship between the trainer/Director and student.

GTB wishes to acknowledge that this break down in relationship between trainer/director and student needs to be addressed in a sensitive and comprehensive manner and that resolution strategies must be cognisant of the power issues that are inherent in the trainer – student relationship. GTB acknowledges that trainers and directors have a position of authority within the training programme in that they observe, assess and give feedback to students on their progress within the training. They also make recommendations as to a student's suitability within the programme.

Accordingly GTB makes known to its students its willingness to address the issues of students in a supportive and professional manner. It does this verbally when working with students and in written form in the Student Handbook. GTB also makes public the student's right to take their complaint to GTB's formal Grievance Procedure.

Firstly, GTB works towards the resolution of conflict through the Informal Resolution of Difference processes.

Students are invited to bring their complaints to the person involved or if this is difficult to another trainer or one of the Directors.

When a student has approached a trainer/director with a complaint the trainer/director encourages the student to voice his or her complaint. When this is difficult for the student a trainer/director other than the person to whom the complaint is directed may assist the student to voice the complaint. A student will be supported to take the issue of his or her complaint to personal therapy in order that he or she may heighten awareness of the issues involved and the matter he or she wishes to voice.

A trainer/ director who is involved in a breakdown of relationship with a student is supported by another trainer and/or one of the Directors in order that this trainer/Director may work appropriately towards conflict resolution.

Appropriate time will be put aside for the communication and resolution of the conflict.

Resolution of the conflict may involve a process of facilitation of communication between the persons involved by another trainer/Director. The person chosen must be an agreeable person to both persons involved in the conflict.

The student and trainer may bring a third party with them to the resolution process.

If the breakdown in relationship between the trainer/director and student cannot be resolved through the above informal resolution process the student and/or trainer will be asked if they wish to enter into the formal Grievance Procedure and both will be given a copy of GTB's Policy No 3, Grievance Policy and Procedure and information as to how to activate a formal Grievance Procedure.

## **Statement regarding the handling of complaints relating to Trainers and Staff Members**

Ratified by the Directors of Gestalt Therapy Brisbane August 2010

Ratified by the Directors of GTS 1 February, 2011

Gestalt Therapy Brisbane acknowledges that at times complaints will arise from trainers, staff and guest trainers contracted by GTB. Please note that any staff performance management processes will be dealt with separately from this complaints process.

GTB wishes to acknowledge that any break down in relationship between a trainer and staff member and GTB, its trainers, directors or committee members needs to be addressed in a sensitive and comprehensive manner and that resolution strategies must be cognisant of the power issues that are inherent in the trainer/staff – Institute relationship. GTB acknowledges that the directors have a position of authority within the training programme in that they contract, observe, give feedback and make payments for work completed to trainers and staff members.

Accordingly GTB makes known to its trainers and staff its willingness to address their issues in a supportive and professional manner. It does this verbally when working with trainers and staff and in written form in the Staff Handbook. GTB also makes public the trainer and staff member's right to take their complaint to GTB's formal Grievance Procedure.

Firstly, GTB works towards the resolution of conflict through the Informal Resolution of Difference processes.

Trainers and staff are invited to bring their complaints to the person involved or if this is difficult to another trainer or one of the Directors.

When a trainer or staff member has approached a director with a complaint the director encourages the trainer or staff member to voice his or her complaint. When this is difficult for the trainer or staff member the director other than the person to whom the complaint is directed may assist the trainer or staff member to voice the complaint. A trainer or staff member will be supported to take the issue of his or her complaint to personal therapy in order that he or she may heighten awareness of the issues involved and the matter he or she wishes to voice.

A trainer/ director who is involved in a breakdown of relationship with a trainer or staff member is supported by another trainer and/or one of the Directors in order that this trainer/Director may work appropriately towards conflict resolution.

Appropriate time will be put aside for the communication and resolution of the conflict.

Resolution of the conflict may involve a process of facilitation of communication between the persons involved by another trainer/Director. The person chosen must be an agreeable person to both persons involved in the conflict.

The trainer or staff member may bring a third party with them to the resolution process.

If the breakdown in relationship between the trainer/staff member and trainer/director cannot be resolved through the above informal resolution process the trainer or staff member will be asked if they wish to enter into the formal Grievance Procedure and both will be given a copy of GTB's Policy No 3, Grievance Policy and Procedure and information as to how to activate a formal Grievance Procedure.

## Policy No 3

### GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Ratified by the Directors of Gestalt Therapy Brisbane August 2010

Ratified by the Directors of GTS 1 February, 2011

#### Overview

Gestalt Therapy Brisbane (GTB) is concerned about maintaining the highest levels of quality and integrity of its courses and administrative practices. Accordingly the Institute operates with a set of Grievance Procedures set out in this policy that students or people seeking to enrol in any of GTB's programmes and/or accredited higher education courses are entitled and encouraged to use when necessary. A copy of GTB's Grievance Policy and Procedure will be given to prospective students on request or at the time of interview. A copy of the policy will be given to all students in their Student Handbook. This policy will also be available to students on the GTB's Website, [www.gestaltinstitute.com.au](http://www.gestaltinstitute.com.au) The grievance procedures detailed in this policy document are utilized for **both non-academic and academic grievance issues**.

