

Trustee Decision on Student Complaint

Institution: 3581 – Visual College of Art and Design (VCAD)

1. Introduction

The Complainant graduated from the Interior Design Program [**Program**] on March 29, 2025, and filed a complaint against the Institution [**Complaint**] on January 19, 2026.

The Complainant is seeking a full tuition refund.

The Complainant exhausted the Institution's dispute resolution process [**DRP**] prior to filing this Complaint.

The Complainant was dissatisfied with the Program and submits the Institution made false representations related to evaluations and the career options available upon graduation. The Complainant further submits she was misled in respect of instructor qualifications; the provision of books; and the currency and availability of software.

The Institution denies it misled the Complainant, as alleged or at all.

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:	Interior Design
Start date:	July 4, 2023
End date:	December 21, 2024
Revised end date:	March 29, 2025
Graduation date:	March 29, 2025
Total charged:	\$ 45,940
Tuition:	\$ 41,882
Application Fee:	\$ 150
Course Materials Fee:	\$ 378
Textbooks Fee:	\$ 3,345
Tuition Reduction: Scholarship	\$ 4,729
Amount paid to date by Complainant:	\$ 41,211
Amount refunded by Institution:	\$ 212
Amount of tuition paid to date by Complainant:	\$ 37,153

4. Issues

The following issues arise for consideration: Was the Complainant misled in respect of representations made by the Institution about evaluations and career options available upon graduation; instructor qualifications; the provision of books; and the currency and availability of software.

5. Chronology

July 4, 2023	Program start date
December 11, 2023	Email exchange related to Complainant's dissatisfaction with two instructors
March 29, 2025	Complainant graduates
November 20, 2025	Complainant initiates DRP
November 28, 2025	Institution issues decision [DRP Decision 1]
undated	Complainant appeals DRP Decision 1
undated	Institution issues decision [DRP Decision 2]
January 19, 2026	Complaint filed

6. Analysis

The Program is delivered by distance education.

I have summarized below the issues complained about:

Evaluations

The Institution conducts evaluations through the provision of tests and quizzes.

The Complainant submits the Institution's admission representative represented, prior to enrolment, that evaluations would only be conducted by way of assignments and there would be no written tests.

The Complainant further submits the tests were routinely graded incorrectly and the burden was on her to request revisions.

The Complainant adds the Institution could not correct the grades assigned for the Materials and Fabrics quizzes because they are auto generated by the Learning Management System (LMS).

The Complainant acknowledges she successfully passed courses and the incorrect auto generated marks did not have a significant impact on her academic record. The Complainant submits it may be different for other students. The Complainant says: "if the automated system is consistently marking things incorrectly and now cannot be changed, this system cannot be relied upon. I feel I was misled in terms of receiving accurate grades".

In respect of the alleged representations related to evaluations, the Institution submits "...we reviewed the available recruitment call recordings and related records. No references or representations to this effect were identified." The Institution confirms the methods of evaluations are listed in the course outlines provided before the start of each course.

In respect of the grading errors, the Institution confirms it corrected the Complainant's grades, including the grades auto generated by the LMS. The Institution adds the use of auto generated assessments is common and isolated technical errors do not amount to misleading.

Textbooks

The Complainant submits the Institution did not provide three of the textbooks listed on the syllabus.

The Institution acknowledges three textbooks were not uploaded to the Complainant's LMS account and issued a refund of \$212. The Institution adds the books were not required course material and the omission did not affect learning outcomes.

Instructor qualifications

The Complainant submits instructors were not “industry professionals” qualified to teach and there was an overreliance on YouTube in place of competent instruction.

The Complainant submits as follows:

My issue was not with YouTube use in general but with how instructors who obviously didn’t understand how to use the programs they were meant to be “industry professionals” in would struggle to do things, make mistakes, and then resort to YouTube to teach themselves and us how to use them.

The Complainant raised issues related to two specific instructors but did not follow-up when the Institution requested more information.

The Institution responds that instructors meet minimum instructor qualifications set out in the *Private Training Regulation*.

In its Response, the Institution confirms it reviewed the instruction provided by instructors and submits:

For one course, an internal retrospective review identified a documentation gap related to instructional assignment for Photoshop content. This matter was identified internally and addressed promptly through appropriate corrective action.

Software

The Institution provides access to program software required for the Program through Amazon Web Services (AWS).

The Complainant says it was challenging to access software through AWS and software was not current or up to industry standards: “Instructors suggesting we use different software than what the school was providing did not instill confidence in the curriculum or the idea we were learning with the best tools for the job”.

The Institution submits it discusses, during orientation, the requirement that students have reliable internet access and a strong WI-FI connection and support is available if students experience technical issues. The Institution submits the Complainant did not avail herself of this service or request technical assistance.

The Institution further submits it provides “instruction in current, industry-standard software widely used in the field. From time to time, instructors may reference or discuss emerging tools as supplementary information, reflecting real-world industry practice”. The Institution adds:” As no specific software titles or issues were identified, we are unable to conduct a detailed review of this concern at this time”.

Registered or licensed interior designer

The Complainant has not been successful in finding employment in her field of study.

The career opportunities listed in the Program Outline are as follows: Interior designer, residential designer, furniture designer, and decorator. Interior designer is an unregulated occupation.

The Complainant submits as follows:

I was under the impression from my original phone calls and all of the advertising on the website that this program would prepare me to become an interior designer, but in order to become a licensed Interior Designer, I require a Bachelor of Interior Design Degree from a Council for Interior Design Accreditation program which is not what I received from this institution - this should be something stated during recruitment, as on the website it listed "interior designer" as job opportunities from this course.

The Institution denies it made any representation that graduates of the Program are eligible to apply to become Registered or Licensed Interior Designers.

In its Response, the Institution offers to refund 25% of tuition in addition to \$212 already paid for the textbooks. The Complainant rejected the offer.

7. Decision

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

The Complainant has not provided any evidence in support of the claim the Institution represented, prior to enrolment, there would be no written evaluations. As a result, I am unable to approve the claim on this basis.

Representations made during the admissions process are typically made during a conversation and are rarely confirmed in writing. The issues raised in respect of the Institution's recruitment practices and representations prior to enrolment mirror those made in other complaints against the Institution. I expect the Institution to review its recruitment practices and take appropriate measures to ensure admission representatives provide accurate information to prospective students. A copy of this decision will be provided to the Registrar.

I find the grading errors, which the Institution corrected, do not amount to misleading within the meaning of PTA 23(1)(b).

I find the Complainant was not misled in respect of the textbooks. The Institution acknowledges it did not provide three textbooks (which are not required course material) and reimbursed the Complainant.

I find the Complainant did not provide sufficient evidence to substantiate a claim she was misled in respect of instructors' qualifications, and availability and currency of software.

Finally, I find the Institution's failure to notify the Complainant that graduates of the Program are not eligible to apply to become Licensed or Registered Interior Designers was not misleading. The Institution did not make representations to suggest that graduates would be eligible, and I do not infer anything misleading by the omission of this information. While institutions are required to provide to prospective students accurate and current information, students have a reciprocal responsibility to undertake basic due diligence about their program and field of study.

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