

Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

Purpose

Feedback, Complaints and Appeal Policy and Procedure outlines the provisions and process to address concerns and informs continuous improvement of the organisation. Central Australian College aims to provide a complaint handling system that is open, effective and easy to use.

Scope

This policy applies to all students, all staff employed whether permanent or temporary, trainers and assessors and third-party providing services on behalf of CAC.

Relevant standards, acts and legislation

The Feedback, Complaints and Appeal Policy and Procedures are within the scope of compliance requirement adhering to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Outcome Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations) Instrument 2025 Quality Area 2 Division 5 Feedback, complaints and Appeals. ESOS Act National Code 2018 Standard 10; Standard VET Funding Contract Skills First Program.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Appeals	An appeal may include but is not limited to: - Assessment process and decision - Academic progress decisions
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Complaints	A complaint may include but is not limited to: - Course advice and enrolment - Suspension and/or cancellation of enrolment - Program delivery - Marketing and promotional activity - Personal safety - Customer service and administration - Issue of results, certificates, statement of attainment - Learning resources - Fees and charges - Equity and access, discrimination, harassment and bullying
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
National Code	Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
SRTTO	Standards for Registered Training Organisations

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to affirm CAC's commitment to provide fair and equitable environment for the learners and staff. It ensures:

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1. Ensure students are informed about the feedback, complaints and appeals policy and procedure.
2. To allow students to request for a review of decisions, including assessment decisions made by CAC or a third-party providing services on its behalf that adversely affect them.
3. It ensures that the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stages of complaint and appeal process.
4. It provides for review of the complaints by an appropriate party independent of CAC and the complainant and the appellant, at the request of the individual making the complaint or appeal, if the process fails to resolve the complaint or appeal.
5. To identify potential causes of complaints and appeals and takes appropriate corrective action to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of occurrence.
6. To maintain records of all complaints and appeals procedures.
7. To ensure complaints are treated confidentially and identity of complainants kept confidential to the extent possible where requested, except where the law otherwise provides. In handling complaints CAC shall comply with the requirements of privacy legislation
8. Internal complaints and appeals process will be at no cost to the student unless it is referred to an external agency.
9. CAC must maintain the students' enrolment while the complaint and appeals process is ongoing.
10. All issues must be addressed in a timely manner and treated in the strictest confidence.
11. The outcome of feedback, complaints and appeals shall be used by CAC to inform continuous improvement.

Procedure:

This procedure outlines the steps to be taken when handling complaints from students, staff and stakeholders.

a. Complaints about academic matters

- i. Complaints related to academic results, academic process, academic conduct, curriculum or awards: Statement of Attainment or Qualification Certificates is addressed informally by the relevant Training Manager/Coordinators according to the Complaints Handling procedure indicated in section 2 and 3. Formal complaint shall be registered on the Complaints and Appeals Form and escalated to the RTO Operations Manager and the CEO.
- ii. Appeals related to assessment decisions and academic processes are addressed by the RTO Operations Manager according to the Appeals Process outlined in section 4 below.

b. Complaints about non-academic matters

- i. Complaints related to non-academic matters including matters relating enrolment in a course and personal information held by the provider is addressed by the Administration Manager according to the Complaints Handling Procedure indicated in section 2 and 3. Formal complaint are registered in the Complaints and Appeals form and shall be escalated to the RTO Operations Manager and CEO.
- ii. Appeals related to non-academic matters including matters relating enrolment in a course and personal information held by the provider is addressed by the RTO Operations Manager according to the Appeals Process outlined in section 4 below.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned policy statements, the CEO /the RTO Operations Manager shall arrange for:

1. Process to inform students, staff and stakeholders
2. Procedure for informal feedback and complaints
3. Procedure for Formal complaint

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4. Process to appeal a decision
5. External appeals process
6. Continuous improvement

Procedure

1. Process to inform students, staff and stakeholders

- i. All prospective students are informed during about the Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure during the pre-enrolment and enrolment stage.
- ii. Students are clearly explained about the procedures for providing feedback, lodging complaints and appeals during enrolment and student induction at the time of orientation.
- iii. Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure is made available in the Student Handbook and on the website.
- iv. Staff members provide guidance to students on how to access and navigate the complaints and appeals process, ensuring they understand their rights and responsibilities.

