

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY

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Complaints and Appeals Policy

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Complaints and Appeals Policy

Complaints

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that the ACI will handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint. The policy covers the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and the ACI Board receiving or managing complaints made to or about us, regarding our products, services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

1.3. Organisational commitment

The ACI expects staff to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
CEO or chair of the ACI Board	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<p>Report to the ACI Board on our complaint handling.</p> <p>Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints.</p> <p>Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.</p> <p>Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</p> <p>Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.</p>

Who	Commitment	How
Staff whose duties include complaint handling	Efficiently and effectively undertake complaint handling	<p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Assist people to make a complaint, if needed. Comply with our policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve our complaints management system.</p> <p>Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.</p>
All staff	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.	<p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures.</p> <p>Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process.</p> <p>Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.</p>

2. Terms and Definitions

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.¹

¹ Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint handling in organizations AS/NZS 10002:2014

Complaint handling/management system

All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

Dispute

An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of the ACI.

Feedback

Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Grievance

A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

Policy

A statement of the overarching principles and commitment to action to achieve compliance.

Procedure

A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

3. How we respond to complaints

3.1 No charge

Complaining to us is free.

3.2 Lodging a complaint

Complaints can be received by the ACI in any method that the complainant feels is appropriate. This can include email, telephone or other forms of electronic means. Complaints can be anonymous, however if the complainant does not disclose any contact details it will be difficult for the ACI to follow up on the issues or help close out the matter.

3.3 Early resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us.

When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

3.4 Responsiveness

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints, being no more than 10 business days from receipt.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

3.5 Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly.

3.6 Responding flexibly

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

3.7 Confidentiality

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

4. Managing the parties to a complaint

4.1 Complaints involving multiple parties

Where our services are contracted out, we expect contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. We take complaints not only about the actions of our staff but also the actions of our service providers.

4.2 Empowerment of staff

All staff managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

4.3 Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

4.4 Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman or oversight regulatory bodies).

The three levels of complaint handling:

Level 1

We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Level 2

Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint to the CEO. This second level of complaint handling will provide for the assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made.

Level 3

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of our decision (by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission).

5. Record keeping and analysis

5.1. Analysis and evaluation of complaints

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the ACI Board of Directors.

We will undertake an analysis of:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

A report and analysis will be provided to our CEO and ACI Board for review, at least annually.

5.2. Monitoring of the complaint management system

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints and identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

Appeals

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle appeals fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to lodge an appeal regarding their assessment, the assessment process and/or and administrative matter involving their completion of an ACI accredited course.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and the ACI Board receiving or managing complaints made to or about us, regarding our products, services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

1.3 Organisational Commitment

As with the Complaints policy (see above), the ACI expects staff to be committed to fair, effective and efficient handling of any appeals lodged. The nature of commitment expected and the way that it should be implemented for appeals is the same as with our commitment to complaints handling.

2. Terms and definitions

Appeal

A formal document lodged by a student of an ACI course which states the basis on which they state that their assessment should be reviewed.

Feedback

Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or appeals system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Grievance

A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

Policy

A statement of the overarching principles and commitment to action to achieve compliance.

Procedure

A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

3. How we respond to appeals

3.1 No charge

Lodging an appeal is free.

3.2 Lodging an appeal

The method of lodging an appeal will depend on the complexity of the issues being the subject of appeal. The ACI has four (4) levels of assessing appeals as follows:

Level 1

Students who are appealing an assessment outcome and/or the assessment process or an administrative matter involving their study should bring the matter with their Trainer/Assessor who will attempt to resolve the issue immediately. Appeals may be made by email, phone or in person. If the student advises the matter is resolved or no response is received from the student within 30 calendar days after the decision is issued, the issue is considered closed. The outcome is noted and placed in the student file and the Appeals and Complaints log.

This step should commence within ten (10) working days of the assessment outcome being advised or the issue becoming a concern.

Level 2

If the student is not satisfied with the Level 1 response, the student must outline the basis of their continued appeal and forward to the CEO of the ACI. The student should undertake a Level 2 appeal no later than 30 days after they have been informed of the decision of the Level 1 appeal.

Level 2 appeals will result in the assessment being sent to a different assessor for review. The new assessor will not receive any information on the original assessor's marks or commentary. The student will be advised of the appeals outcome within 10 working days after the matter has been sent to the new assessor. If the student advises the matter is resolved or no response is received from the student within 30 calendar days after the decision is issued, the issue is considered closed. The outcome is noted and placed in the student file and the Appeals and Complaints log.

Level 3

If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal it is to be reviewed by the CEO of the ACI. If necessary, the CEO will convene a review panel to thoroughly examine the appeal or complaint. The student will be advised of the outcome of the Level 3 review 15 working days after the appeal is reviewed by the CEO/panel. If the student advises the matter is resolved or no response is received from the student within 30 calendar days after the decision is issued, the issue is considered closed. The outcome is noted and placed in the student file and the Appeals and Complaints log.

Level 4

Should a student wish to engage an independent party once the ACI internal review process is exhausted, the student can refer the matter to National Training Complaints Hotline. Such complaints will be directed to relevant authorities, connecting consumers with the most appropriate organisation to assist them. Students can register a complaint with the National Training Complaints Hotline by:

- Phone: 13 38 73
- Email: skilling@education.gov.au

4. Record keeping and analysis

4.1. Analysis and evaluation of appeals

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the ACI Board of Directors.

We will undertake an analysis of:

- the number of appeals received,
- the outcome of appeals,
- issues arising from appeals,
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our appeals process.

A report and analysis will be provided to our CEO, Professional Development Committee and ACI Board for review, at least annually.

4.2. Monitoring of the appeals management system

We will continually monitor our appeals management system to ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving appeals and identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.