All students of GTB or those seeking to enrol in a course of study with GTB are entitled to access the grievance procedures set out in this policy, regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the student's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

The complainant and/or the respondent in a grievance process are permitted to be accompanied and assisted by a third party such as a family member, friend, counselor or other professional support person if they so desire at any stage throughout the process. GTB will not bear the cost of any external consultant that the complainant invites to join her/him in this process.

The complainant and the respondent will not be victimized or discriminated against in any of the three stages of addressing a grievance as set out in this policy.

Records of grievances and their outcomes will be kept strictly confidential and filed in a separate file (not kept on the student or staff file) and stored in the office of the GTB for a period of five years. Parties to the complaint will be allowed supervised access to these records.

The grievance procedures have **three stages** at which a complaint may be addressed. Each stage is free of cost. Complainants and/or respondents will also be provided with reasons and full explanations in writing for decisions and actions taken at every stage of the grievance process if this is requested by them. The complainant and/or the respondent are permitted to be accompanied and assisted by a third party at any stage throughout the process.

In the **first instance**, complaints should be discussed with the person/s involved in an informal process. However, if this is impracticable, complainants should communicate his/her concerns with a trainer who is delivering the programme or one of the Director of Gestalt Therapy Brisbane or Gestalt Therapy Sydney. The Directors are:

- Greer White. (Brisbane & Sydney)
- Forrest James (Brisbane & Sydney)
- Ashleigh Woolridge (Sydney)

This arrangement is free of charge. Every effort will be made to make a decision within fourteen days.

The **second stage** of the process at which a complaint is addressed as follows:

If unsatisfied with the response to the complaint or the time taken to resolve the matter, the complainant may submit the complaint in writing to the Chair, Academic Governance Body, Gestalt Therapy Brisbane and ask that the matter be dealt with at meeting of this committee. On receiving such a letter the Chair will call for a meeting of the Academic Governance Body within a reasonable time, normally within 30 days of receipt of the complaint. Every effort will be made to make a decision within 30 days.

The **third stage** of the process at which a complaint is addressed is as follows:

If not satisfied with the decision as communicated by the Chair, Academic Governance Body the complainant may request that the matter be dealt with through an external dispute resolution process by the person/body appointed by the provider for that purpose. The details of this person/body are as follows:

In Queensland

Lyn Scott of Diamond Wing Solutions and Beth Mayne of Wynnum West.

In Sydney

Jon Graham [jon\\_graham@bigpond.com](mailto:jon_graham@bigpond.com) Mediate Today [www.mediate.com.au](http://www.mediate.com.au)

Complaints will be addressed within 30 days.

Where a student or potential student requests that a grievance be dealt with through an external dispute resolution process one of the above external reviewers will be appointed by the Directors of the Institute to investigate the grievance issues fully. The external reviewer will be contracted to interview the student or potential student and representatives from GTB who are involved in the grievance. They will be contracted to write a report on the matters at hand and to make a recommendation as to how the grievance can be resolved. The result of the external investigation will be communicated to the student or potential student within 30 days. The costs of this dispute resolution process and writing of the report and recommendations will be born by GTB and will be free of charge to the complainant. GTB will not bear the cost of any external professional outside of the described process that the complainant asks to engage in the process or consults about the process.

If one of the external reviewers make recommendations in relation to a grievance they have reviewed, thus external review persons will forward those recommendations to the Directors of the Institute within 14 days. The Directors will ensure that the recommendations are implemented within 30 days.

The Gestalt Therapy Brisbane recognizes that complaints can be of an academic or non academic nature.

**Academic-Related Grievances** refers to complaints on issues such as admissions, credit for prior study, student assessment, academic grades, curriculum and other course-related matters. All students of GTB can use these procedures to submit a grievance about an academic matter.

**Non-Academic Grievances** refers to grievances on three levels. Firstly, it deals with administrative matters such as institutional practices, financial issues, resources, marketing and access. Secondly it deals with issues of public behaviour, and the relationships that develop between and among colleagues, students, and members of the public. Finally it deals with professional practice and other ethical or practice issues covered by the Institute's Ethical Principles. These principles are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Gestalt Therapy Brisbane's Ethical Principles

1	The working relationship between Directors, staff member, student and clients is governed ethically. It is a relationship, which is respectful, and valuing of each person who is part of it and the member has the primary responsibility for maintaining the ethical framework of that relationship;
2	Directors and staff members work in the best interests and for the welfare of students and clients;

3	Directors and staff members work within the limits of their competence, monitoring their effectiveness and recognizing the need for their on-going professional development;
4	Directors and staff members demonstrate integrity and openness to their students and clients, and are able to separate themselves from the relationship for self-reflection;
5	Directors and staff members do not exploit or harm their students or clients;
6	Directors and staff members respect the dignity, worth and uniqueness of all individuals and affirm their autonomy;
7	Directors and staff members recognize and respect diversity and differences between people. Directors and staff members do not practice, condone or abet unjustified discrimination or oppressive behaviour;
8	Directors and staff members respect privacy and preserve the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their work;
9	Directors and staff members work within the law; and,
10	Within the broader context, the above ethical principles are manifest whenever applicable in all the professional activities and relationships engaged in by Directors and staff members.

