



<b>Code and Number</b>	<b>B.1.2</b>
<b>Title of Document</b>	<b>Customer Service</b>

### POLICY

In accordance with ACN's Customer Charter (Appendix A) all members of staff provide services to customers either directly or indirectly and must meet the needs of customers in a professional and ethical manner with courteous and efficient service.

As personal information may be provided by customers during any exchange, all staff are bound by ACN's Privacy Policy in the collection and protection of that information.

ACN is committed to:

- politeness – the use of good manners in all interactions
- responsiveness – meet agreed timeframes and follow up on all queries
- professionalism – being objective and knowledgeable and demonstrating integrity
- understanding – customers and their business
- confidentiality – respecting the confidentiality of customer information
- transparency – processes are clear, consistent, easy to access and documented.

Our customers are individuals and organisations to which ACN provides services including but not limited to:

- existing fellows and members
- students (past and present)
- awards and grant recipients
- external education service providers
- potential students
- potential members
- general nursing enquiries
- corporate organisations
- other staff
- key stakeholders e.g. governments, Health Departments, nursing and health organisations
- external groups who use ACN venues.

### PROCEDURE

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## 1. General Principles

Staff will:

- demonstrate to the customer at all times respect, courtesy, patience, attentiveness, consideration and sensitivity that is appropriate to the age, culture and linguistic background of the individual or group
- listen to what customers have to say and determine the exact nature of the request
- adequately identify customer or member or scholar or student to meet privacy requirements. Identification should be obtained as follows:
  - Members making a general enquiry by phone: member number and date of birth
  - Members making changes to current banking records: member number, date of birth plus one of either residential address/email address/mobile phone number
  - Members wanting to set-up direct debit or change payment method: member number, date of birth plus two of either residential address/email address/mobile phone number
  - Scholarship holders are identified in the database by their name, sensitive information i.e. payments, require additional identification: date of birth and/or address
  - Students current with general enquiry: student ID number, address and date of birth
  - Students current wanting to withdraw/defer/change address/change timeline/subjects etc.: mailing address and date of birth
    - Once identified and if student requesting update and/or change information it must be confirmed in writing/email. No changes are made to student records without written confirmation.
- respond to customer enquiries promptly and efficiently in a timely manner
- act with integrity and honesty when dealing with customers
- make every effort to see customers with appointments on time and advise if delayed
- assist with further enquiries. A contact name, telephone number and an address is to be included in all written correspondence.
- if unavailable or away from the office, return email messages promptly upon returning
  - If away from the office for two or more days an “out of office” message is to be left on outlook and the telephone.
- provide the customer with advice and other information that is accurate, clear, concise, reliable and in plain language
- take appropriate action and respond in accordance with organisational policies and procedures with minimal inconvenience to the customer
- make decisions using processes that are consultative, impartial and ethical
- adopt fair, lawful and appropriate procedures when making decisions, carrying out activities and performing services
- be sensitive to any language or other communication difficulties experienced by customers when providing advice and other information
- be sensitive to any customers with disabilities when providing advice and other information
- present a positive image of ACN to the broader health community and the public
- act in accordance with the law and ACN’s Code of Conduct.

## 2. Managing Telephone Enquiries

There is an interactive menu aligned with the two main office numbers where callers are able to make selections as follows:

- If you know the extension you wish to speak to enter it now
- Membership enquiries including payments dial 1
- Education enquiries dial 2
- Reception dial 0 or hold the line

Membership 1800 - the two membership staff phones will ring, if no answer after the 7<sup>th</sup> ring then caller will go to mailbox.

Scholarships 1800 – designated extension in the ring group will receive call, if no answer after three rings it will move to next extension, if no answer, or line is busy of after seven rings call will switch to mailbox.

Reception – will ring three times, if busy then will forward to Customer Services, after seven rings and then goes to all customer services team members. If night switch is on, it will ring three times and then call will switch to mailbox.

Staff will answer all calls promptly and efficiently, referring calls to the appropriate officer quickly and providing clear and concise information in response to caller enquiries.

The officer to whom the enquiry has been passed will:

- respond that they have received the message
- respond to (or update) the enquirer within 24 hours.

