



Subject Outline

**DFSE208 Complaints handling and
dispute resolution**

Section 1 — General information

1.1 Administrative details

Duration	Credit points	Level
One study period (12 weeks)	3	AQF5

1.2 Core or elective subject

This is an elective subject for the Diploma of Financial Services.

1.3 Delivery mode

This subject is delivered online.

1.4 Assumed knowledge

Whilst there are no prerequisites for this subject, Kaplan assumes students have previously acquired knowledge of relevance in accordance with the entry requirements, specifically via a prior qualification and/or equivalent work experience.

1.5 Course transition subject equivalence

Students may not be required to complete this subject if they have transitioned from a SIA/Finsia/Kaplan course and have completed the following subjects:

- there are no equivalences for this subject.

Section 2 — Academic details

2.1 Subject overview

Complaints handling and dispute resolution explores the process of complaints handling and dispute resolution within the context of the financial services sector. It discusses the legislative and regulatory obligations for financial services complaint handling, steps for managing conflict resolution, and use of insights from customer feedback and complaints to continuously improve organisational policies and processes.

Students will demonstrate knowledge of sources of conflict in customer relationships, techniques for undertaking difficult conversations, and developing and applying strategies to manage complaints and negotiate resolutions.

2.2 Subject learning outcomes

On successful completion of this subject, students should be able to:

1. Identify the legislative and regulatory obligations for resolving financial services complaints and disputes.
2. Describe the sources of conflict in customer relationships.
3. Discuss the conflict management and dispute resolution processes.
4. Develop strategies to effectively manage conflict, negotiate resolutions and embed insights into organisational practices.

2.3 Topic learning outcomes

Topic 1: Complaints handling in financial services

On successful completion of this topic, students should be able to:

- distinguish between a query, a complaint and a dispute
- explain the purpose of internal dispute resolution and its relationship to external dispute resolution.
- identify the main responsibilities involved in complaint intake and escalation
- apply a simple complaint-handling workflow from receipt to closure
- recognise the importance of accurate records, timeframes and clear communication.

Topic 2: Sources of conflict in customer relationships

On successful completion of this topic, students should be able to:

- identify common sources of conflict across financial services contexts
- explain how communication breakdowns, unmet expectations and service failures contribute to complaints and conflict
- describe how trust, emotion, vulnerability and power imbalance can influence customer conflict
- recognise how ethics, staff behaviour and organisational culture can contribute to or reduce conflict
- distinguish between individual, operational and systemic causes of conflict.

Topic 3: Steps in the conflict resolution process

On successful completion of this topic, students should be able to:

- explain how organisations determine an appropriate conflict resolution pathway
- describe the activities involved in investigating, assessing and resolving a customer complaint
- distinguish between informal resolution, referral, escalation and formal dispute resolution processes
- describe the stages of a conflict management and dispute resolution process
- explain how documenting outcomes and communicating next steps support effective dispute resolution.

Topic 4: Negotiating dispute resolution

On successful completion of this topic, students should be able to:

- prepare for a negotiation by identifying goals, limits and likely outcomes
- distinguish positions from underlying interests
- generate resolution options that balance fairness, practicality and customer trust
- use objective criteria to support a proposed outcome
- confirm and communicate an agreement clearly and professionally.

Topic 5: Strategies to manage difficult conversations

On successful completion of this topic, students should be able to:

- recognise signs of escalating conflict and select an appropriate de-escalation response
- adapt communication strategies to respond appropriately to challenging behaviour while maintaining clear professional boundaries.

Topic 6: Applying conflict resolution strategies

On successful completion of this topic, students should be able to:

- apply conflict resolution strategies to complex financial services scenarios
- select an appropriate response strategy, including when a hand-off or escalation is required, based on the nature, severity, complexity and risk of the issue
- justify the selected strategy using relevant evidence, organisational policy, ethical considerations and regulatory obligations.

Topic 7: Continuous improvement based on customer feedback and complaints

On successful completion of this topic, students should be able to:

- explain how complaint data can be used to identify recurring issues
- recognise when a problem requires a systemic rather than individual response
- recommend improvements to process, communication, training or governance
- describe how complaint insights support better customer outcomes
- evaluate whether a corrective action has been effective over time.

2.4 Assessment schedule

Assessment	Description	Week	Topics	Weighting	Subject learning outcomes assessed
Quiz	Online quiz of ten (10) multiple-choice questions that assess understanding of customer complaint resolution requirements and principles.	4	1 - 3	10%	LO1, LO3
Reflective Task	Written reflection drawing on communication and conflict resolution concepts to evaluate a negative consumer experience. Maximum 500 words.	6	2 - 4	20%	LO2, LO3, LO4
Oral assignment	Prepare a script and recorded presentation that examines a conflict scenario and its resolution.	10	4 - 5	20%	LO4
Assignment	Written business report on customer complaints, resolution processes, and recommendations to minimise future complaints and communicate changes. Maximum 2,500 words.	12	1 - 7	50%	LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4

Please refer to our website <www.kaplanprofessional.edu.au> to review student policies relating to your assessment, including the *Kaplan Assessment Policy* and *Academic Integrity and Conduct Policy*.

2.5 Prescribed text

There is no prescribed text for this subject. Refer to the required readings and recommended resources in the 'Learning' tab of this subject room.

2.6 Study plan

Week	Topic	Hours
1	Topic 1: Complaints handling in financial services	10
2	Topic 2: Sources of conflict in customer relationships	10
3	Topic 3: Steps in the conflict resolution process	10
4	Topic 4: Negotiating dispute resolution Quiz (10% weighting)	10
5	Topic 5: Strategies to manage difficult conversations Work on Reflective Task	10
6	Topic 6: Applying conflict resolution strategies Task (20% weighting)	10
7	Topic 7: Continuous improvement based on customer feedback and complaints	10
8	Work on Oral Assignment	10
9	Work on Oral Assignment	10
10	Work on Assignment Oral Assignment (20% weighting)	10
11	Work on Assignment	10
12	Assignment (50% weighting)	10
Total hours		120

Additional study hours (if required), dependent on knowledge and personal commitments	60 hours
Total study load, including additional study hours	180 hours