Where the grievance cannot be resolved by the grievance processes described above, the student or potential student will be advised of the appropriate legal bodies from which he/she can seek further assistance or advice. Costs that are incurred by students or potential students in following through any external legal body will not be met by Gestalt Therapy Brisbane.

1. GANZ Ethics Committee: If trainees are dissatisfied with the results of their grievance complaint or the way the grievance process has been conducted they can make a formal complaint to GANZ (Gestalt Australia and New Zealand). GANZ is the professional association for Gestalt therapists and the training programme offered by GTB is accredited through GANZ. This complaint may also find its way to PACFA (Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia) as GANZ is a member of PACFA;
2. Mediation:

**Queensland:** The Department of Justice and Attorney-General runs a number of Dispute Resolution Centres throughout Queensland. You can request mediation at one of these Centres in an effort to resolve your problem, however the Institute will need to consent to being involved, and any outcomes of mediation will not be legally binding. You can find out more about mediation at: <http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/mediation/home.htm>, or by telephoning: (07) 3239 6269 in Brisbane or 1800 017 288 from the rest of Queensland.

**New South Wales:** Mediation: The NSW Attorney-General Department runs a number of Dispute Resolution Centres throughout NSW. You can request mediation at one of these Centres in an effort to resolve your problem. However Gestalt Therapy Sydney will need to consent to being involved, and any outcomes of mediation will not be legally binding.

3. Small Claims Tribunal: If your dispute involves trainee fees or other charges (including where you feel that the course delivered did not match the description given when you enrolled), and the total sum involved is less than \$7500, you may be able to bring a claim before the Small Claims Tribunal. Lawyers are not involved in Small Claims Tribunal hearings, and costs are generally limited to filing fees of less than \$100.

**Queensland:** You can find out more about the Tribunal at: <http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/courts/factsht/factsheet1.htm> or by telephoning (07) 3247 4578. If you are outside Brisbane you should contact your nearest Magistrates Court or community legal centre.

**New South Wales:** You can find out more about the Tribunal at: [http://www.cttt.nsw.gov.au/Dispute\\_resolution/Conciliation\\_process.html](http://www.cttt.nsw.gov.au/Dispute_resolution/Conciliation_process.html) or by telephoning (02) 9641 6477. If you are outside Sydney you should contact your nearest Magistrates Court or community legal centre.

4. Anti-Discrimination Tribunal: If your problem relates to the way you have been treated by your college or institute due to matters such as your sex, pregnancy, age, race, impairment, religion, political belief or lawful sexual orientation, you should contact the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal for further advice:

**Queensland:** <http://www.adcq.qld.gov.au/tribunal/guide.html>, telephone: (07) 3239 6408.

**New South Wales:** <http://www.awna.com.au/index.htm> or telephone: 1300 766 700.

5. Legal action: For information on taking legal action to resolve your problem, you should contact your solicitor. The Office of Higher Education Queensland Department of Education or the Department of Education and Training, New South Wales cannot advise you in relation to this.
6. Writing to the Office of Higher Education, Queensland Education and the Department of Education and Training, New South Wales through which GTB's courses are accredited. If you have exhausted the internal grievance procedures of your college or institute, and still feel that your problem has not been adequately addressed (or there are problems with the process) you can take your grievance to the course accrediting body through:

**Queensland:** The Manager, Accreditation, Office of Higher Education, PO Box 15033, City East, QLD 4002. Fax it to: (07) 3237 1444 Email: [Enquiries.OFFICEHE@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:Enquiries.OFFICEHE@qed.qld.gov.au)

**New South Wales:** The Manager, Quality and Regulation Unit, Higher Education, NSW Department of Education and Training, GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001; Fax it to: (02) 9561 8656 ; Email: [highered@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:highered@det.nsw.edu.au)

This policy is communicated to academic staff and support staff through the GTB Staff Handbook. The Directors of the Institute Dr Greer White and Forrest James are responsible for the training of staff in the application of the policy. Each member of GTB's Staff have been informed of GTB's grievance procedures in writing and have been directed to inform the student or potential student of GTB's grievance procedures in the event of a student or potential student expressing a grievance about any element of the programme or their treatment within the programme. Training in this grievance procedure will occur for all staff at the beginning of each academic year.

This policy is set out in the Student Handbook and the GTB policy manual.

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other higher education provider policies or under statute or any other law.