Staff will:

- at all times identify themselves by name when they answer the telephone or make a call
- answer the phone in a timely manner
- be warm and friendly as their voice is the first impression for the caller
- speak slowly and clearly and keep their tone moderate
- welcome callers politely and courteously
- if unavailable or away from the office, return telephone messages promptly upon returning
- be careful with language –slang, jargon or swearing is not to be used
- make sure their voice is positive and helpful even if they don't know the answer, 'let me find out for you' or similar is the correct response in this instance
- deal with the call, redirect the call, provide the caller with option to leave a message on the recipient's voice mail or take a clear message from the caller as required
- ensure all messages include details of the caller's name, contact number and message along with details of who took the message, date and time
- give clear advice to the caller about when the caller can expect a response when calls cannot be fully responded to immediately
- put calls on hold for the minimum amount of time possible
- deal with customers calmly, courteously and patiently, even when the callers are angry, aggressive or distressed. Remain polite and seek help if necessary
- answer unattended telephones in the absence of colleagues whenever practical
- respond to telephone messages within one business day whenever practical
- change voicemail message(s) when absent from the office for any period of time, for example external all day meeting, state/territory based public holiday or leave.

The key elements of service are outlined in Appendix B *Customer Response Scenarios*.

### **3. Managing Written Enquiries**

Responses to correspondence (letters, facsimiles and email messages) will provide clear and concise responses promptly.

ACN endeavours to:

- *acknowledge* receipt of written correspondence:
  - email within one working day
  - mail within three working days
    - some customer requests will be required to move through official approval/review processes and this may affect the timing of full responses.

In this event customers are to be regularly updated on the progress of their request

- provide a response to all other matters within five working days of receiving the correspondence unless further investigation is required
- respond to student progression matters and queries relating to formal award programs as per the guidelines provided in the *Student Management Policy*
- ensure that all outward correspondence includes the name and contact details of the officer dealing with the matter and appropriate file reference
- use language that is clear and concise.

#### **4. Managing Face to Face Enquiries**

ACN recognises the need to promptly serve members of the public who come to ACN's premises to seek information or transact business and will endeavour to have officers available to the public during office hours and at designated times.

ACN endeavours to:

- make staff available for meetings by prior arrangement
- attend to members of the public at the main reception desk (Sydney and Canberra offices) and the Library reception desk (Sydney office) in a professional and helpful manner and within five (5) minutes of arrival
- promptly advise staff if there is a member of the public in the main reception area for an appointment
- provide a range of information for public inspection in customer service areas
- speak clearly and deal with visitors calmly, courteously and patiently, even when visitors are angry, aggressive or distressed

#### **5. Managing Complaints**

All complaints are to be registered on the Complaints Register. Only managers and executive directors are able to modify and view the content on this register. Any complaints received by a staff member must be reported to their respective manager and/or executive director.

The respective manager/executive director is to be made aware of any complaint/grievance as soon as possible. If a formal response is required, this will be made at the executive management level after being referred by a manager. The executive director will decide whether the CEO must be informed of the complaint. If the complaint is received from an ACN member it is to be recorded against their iMIS record by membership services.

Relevant documentation regarding the complaint should be kept and filed such as:

- a copy of the complaint (e.g.: email/letter or memo outlining the phone conversation)
- any customer record
- any other relevant documentation
- record any complaints where offensive language has been used or threat of legal action

Student complaints (and appeals) are to be managed in line with the Student Management Policy. Scholarship applicant and recipient complaints are to be managed and recorded in line with the Scholarships Customer Service policy.

#### *Resolving complaints*

When a complaint is received, thank them for raising the matter with you. Treat them with genuine empathy, courtesy, patience, honesty and fairness. Respond to the complaint quickly. Tell them how you will handle it and when to expect a response. To show that you clearly understand their complaint:

- familiarise yourself with any background information before you speak to them, check internal records, speak to staff and check how their version of events compares with the customer's
- listen carefully and do not jump to conclusions, lay blame or become defensive
- ask questions to clarify the situation
- summarise back to the customer your understanding of the problem
- inform the customer what will happen next

ACN staff are encouraged to adopt a solution-focused approach by actively involving the person lodging the complaint in the process. Ensure you take all promised action as promptly as possible.

When you find a solution, tell the complainant and check they are happy with the resolution. Tell them how you will prevent the problem arising again.

Make sure the Complaints Register is updated.

## **6. Dealing with difficult customers**

ACN staff are expected to treat customers with courtesy and respect at all times and to make every reasonable effort to address the customer's needs even when the customer is rude or difficult. There may be a small percentage of customers whose issues cannot be dealt with to their satisfaction. This may be due to refusal by the customer to accept an organisational decision, demands placed on the organisation which are not within our scope or resources to meet, or a level of rudeness or aggression shown to staff by the customer that makes it unsafe or unreasonable to proceed.

