

Trustee Decision on Student Complaint

Institution: 3147 – Stenberg College

1. Introduction

The Complainant was enrolled in the Education Assistant Program [**Program**]. The Complainant filed a complaint against the Institution [**Complaint**] on February 16, 2026, after having withdrawn from the Program on November 7, 2025.

The Complainant exhausted the Institution's dispute resolution process [**DRP**] prior to filing this Complaint. The matters at issue relate to instructional delivery, academic workload and expectations, the learning environment, and the application of the tuition refund provisions.

For the reasons outlined below I find the Institution did not mislead the Complainant regarding a significant aspect of the Program and, accordingly, deny the claim.

2. Statutory Scheme

Section 23(1) of the *Private Training Act* [**PTA**] provides that, a student may file a claim against the Student Tuition Protection Fund [**Fund**] on the ground that a certified institution misled the student regarding any significant aspect of an approved program of instruction in which that student was enrolled. Claims are filed with the Trustee, being the minister or the person to whom the minister has delegated the relevant powers or duties.

Claims must be filed no later than one year after the student completed or was dismissed or withdrew from the program and only after the student has exhausted the institution's dispute resolution process.

Following receipt of the complaint, the process is as follows:

Claim the student was misled		
Who	What	When
Trustee	Gives a copy of the claim to the institution	As soon as practicable
Institution	May respond to the claim [Response]	Within 15 days of receiving a copy of the claim from the Trustee
Trustee	Gives the Response from the institution, if any, to the student	Within 15 days of receiving the Response from the institution
Student	May reply to the Response from the institution [Reply]	Within 15 days of receiving the Response from the Trustee
Trustee	Must give the Reply from the student, if any, to the institution	Within 15 days of receiving the Reply from the student
Trustee	Adjudicates the claim to determine whether any refund should be issued, and provides written reasons to the student, the institution, and the registrar.	

If a claim is approved, the Trustee may authorize payment from the Fund of all or a portion of the tuition paid to the institution by or on behalf of the student. Section 25(4) of the *Fees and Student Tuition Protection Fund Regulation* requires that payments from the Fund be directed first to the government if all or a portion of the tuition was paid using funds from a provincial or federal student assistance program, and then to the claimant.

3. Program Information

Program:	Education Assistant
Start date:	September 8, 2025
End date:	June 1, 2026
Withdrawal date:	November 7, 2025
Total charged:	\$ 14,391.50
Tuition:	\$ 13,899
Registration Fee:	\$ 150
Textbook and Supplies Fees:	\$ 373.25
Student Fee:	\$ 139.25
Tuition Reduction: First Aid Certificate	\$ 170
Amount paid to date by Complainant:	\$ 5435.75
Amount refunded to Complainant:	\$ 752.02
Amount of tuition paid to date by Complainant:	\$ 4,118.70

4. Issues

Did the institution mislead the Complainant regarding:

- (a) The instructional delivery model of the Program;
- (b) The academic workload and expectations of the Program;
- (c) The learning environment, including academic integrity policies and the use of plagiarism/AI detection tools;
- (d) The application of the Tuition Refund Policy.

5. Chronology

September 8, 2025	Program start date
November 6, 2025	Academic integrity alert issued; Complainant expresses feeling overwhelmed and is concerned about workload
November 6-7, 2025	Complainant inquires about withdrawal and financial implications; Institution provides tuition refund calculation
November 7, 2025	Complainant withdraws from Program and requests refund of an amount commensurate with her attendance
November 27, 2025	Complainant initiates DRP requesting reconsideration of tuition refund
December 4, 2025	Institution issues DRP decision confirming its position
February 16, 2026	Complainant submits Complaint

6. Analysis

The Program is an accelerated diploma program delivered by distance education (both by synchronous and asynchronous instruction). The Complainant withdrew after completing 18.81% of the Program.

The Complainant alleges she was misled regarding a significant aspect of the Program, particularly the learning environment, the volume and nature of assigned work, the adequacy of instructional materials, and the impact of academic integrity processes.

Learning Environment and Program Delivery

The Complainant submits the Program did not align with her expectations of a structured, instructor-led learning environment. She states that a substantial portion of the Program consisted of asynchronous instruction, including short narrated presentations, pre-recorded materials, and external online resources, rather than direct teaching.

She further submits that the balance between guided instruction and self-directed learning differed materially from what she understood prior to enrolment, and that this contributed to her difficulty progressing through the Program.

The Institution responds that the Program Outline provided prior to enrolment described the combined delivery model, including asynchronous coursework, independent learning, and scheduled online components. It submits that the delivery format was consistent with the description in the Program Outline and reflects standard program design.

