

Complaints and Appeals Policy and Associated Procedures

Purpose of the policy

This policy and associated procedures outline RTO approach to managing complaints and appeals. This is to ensure that complaints are handled in a transparent way, as well as fairly, efficiently, and effectively.

This policy and associated procedures meet the requirements of Standard 6 of the Standards for RTOs 2015.

Policy statements

Approach

- Complaints against SLIC, its trainers, assessors, and other staff, as well as learners and third parties providing services on behalf of SLIC, including education agents, are welcomed. These complaints can encompass any aspect of the services provided by SLIC. Similarly, appeals can be made concerning any decision by SLIC, constituting a request for a comprehensive review, including assessment appeals.
- Throughout the management of complaints, SLIC is committed to upholding the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, ensuring an objective and consistent review process at every stage. For this purpose, relevant individuals are appointed to oversee complaints and appeals.
- Importantly, the internal complaints and appeals process is conducted without any cost to the students involved. Investigating potential causes of complaints and appeals is a priority for SLIC, and corrective and preventive actions are taken in response, viewing such instances as opportunities for improvement.
- All individuals, including third parties, are duly informed of allegations made, granting them the opportunity to present their case. It is essential to note that this policy and procedure do not limit individuals from exercising their rights under Australia's Consumer Protection laws, and they retain the freedom to pursue other legal remedies.
- SLIC strongly encourages complainants to initially seek an informal resolution by discussing the issue with the involved party. If such attempts prove uncomfortable or unsuccessful, individuals are advised to follow the procedures outlined below.
- Furthermore, SLIC diligently maintains records of all complaints and appeals, ensuring their proper documentation in the complaints and appeals register.

Complaints and appeals process

Complaints and appeals are to be made as follows:

- Submit complaint or appeal in writing using the complaints and appeals form. The complaints and appeals form outlines the information that should be provided.
- Submit complaint within 30 calendar days of the incident or in the case of an appeal within 30 calendar days of the decision being made.

Response to complaints and appeals

Complaints and appeals will be responded to as follows:

- The complaint or appeal will be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days of receipt.
- Review of the complaint or appeal will commence within 5 working days of receiving the complaints.
- Complaints and appeals will be finalised as soon as practicable or within 30 calendar days.
- Where the complaint or appeal is complex and is expected to take more than 60 calendar days to process, RTO will write to inform the complainant or appellant of this including the reasons for such. Following this update, regular updates will be provided of progress.
- The outcomes of the complaints and appeals process will be communicated in writing to the person making the complaint or appeals. This will also include the reasons for the outcome.

Complaints and appeals handling

Each individual involved in the complaint may have a support person of their choice present at any meetings to resolve the complaint or appeal.

An independent assessor will be identified to conduct a review of an assessment decision that is being appealed.

Enrolment during a complaints process

Students' enrolment will be maintained throughout the complaints and appeals process unless the complaint is in relation to misconduct.

Students' enrolment will also be maintained throughout the internal appeals processes.

Additionally:

- If the appeal is against the RTO's decision to cancel the student's enrolment for unsatisfactory course progress or attendance, the student's enrolment will be maintained until the external process is completed and has supported or not supported the RTO's decision to cancel their enrolment.
- If the appeal is against the RTO's decision to defer, suspend or cancel a student's enrolment due to misbehaviour, RTO will cancel the student's enrolment after the outcome of the internal appeals process.

Independent appeal process

Where the internal process has failed to resolve the complaint or appeal, the matter will be referred to an independent mediator.

All associated costs are to be met by the complainant/appellant unless it is RTO that made the decision to appoint the independent party.

The independent party recommended by RTO for cases involving domestic students is the Resolution Institute. However, another mediator of the student's choice can be appointed.

During the mediation process, RTO will cooperate in full and commits to immediately implement the decision or recommendation made by the external mediator and/or take preventative or corrective action required by the decision or recommendation.

All actions taken will be communicated in writing to students.

Information about external bodies to whom complaints can be made

Complaints can also be made to the organisations indicated below:

National Training Complaints Hotline:

The National Training Complaints Hotline is a national service for consumers to register complaints concerning vocational education and training. The service refers consumers to the appropriate agency/authority/jurisdiction to assist with their complaint. Access to the Hotline is through:

Phone: 13 38 73, Monday–Friday, 8am to 6pm nationally

Email: ntch@education.gov.au

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA):

Complainants may also complain to the RTO's registering body, Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). It is important to understand that ASQA does not act as an advocate for individual students and is not responsible for resolving disputes between students and training providers. ASQA only uses information from all complaints as intelligence to inform regulatory activities. More information can be found at: <https://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints>

Procedures

1 Process complaints and appeals

- 1.1 File the complaints and appeals form received.
- 1.2 Send out an acknowledgement within 3 working days of receiving the complaint or appeal.
- 1.3 Record details of the complaint or appeal on receipt on the complaints and appeals register.
- 1.4 Determine whether the complaint or appeal can be resolved quickly and easily. If so, take immediate action to resolve the complaint or appeal and inform the student in writing of the outcome.
- 1.5 If the complaint is more complex, organise relevant staff to review the complaint and commence investigation.
- 1.6 Inform the complainant or appellant within 5 days of receiving the complaint that the investigation will commence or of the action that will occur in the case of simple complaints.
- 1.7 Conduct an investigation that includes:
 - checking of all facts and accuracy of information
 - requesting further information as required
 - organising a meeting with the complainant/appellant
 - identifying relevant corrective/preventative action
 - confirming a solution.
- 1.8 Where the matter is an appeal about an assessment decision, the investigation process will include an independent review of the assessment evidence and decision by another assessor. A relevant independent assessor should be organised.
- 1.9 The investigation will be completed within 30 days, or if it is considered that it will take longer than 60 calendar days to process, RTO will write to inform the complainant or appellant of this including the reasons for such. Following this update, regular updates will be provided of progress.
- 1.10 Where the process finds in favour of the student, organise a management meeting to discuss:
 - the process and its outcome; and
 - actions to be taken to implement the decision, including both corrective/preventative actions.
- 1.11 Following the meeting, agreed actions will be immediately implemented.
- 1.12 Update the complaints and appeals register.

- 1.13 Once the investigation is complete, the complainant or appellant will be informed in writing of the outcome using the complaints and appeals outcome letter. Where the response is in relation to a complaint, the letter will advise that the internal appeals process may also be accessed.
- 1.14 Archive the complaint or appeal documentation.

2 Organise external appeals

- 2.1 In cases where the student has organised the mediator, it will be responding to the mediator's requests.
- 2.2 Cooperate with all requirements of the mediator, providing all information as required.
- 2.3 Where the mediator finds in favour of the student, organise a management meeting to discuss:
 - the external process and its outcome; and
 - actions to be taken to implement the decision, including both corrective/preventative actions.
- 2.4 Following the meeting, agreed actions will be immediately implemented.
- 2.5 Advise the student of the action that RTO will take in response to the external mediator's decision.

Responsibilities

The **CEO** is responsible for:

- investigating complaints and appeals
- making decisions about complaints and appeals in conjunction with others.

The **RTO Manager** is responsible for:

- investigating complaints and appeals.
- making decisions about complaints and appeals in conjunction with others
- facilitating external decisions.

The **Administration and Student Support Officer** is responsible for:

- processing complaints and appeals forms
- filing all documentation.