Where the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or delegate is satisfied that every effort has been made by staff to address a customer's needs, a decision may be made that there is no reasonable prospect of reaching a position where a particular customer is satisfied with ACN's actions and service. In such a case the CEO or delegate may decide to stop or limit responses to the customer in relation to the issue in question. This may include:

- refusal to accept telephone calls or make appointments with the customer
- a request that all future communication be in writing
- provision of responses to queries, information requests only where a new issue has been presented
- identification of a single staff member as a contact person through whom all communication must occur

Where the CEO has made such a decision, this will be communicated in writing to the customer and the customer may be given the opportunity to make representations to ACN about the proposed course of action. In addition, the CEO will advise relevant staff of any correspondence issued in relation to such a decision and will continue to monitor any further contact with the customer over the issue.

### **6.1 Customers who are rude, abusive or aggressive**

Rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour may include rude or otherwise vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse of a personal or general nature, intimidating, threatening or offensive behaviour, physical violence against property or physical violence against a person.

If, in the opinion of any staff member, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made in telephone conversations or interviews, the staff member may advise the caller that if the behaviour continues, the conversation or interview will be escalated to a manager. The manager would then either:

- a. resolve the situation; **or**
- b. should the behaviour continue, terminate the conversation or interview.

Where a conversation or interview is terminated, the manager would then inform their Executive Manager of the incident, make a diary or file note of the event and determine what action should be taken with respect to the customer's behaviour. If necessary, the matter can be escalated to the CEO. If in the opinion of the CEO, any correspondence to ACN that contains personal abuse, inflammatory statements or material clearly intended to intimidate, a decision will be made as to what if any action including legal action will be taken.

In the event that the caller is extremely rude or threatening to the staff member, the staff member has the right to terminate the conversation if unable to calm the caller sufficiently to escalate to a manager.

It is recommended that this type of incident also be Complaints Register along with any decision/outcome.

## **7. Student Grievance Handling – Academic and Non Academic**

A grievance can be defined as a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of ACN's services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters, such as:

- the enrolment, induction/orientation process;
- the quality of education provided;
- academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study;
- handling of personal information and access to personal records;
- the way someone has been treated.

These grievance procedures are designed to ensure that ACN responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term "complainant" applies to both current students of ACN and persons seeking to enrol with ACN.

Complainants are entitled to access the grievance procedures set out in this policy regardless of the location of the campus of ACN at which the grievance has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence.

Complainants are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. There are staff available to assist the resolution of issues at this level. Complainants may raise an informal grievance by contacting Administration in person or by phoning (02) 9745 7500 or 1800 265 534, and asking to speak to Manager Customer Services. Even though it is not mandatory for complainants to raise a grievance informally, it is highly recommended.

This procedure can be utilised by complainants to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study. Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all other matters including grievances in relation to personal information that ACN holds in relation to an individual.

For additional information relating to procedures for handling Student Grievances please see policy E.1.13 Student Grievance Handling – Academic and Non Academic.

## **8. Managing anonymous customer feedback**

Customers can provide anonymous feedback to ACN via the website. This feedback, however, can be difficult to investigate (often staff need to obtain more information from the person providing the feedback) and for obvious reasons it can be impossible to contact the person making the complaint and communicate the findings of ACN.

ACN will not normally investigate anonymous feedback unless the issue places public safety at risk or raises a serious/legal matter and there is sufficient information in the feedback to carry out an investigation.

Where possible It is recommended that this type of be logged in the appropriate section of the Improvement Register along with any outcome.

## **9. Confidentiality and privacy**

ACN is committed to the protection of customer personal information. All dealings with customers must abide by the NSW *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the *Privacy Act 1998 (CTH)* and the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012*, except when qualified by any relevant Codes of Practice, and will underpin all matters related to personal information at ACN. ACN also has a Privacy Policy (A.3) in accordance with that Act.

## **10. Privacy Complaints**

Individuals, who feel that ACN may have breached their Privacy or ACN's Privacy Policy, are to be advised to contact ACN in writing either by email, fax or letter addressed to:

The Privacy Officer  
Australian College of Nursing  
PO Box 219  
DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600  
Fax: 02 6282 3565  
Email: [acn@acn.edu.au](mailto:acn@acn.edu.au)

## **Other Feedback Channels**

Individuals may also use the online feedback form available on the ACN website which forwards to [acn@acn.edu.au](mailto:acn@acn.edu.au) - monitored by the Manager Corporate Support who will forward to appropriate area for action.

Student Grievances are to be submitted in writing, marked attention to Manager Education Business Operations and sent to [studentcomplaints@acn.edu.au](mailto:studentcomplaints@acn.edu.au). The Manager Education Business Operations or their nominee is responsible for the investigation and resolution of these grievances.

## **11. Records**

In all of the situations referred to in this policy adequate documentary records must be made and maintained on the appropriate ACN file and the corresponding sections in the Improvement Register updated.

Where the CEO or delegate determines to limit a customer's access to ACN in any of the ways specified in this policy, staff will be advised as soon as possible of the relevant circumstances and the action taken and forward such advice, where appropriate, to the relevant state/territory Ombudsman for information.