2. Informal complaint process

- i. The CAC staff member contacted by the student about a concern or a complaint, shall clarify the issue and the complaint process. If the staff member is a first line staff member, they are to notify the most senior staff member available (e.g. Administration Manager/ Training Manager).
- ii. The senior staff member available shall attempt to resolve the issue. Notes of the complaint/ issues are to be taken. The student is to be provided with a copy of Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure upon request as well as information about complaints referral via external agencies.
- iii. Where possible all non-formal attempts shall be made to resolve the issue. This may include advice, discussions, and general mediation in relation to the issue and the student's grievance.
- iv. When a complaint or appeal cannot be resolved through informal discussion, then CAC staff member shall provide the student with a Complaints and Appeals Form; and information about external complaints handling agencies. Alternatively, the staff member may assist the complainant to complete the online Complaints and Appeals Form and submit it to CAC.
- v. The complainant is to be assured that the complaint will be treated confidentially and impartially and that they will not suffer any loss of their right as a student while the complaint is being investigated.

Once a student has placed a formal complaint / appeal the following procedures must be followed.

3. Formal complaint process

3.1 Registering the complaint

- i. The formal complaint is registered in the complaint and appeals register by the staff member managing the complaint, who communicates written acknowledgement to the complainant within 3 working days.
- ii. The Student Administration Manager or their delegate allocates the complaint to the relevant manager.
- iii. Where negative feedback is received via survey or other CAC feedback processes and includes contact details of the student Training Manager shall follow up directly with the student to resolve the issue and the remainder of the complaint procedure is followed as required.
- iv. Student Administration Manager and relevant manager assigned to investigate the complaint or issue is to make progress notes in the Complaints and Appeals form in the 'Office Use Only' section. This includes:
 - a. the documentation of the date the Administration Manager received the complaint/ appeal
 - b. the date and the name of the manager that is notified of the complaint/appeal.
 - c. the date on which the 'Complaints and Appeals Register is updated'
 - d. Any follow up directly with the complainant to resolve the issue.

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- v. The specific information regarding the complaint/ appeal is to be documented in the 'Complaints and Appeals Register' which is monitored by the Training Manager/Coordinator regularly. The information to be contained and updated within the register are as follows:
 - Submission date of complaint
 - Name of Complainant
 - Issues identified
 - Investigating officer
 - Outcome communicated

3.2 Assigning the investigating officer

- i. Once a complaint has been registered in the 'Complaints and Appeals Register' the Student Administration Manager shall send an acknowledgement of the complaint to the complainant and notify the Training Manager of the complaint and provide any further documentation related to the matter.
- ii. Student Administration Manager and the Training Manager shall assess the nature of complaint and assign a priority based on the urgency of the issue.
- iii. The Training Manager/ Coordinator shall ensure the process of addressing the complaint /appeal commences within 10 working days of the formal lodgement of the complaint/ appeal. Where it is determined that the subject matter falls within the definition, the Training Manager/Coordinator or nominee will:
 - a. Gather such information as required to assist with the settlement of the complaint, including providing the respondent with the statement of the complaint and giving them the opportunity to respond
 - b. Attempt to resolve the complaint by using the process outlined by the student for settlement (if appropriate) or through meeting, mediation and/or conciliation.
 - c. The Training Manager may refer the matter to the appropriate staff or to the investigating officer to resolve, or make a decision on the complaint ensuring that all reasonable measures are taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.
 - d. The Training Manager is to keep the complainant informed of any decisions or outcomes concluded, or processes in place to deal with the complaint.
- iv. Where it is determined that the subject matter of the complaint falls outside the definition of a complaint, the Investigating Officer will advise the student accordingly.
- v. Students will be provided with details of external authorities they may approach, if required.
- vi. A student is to be offered the option to be assisted or accompanied by a support person regardless of the nature of the grievance or complaint throughout the process.
- vii. The investigating officer must ensure that notes are taken of all meetings, phone conversations etc carried out as part of the complaints handling process.
- viii. Once a decision has been reached the Training Manager shall be required to inform all parties involved of any decisions or outcomes that are concluded in writing.
- ix. The root cause must be determined and explained within all complaints. Any corrective action arising from the establishment of the root cause must be processed through the continuous improvement register and linked to the original complaint to maintain the full audit trail.
- x. Copies of all documentation, outcomes and further action required will be placed into the 'complaints and appeals register' by the Student Administrations Manager.
- xi. Complaints are treated confidentially, and the identity of the complainant is kept confidential. Where staff members are implicated in complaints then investigations are to exclude the relevant staff member from direct involvement to preserve partiality. Complainants identity will not be disclosed. All parties involved in the issue to be treated with respect and not to be victimised or discriminated against during the process.
- xii. Within the notification of the outcome of the formal complaint the students shall also be notified that they have the right to appeal the decision.

