

# Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy

## Contents

Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Outcome Standards .....	2
Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy.....	3
Feedback.....	3
Procedures .....	3
Monitoring .....	3
Records .....	3
Complaints .....	4
Procedures .....	4
The Complaints Process .....	5
Monitoring .....	7
Records .....	7
Appeals .....	8
The Assessment Appeals Process .....	8
Monitoring .....	9
Records .....	9
Complaints and Appeals: Alternative Contacts.....	9
Related Policies .....	9
References .....	9

## Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Outcome Standards

Policy Content	Quality Area 2: VET Student Support	Performance Indicators
Feedback	Information: Standard 2.7	The RTO demonstrates:
Complaints	Information: Standard 2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) information about how to provide feedback and make complaints is publicly available and easily accessible</li> <li>(b) VET students are supported to provide feedback and make complaints</li> <li>(c) a complaints management system that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) ensures parties are afforded procedural fairness</li> <li>(ii) identifies reasonable timeframes for responding to and resolving complaints</li> <li>(iii) provides avenues for further action where complaints are not resolved</li> </ul> </li> <li>(d) outcomes of complaints are documented and communicated to relevant parties</li> <li>(e) feedback and complaints are used to inform continuous improvement.</li> </ul>
Appeals	Information: Standard 2.8	<p>The RTO demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) VET students are informed about avenues for appeal</li> <li>(b) an appeals management system that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) ensures appellants are afforded procedural fairness</li> <li>(ii) identifies reasonable timeframes for actioning appeals</li> <li>(iii) provides avenues for review by an independent party, if requested by the appellant (at no or low cost to them)</li> </ul> </li> <li>(c) appeal outcomes are documented and communicated to the appellant</li> <li>(d) the outcomes of appeals are used to inform continuous improvement.</li> </ul>

## **Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy**

Achievers College understands that effective and confidential feedback and complaints processes enhance the overall quality of VET services and strengthens our reputation. It also means we can proactively identify and rectify systemic issues and strengthen our continuous improvement practices.

In most instances, we accept the definition of feedback to be a compliment, criticism, comment or suggestion where a response is not sought, or not reasonable to expect. Therefore, the key difference between complaints and critical feedback for the purpose of this policy is the reasonable expectation of a response.

We also understand our obligation to manage appeals regarding assessment decisions.

We ensure that information regarding feedback, complaints and appeals processes is accessible by publishing it in our Student Handbook and on our Student Information webpage. New staff will be informed at induction as per the VET Workforce Policy and students at course commencement.

### **Feedback**

We encourage ongoing and timely feedback with respect to our services as we recognise that prompt resolution of minor issues can prevent escalation into formal complaints and can ensure improvements are made to services that enhance the experience and satisfaction of students

### **Procedures**

We collect feedback from students and stakeholders in several ways:

- through end of course evaluations
- by informal discussions with students, trainers and staff
- from feedback when applying reasonable adjustment to training and assessment processes
- from Quality Indicator survey feedback
- from industry representatives into the development of our training and assessment strategies and assessment validation

### **Monitoring**

All feedback including course evaluations and Quality Indicator surveys is reviewed by the RTO manager and/or CEO and summaries are presented at management meetings.

- Any agreed action is minuted and allocated to a staff member.
- Improvements generated by feedback from review of Training and Assessment Strategies or assessment validation are monitored as per the Training and Assessment Policy.
- Improvements are recorded in the Continuous Improvement Register.

### **Records**

- End of Course Evaluations
- Quality Indicator Surveys
- Minutes of meetings
- Assessment Validation Checklists
- Training and Assessment Strategies
- Continuous Improvement Register

## Complaints

We adopt the Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines AS/NZS 10002:2014 definition of a complaint as an implied or express statement of dissatisfaction where a response is sought, reasonable to expect or legally required.

We are committed to protecting the rights of our students by managing and responding to complaints involving the conduct of our marketing, administration and training and assessment processes. This includes complaints directed at other students, our trainers, assessors and staff. All complaints and appeals will be treated as an opportunity for improvement, will help determine future programs and contribute to our continuous improvement systems.

## Procedures

- The student complaints process is written in plain English and included in our Student Handbook and on our Student Information webpage.
- We make it clear that complaints are welcome, and the process is unbiased and confidential.
- The Complaints Form is simple and easy to use.
- The Complaints Form on our website is accessible from our Student Information page so that anyone can reach it in one or two clicks.
- Students have a variety of ways to make a complaint including:
  - face to face prior or after class
  - by phone
  - by email
  - by post
  - the Complaints and Appeals form (on request and on website)

As we grow, we will ensure the following procedures apply:

- All staff including trainers, assessors will be informed of the complaints process at induction.
- We will ensure adequate staff are employed to handle front of house complaints.
- To ensure staff can provide relevant and up to date services and support in response to complaints, they will be kept informed of any changes to training programs, services and policy or procedures through emails and discussion at management/staff meetings.