## APPENDICES

[Appendix One Customer Charter](#)

[Appendix Two Customer Response Scenarios](#)

## REFERENCES

[Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1998 \(CTH\)](#)

[Privacy Amendment \(Enhancing Privacy Protection\) Act 2012](#)

[Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 \(NSW\)](#)

[Privacy Amendment \(Private Sector\) Act 2000 \(CTH\)](#)

## RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PRD.2 Governance Charter

A.1 Code of Conduct

A.3 Privacy Policy

B.1.2.1 Feedback from members, students and visitors

E.1.3 Student Management Policy

E.1.13 Student Grievance Handling – Academic and Non Academic

F.3.2 Scholarships Customer Service

## OTHER

ACN Improvement Register

ACN Complaints Register

<b>Responsibility for Review</b>	Manager Customer Services/Manager Corporate Support
<b>Ratification</b>	Executive Leadership Team
<b>Date of Issue</b>	September 2013
<b>Date Last Reviewed</b>	September 2018
<b>Date Next Review Due</b>	June 2021



## CUSTOMER CHARTER

ACN keeps abreast of contemporary international trends and ensures that nurses and midwives are informed and involved in the debate about and direction of the future delivery of health care both nationally and internationally.

Our customers include but are not limited to students (past and present); Board Directors; staff; fellows and members; external service providers; potential students; potential members; corporate organisations, commonwealth, state and territory health departments, nursing and health organisations and members of the community.

### Our business delivery

ACN will:

- create membership experiences that ensure personal and professional growth and development
- create learning experiences that ensure personal and professional growth and development
- provide an environment conducive to lifelong learning focused on strong relationships between service providers, customers (writers, students, lecturers, members) and the community
- continually develop products and services ensuring they are of high quality, contemporary, contain balanced content and where necessary, relevant to the nursing profession and its customers
- provide a comprehensive resource of information to address the research and learning needs of staff, members and customers
- ensure an attitude and process of continuous quality improvement in all our dealings

### Our relationships

ACN will:

- listen, investigate and respond to customer needs in a timely manner, recognising that customer loyalty depends on integrity
- see complaints as an opportunity to critique, develop and strengthen our organisation. Staff are empowered to investigate and resolve customer complaints

### Our Service Response

ACN will:

- guarantee to be available within normal business hours and where possible respond to all mail, voice mail and email enquiries within 24 hours
  - The exception is when enquiries come in on Friday afternoon and/or when ACN is closed for business.
- review, challenge and improve work practices and processes, which stand in the way of better standards of customer service
- keep personal information accurate, complete and up-to-date as notified

### Our respect for your Privacy

ACN will:

- guarantee the privacy and confidentiality of any information acquired from customers and not divulge that information to any third party for any purpose without prior consent.

## APPENDIX TWO

### CUSTOMER RESPONSE SCENARIOS

For the purpose of this appendix the term 'conversation' means telephone, the term 'contact' means face to face.

#### Standard Greetings

Telephone: *"Good morning/afternoon, Welcome to the Australian College of Nursing/Department, (name) speaking, how may I help you."*

#### Transferring Telephone Calls

- All calls for the Chief Executive Officer are to be transferred to the Executive Assistant and the caller's name announced.
- All calls transferred to any other area within ACN are to be put through to the extension/voicemail of the requested party. Where time permits announce callers name and provide a brief description of the enquiry.

#### Taking Messages

All messages are to contain all relevant information, i.e. name and contact number of caller, date and time of call, details of the enquiry, and emailed to the relevant individual as soon as practical.

#### Dealing with difficult, rude, abusive or aggressive customers

Advise the customer that if the behaviour continues, the conversation/contact will be dealt with in one of the following ways:

##### **Conversation - transfer to a manager:**

*"Unfortunately I can't help you anymore with this matter; therefore, I will transfer you to my manager."*

##### **Conversation - terminated:**

*"I can see that you are upset, however, if you continue to speak to me in this way I will have no other choice but to terminate this call."*

Terminate the conversation if the behaviour continues after the warning has been given.

*"I can see that you are upset, however, I don't feel we can discuss this matter while you are speaking to me in this way, I'm sorry but I must terminate this call."*

##### **Face to Face Contact (mainly reception at Sydney Office and Library)**

The manager should be called as well as pressing the *panic/duress* button if further assistance is required. If the duress button is pressed, then the procedure outlined in the Security Policy is to be followed.

##### **Dealing with callers who have an issue that is not directly ACN related**

Advise the customer politely that this is not an ACN matter and advise them to raise the matter to a more appropriate person/organisation – e.g. their workplace or the Union if this is appropriate.