4. Appealing a decision

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- i. If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may lodge an appeal. The appeal is referred to the CEO. If the complainants are not satisfied with the response of the CEO then they are to be referred to the external agencies as outlined in section 5.
- ii. Complainant may initiate an internal appeal process by completing the Complaints and Appeals form, this time ticking on the appeals box.
- iii. To activate the appeal process the student is to complete a 'Complaints and Appeals Form' which is to include a summary of the grounds the appeal is based upon. The reason the student feels the decision is unfair is to be clearly explained. Help and support with this process can be gained from Student Administration Department.
- iv. All students have the right to appeal decisions made by CAC where reasonable grounds can be established. The areas in which a student may appeal a decision made by CAC may include:
 - Assessments conducted
 - Deferral, suspension, or cancellation decisions made in relation to the student's enrolment
 - Or any other conclusion / decision that is made after a complaint has been dealt with by CAC in the first instance.
- v. Investigating Officer shall then determine the validity of the appeal and organise a meeting with all parties involved in the matter and attempt to seek resolution where appropriate.
- vi. The process for all formally lodged appeals will begin within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.
- vii. The Training Manager/Coordinator shall ensure that CAC acts on any substantiated appeal.
- viii. Where an appeal has been lodged it will be defined into one of the following categories and the appropriate procedures followed.

4.1. General appeals

- i. Where a student has appealed a decision or outcome of a formal complaint they are required to notify CAC in writing within 20 working days of the grounds of their appeal. Any supporting documentation should also be attached to the appeal.
- ii. The appeal shall be lodged through student administrations and the Student Administration Manager shall ensure the details of the appeal are added to the 'Complaints and Appeals Register'.
- iii. The Training Manager/Coordinator shall be notified and shall seek details regarding the initial documentation of the complaint and shall decide based on the grounds of the appeal.
- iv. The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome with reasons for the decisions, and the 'Complaints and Appeals Register' updated. The student shall also be provided the option of activating the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The student is required to notify CAC if they wish to proceed with the external appeals process.

4.2. Assessment appeals

- i. Where a student wishes to appeal an assessment outcome they are required to notify their assessor in the first instance. Where appropriate the assessor may decide to re-assess the students work to ensure a fair and equitable decision is gained. The assessor shall complete a written report regarding the re-assessment outlining the reasons why re-assessment was or was not granted.
- ii. If this is still not to the student's satisfaction the student shall formally lodge an appeal by submitting a written letter outlining their reasons for the appeal. They shall lodge this with Student Administrations Department and the appeal shall be entered into the 'Complaints and Appeals Register'.
- iii. The Training Manager/Coordinator shall be notified and shall seek details from the assessor involved and any other relevant parties. A decision shall be made regarding the appeal either indicating the assessment decision stands or details of a possible re-assessment by a 'third party'. The third party shall be another assessor appointed by CAC.
- iv. The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome with reasons for the decision, and the 'complaints and appeals register' updated. The student shall also be provided the option of activating the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The student is required to notify CAC if they wish to proceed with the external appeals process.