## **The Complaints Process**

Achievers College welcomes complaints and has processes in place to ensure they are handled reasonably and fairly in confidence and without bias or any fear of punishment.

### **Step 1 – Informal resolution**

Students and staff are encouraged in the first instance to talk to the person involved; this might be a trainer/assessor, member of staff or another student.

If the problem continues or is not easy to resolve informally the following steps are initiated.

### **Step 2—Submit the complaint**

Complaints may be received by phone, text, post, email or via our Complaints and Appeals form on our website. Contact details and links are available on our website and in our Student Handbook and on our Student Information Page.

In all instances we will clarify the source of the dissatisfaction, that is, is it with our services, actions, decisions, inaction, delay, policy or processes.

If possible, we establish the desired outcome of the person making the complaint (the complainant).

We also establish if the complainant has any communication preferences, requires an interpreter or needs support with making the complaint.

The complaint is logged in the Complaints and Appeals Register.

Written complaints are acknowledged in writing and include:

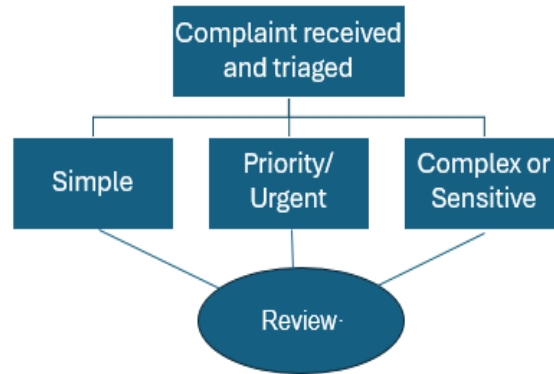
- the expected length of time to resolve
- contact details for the CEO.

### **Step 3—Assess and triage**

To facilitate quicker resolutions and higher levels of complainant satisfaction, complaints are triaged as Simple, Priority/Urgent or Complex. Those classified simple or urgent can be resolved promptly. Complex and sensitive complaints are allocated more time and resources.

The CEO is responsible for triaging complaints and notifying other relevant staff members who are to be involved in the resolution process.

**Simple:** can be resolved by staff normally within 3 days and are usually:



- any that involve external agencies and can be resolved by a suitable referral
- those that can be resolved by providing a better explanation or information
- those that relate to simple errors that can be readily fixed.

In instances where simple complaints can be handled by frontline staff, they will be logged in the Complaints Register with details of the agreed resolution and the Manager notified.

**Priority/Urgent:** can normally be resolved internally within 7 days and are usually:

- those that have urgent wellbeing, health or safety implications for the person involved and/or other staff and students
- any that involve a deadline for achieving an outcome e.g. the impending end of training or assessment delivery
- those that have risks of escalation or loss of reputation.

**Complex/Sensitive:** may take up to 28 days to resolve and usually require an investigation that may involve people other than the complainant e.g. other students, staff or external organisations.

#### **Step 4 - Resolve or Investigate**

A complaint is considered resolved when the outcome wanted by the complainant is reached or a solution is provided that is appropriate and fair in the circumstances and that corresponds with legislation and organisational policy.

If a complaint falls outside our organisational responsibility, we will provide suitable referral information or support the person to access the appropriate services.

Investigation may be required if the complaint cannot be resolved easily or promptly. Investigation plans and reports will be developed for complex complaints to indicate how the following is considered.

- significant complaint issues
- further information required
- the estimated timeframe to resolution
- the complainants preferred outcome
- communication required to keep complainant informed of progress

- potential outcomes and solutions
- internal and relevant external policies and procedures
- legislation

A meeting with the complainant may be required to gather more information through the investigation process. This meeting can be face to face, by phone or zoom, and the complainant can elect to have a representative present. A record of the meeting is kept. Any investigation of matters raised is followed up and a response made within an agreed timeframe. Both parties are to sign the record of the meeting,

#### **Step 5 - Communicate the outcome**

Prior to finalising a complaint, we will contact the complainant to discuss the intended outcome. At this stage, the complainant can provide other information and ask further questions. In most instances, this will be done verbally, either by a meeting or phone, and followed up in writing taking into consideration any identified LLN issues or language barriers of the complainant.

If the complainant is satisfied with the outcome, it is considered completed.