Workload and Academic Expectations

The Complainant submits the volume and nature of the workload were excessive and differed from what she reasonably expected. She states that she was required to complete multiple written assignments, including tasks focused on academic English skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and APA formatting, in addition to course-specific content. She alleges these tasks were not suitable for the minimum level of English required for admission to the Program.

She further submits that the intensity of the workload, combined with the pace of the Program, created significant stress and contributed to her decision to withdraw. In correspondence prior to withdrawal, she indicated that she felt “extremely overwhelmed by the course” and uncomfortable with the number of assignments.

The Complainant also reports that much of the assigned work required extended independent effort relative to the amount of direct instruction provided, which she submits was not clearly conveyed prior to enrolment.

The Institution responds that the Program Outline disclosed that the Program is delivered in an accelerated format, with approximately 25 hours per week of coursework and additional weekly homework expected. It submits that written assignments and independent work are standard components of diploma-level study.

The Institution characterizes the Complainant’s concerns as relating to her personal experience of workload intensity rather than any discrepancy between what was disclosed and what was delivered.

Instructional Materials and Quality of Instruction

The Complainant submits that the instructional materials were inadequate to support learning at the expected level. She describes the materials as consisting largely of brief narrated slides, links to external videos, and reading assignments, which required significant self-directed interpretation.

She further submits that these materials did not provide sufficient instructional depth or guidance, and that the structure of the coursework placed a disproportionate burden on students to independently synthesize information. She states that this approach made it difficult to meet academic expectations and contributed to her overall dissatisfaction with the Program.

The Institution responds that the use of instructor-developed materials, curated external resources, and independent learning activities is consistent with the Program's design and with standard post-secondary instructional practices, particularly in programs that include asynchronous instruction.

It submits that instructors were available to provide guidance and support, and that the materials used were consistent with the Program Outline and approved curriculum.

Academic Integrity and AI/Plagiarism Tools

The Complainant submits the learning environment was negatively affected by plagiarism and AI-related warnings, which she found intimidating and stressful. She further submits that, as an English language learner, she was concerned that such tools may inaccurately flag her work, which added to her anxiety.

The Institution responds that only one academic integrity alert was issued during the Complainant's enrolment. The alert did not result in any grade penalty and was intended to inform the student of the similarity detection result. The instructor offered to meet with the Complainant to review the alert and provide support.

The Institution further submits that academic integrity expectations, including the use of detection tools, were disclosed in institutional policies and addressed during orientation.

Tuition Refund

The Complainant submits that the language "up to 30%" in the Tuition Refund Policy implies discretion and that, in her circumstances, a reduced retention should apply. Specifically, she argues that because she only completed roughly 18% of the course, only 18% of the tuition should be retained by the Institution.

The Institution responds that the Complainant withdrew after more than 10% but before 30% of the Program was delivered, and that the Policy permits retention of up to 30% in such cases. It submits that the retention amount applied was calculated in accordance with the Policy and reflects the allocation of instructional and administrative resources.

7. Decision

For the following reasons, I find the Institution did not mislead the Complainant regarding a significant aspect of the Program and therefore deny the claim.

While I have sympathy for the Complainant's situation and can appreciate their frustration, there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the claim. The Program's enrolment contract clearly sets out the delivery methods, including a module-by-module breakdown of the mode of delivery, specifying the proportion of asynchronous and synchronous instruction.

In addition, the Institution's academic integrity policies—including the use of plagiarism detection tools—form part of its established policies. Students are made aware from the outset that such tools would be used to monitor their work. These policies were applied consistently and fairly throughout the Complainant's time at the Institution, and there is no evidence that they had a detrimental impact on the Complainant.

The enrolment contract also specified that students should expect to spend approximately 10–15 hours per week on homework. The Complainant submitted that the workload exceeded this expectation and that the material was particularly challenging as an ESL learner. While I acknowledge that the Complainant may have experienced difficulty, I am unable to conclude, based on the evidence before me, that the Institution misrepresented a significant aspect of the Program.

Following the Complainant's withdrawal, the Institution calculated the refund in accordance with its Tuition Refund Policy and applicable regulatory standards.

For these reasons, the claim is denied.

This decision is final. The Trustee does not have authority to re-open or reconsider the decision and there is no appeal under the PTA. Parties may wish to seek legal advice regarding a judicial review by the BC Supreme Court.

Date: July 14, 2026



Joanna White

Trustee, Student Tuition Protection Fund