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4.3. Appealing deferrals, suspension or cancellation of enrolment decisions

- Where a student wishes to appeal a decision relating to deferment, suspension, or cancellation of their enrolment they are required to lodge, in writing, a letter outlining the details of their appeal. The student should have extenuating circumstances as to why the decision should be reviewed and any supporting documentation supporting their appeal.
- The appeal shall be lodged this with Student Administrations Department and the appeal shall be entered into the 'Complaints and Appeals Register'.
- The Training Manager/ Coordinator shall be notified and shall seek details regarding the initial documentation of the decision and shall make a decision based on the grounds of the appeal.
- The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome with reasons for the decision, and the 'Complaints and Appeals Register' updated. The student shall also be provided the option of activating the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The student is required to notify CAC if they wish to proceed with the external appeals process.
- The Training Manager/ Coordinator shall ensure that CAC will act immediately on any substantiated appeal. If the internal or any external complaint handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the student, the Investigating Officer must immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventive action that is required, and advise the student of the outcome.

5. External Appeals

If a student is still not satisfied with the decision of CAC, a student may wish to refer the matter to an external independent / third party mediator.

- If an overseas student is not satisfied with the internal appeals process, they will be advised to request mediation through Overseas Student Ombudsman (OSO). Students will have 10 working days to lodge an appeal to the Ombudsman.
- A fee may be involved as per the Overseas Student Ombudsman guidelines.
- To lodge an external appeal or complaint with the Ombudsman for international students, you need to lodge a complaint at the following address

International student complaints
Web: International student complaints Commonwealth Ombudsman Online form: Web Form Submission Call 1300 362 072 • Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm • Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm • Wednesday 10:00 am – 2:00 pm • Thursday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm • Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm Postal address Commonwealth Ombudsman GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601 If you want to make a complaint in your language you can. Call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450. Ombudsman will pay for the interpreter.

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- iv. If an appeal is against the CAC's decision to report an international student for a breach of visa conditions, CAC must maintain the student's enrolment (i.e. not report the student to DHA) until the external appeals process is complete and has supported the provider's decision to report.
- v. International students may only appeal once to an external mediator before CAC reports the student to DHA. This does not stop the student from appealing more than once, but CAC reserves the right to report the student after the outcome of the first external appeal when the appeal decision has gone against the student.
- vi. If an appeal is against the CAC's decision to defer, suspend or cancel a student's enrolment due to misbehaviour, the Institute only needs to await the outcome of the internal appeals process (supporting the Institute) before implementing its decision to change the student's enrolment status.
- vii. These complaints and appeal procedures do not restrict a student's right to pursue other external remedies within the Australian legal system.
- viii. Domestic students are advised to contact Ombudsman office at Victoria:

Ombudsman Victoria
Web: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au Online Form: Make a complaint Victorian Ombudsman Call: 1800 806 314 (between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday)
Dispute Resolution Centre of Victoria
Dispute Assessment Officer Web: http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au/ Call: 1300 372 888

- Alternatively, if the student (complainant) is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint they can escalate the complaint to the National Training Complaints Hotline. The National Training Complaints Hotline is a referral service and will ensure that your complaint is handled by the most appropriate authority.

National Training Complaints Hotline
Online form: Department of Employment and Workplace relations online complaints form Call: 13 38 73.

- Where a decision or outcome is in favour of the student CAC shall follow the required action and recommendation from Ombudsman to satisfy the student's complaints soon as practicable.
- The decision of this independent mediator is final and any further action the student wishes to take is outside CAC's policies and procedures. The student shall be referred to the appropriate government agencies and this information can be gained from the CEO.

6. Continuous improvement

After resolving the complaints and appeals:

- i. Student Administration Manager monitors the complaint process for close out of all complaints and provides report to the RTO operations Manager.
- ii. RTO Operations Manager shall analyse the root causes of issues and identify areas of improvement.
- iii. Update policies, procedures, or training materials as needed.

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- iv. Track the effectiveness of implemented changes to ensure they address the identified issues.
- v. Share findings and improvements with the senior management team to promote transparency and accountability.

Policy Reference

- ESOS ACT 2000 National Code 2018 Standard 10
- SRTO Quality Areas 2 Standard 2.7 and 2.8
- Standard VET Funding Contract Skills First Program
- Department of Education and Training's Victorian Training Guarantee Contract Compliance Complaints Management Guide.

Relevant Policies

- Enrolment Policy and Procedure

Relevant Forms and Documents

- Feedback Form
- Complaints and Appeals Form
- Complaints and Appeals Register

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