#### **Step 6—Independent mediation**

If the matter is still unresolved, an independent mediation body will be assigned to examine the matter. This party will be independent of the RTO and the complainant, and their selection will be managed by the Manager with the mutual agreement of the complainant. The written decision of this body will be final and will be made within 28 days of the complaint first being submitted. If the 28-day target cannot be met, the complainant will be informed in writing giving reasons why more time is required and will then be given regular updates on the progress of the matter.

#### **Step 7-Finalise**

The Complaints and Appeals Register is updated with details of the complaint, personnel involved, actions taken and outcome. Links to relevant documents and correspondence are included.

#### **Monitoring**

All complaints are used to inform our Continuous Improvement Process.

Feedback and complaints are presented at management meetings. Causes for complaints and required improvements are discussed and agreed actions recorded and allocated to staff. The Continuous Improvement Register is updated accordingly

#### **Records**

- The Complaints and Appeals Register
- The Continuous Improvement Register
- Submitted Complaints Forms
- Signed records of meetings with complainant
- Minutes of meetings with any related personnel or students
- Relevant meeting minutes

## **Appeals**

### **The Assessment Appeals Process**

Achievers College will consider all appeals against assessment decisions. All appeals are treated as confidential.

#### **Step 1 – Informal Resolution**

Students are encouraged in the first instance to talk to the assessor who made the assessment decision within one week of receiving the result. Students are entitled to two (or three for online questions) attempts at assessment so in most cases the matter can be resolved by the assessor providing feedback and a resubmission or reattempt organised at a mutually convenient time.

#### **Step 2—Review the competency decision**

If the outcome is not resolved, then the assessment will be re-assessed by another, fully qualified assessor. This should be completed within 14 days.

#### **Step 3 – Submit a formal appeal**

If the student is still not satisfied with the assessment outcome, the appeal should be put in writing within 7 days using the Appeals Form which is available in the Student Handbook and on the Student Information page.

Appeals may be received by phone, text, post, email or via our Appeals Form on our website. Contact details and links are available on our website and in the Student Handbook/Information webpages.

The details of the appeal are logged in the Complaints and Appeals Register

#### **Step 4 - Resolve**

On receipt of the Appeals Form a meeting with the Manager is arranged. This meeting can be face to face, by phone or zoom, and students can elect to have a representative present. A record of the meeting is kept including the reasons for appeal and the agreed proposed solution. Any investigation of matters raised is followed up and a response made within an agreed timeframe. Both parties are to sign the record of the meeting.

#### **Step 5 – Independent mediation**

If the matter is still unresolved, a mutually agreed, independent mediation body will be assigned to examine the matter. The written decision of this body will be final and will be made within 28 days of the complaint first being submitted. If the 28-day target cannot be met, the student will be informed in writing giving reasons why more time is required and will then be given regular updates on the progress of the matter.

#### **Step 6 – Finalise**

All appeals will be recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register links to the assessment(s), outcome results records, and assessor feedback. Copies will also be kept on the student file.

## Monitoring

All appeals are used to inform our Continuous Improvement Process.

Appeals are tabled for discussion at management meetings and processes are developed and implemented to mitigate the risk of future appeals. Identified improvements are noted in the Continuous Improvement Register.

## Records

- Complaints and Appeals Register
- Continuous Improvement Register
- Submitted Appeals Forms
- Signed records of meetings with appellant
- Assessment Records
- Relevant management meeting minutes

## Complaints and Appeals: Alternative Contacts

If in the instance of an Appeal or Complaint not being resolved by the above processes, the student will be informed that there are other avenues of complaint. These include:

- [Fair trading - SA.GOV.AU](https://www.fairtrading.gov.au) for complaints regarding non-training issues such as disputes over refunds or charges.
- The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is the national regulator regarding training and assessment delivery. They handle complaints that relate directly to RTO's providing training and assessment processes that do not meet the Standards for Registered Training Organisations. Details of their Complaints Process are available on the ASQA [website](https://www.asqa.gov.au).
- Complaints to do with Fair Trading SA should be directed to:
  - Phone: 131 882
  - Postal Address: GPO Box 1719, Adelaide SA 5001.
  - Website: <https://www.cbs.sa.gov.au/contact-cbs>
- For any Work Health and Safety issue, the jurisdictional WHS State Body should be contacted. Details of each state body can be found on the [SafeWork Australia website](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au).

## Related Policies

- Privacy Policy
- Record Keeping Policy
- Student Support Policy
- Training and Assessment Policy

## References

[Outcomes Standards Quality Area 2](#)

[A good practice guide to handling complaints](#)