

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY AND ASSOCIATED PROCEDURES

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy and associated procedures outline AIO Training's 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 2.7 the Outcome Standards for RTOs.

Note that mechanisms for providing feedback is addressed in our Quality Assurance Policy and Associated Procedures.

This policy and associated procedures meet the requirements of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (VIC), Working with Children Act 2005 (VIC), and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

POLICY STATEMENTS

APPROACH

Complaints may be made against AIO Training, its trainers and assessors and other staff, a learner of AIO Training, as well as any third party providing services on behalf of AIO Training.

Complaints can be in relation to any aspect of AIO Training's services provided.

Appeals can be made in respect of any decision made by AIO Training. An appeal is a request for AIO Training decision to be reviewed in relation to a matter, including assessment appeals.

In managing complaints, AIO Training will ensure that the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaint process. This means reviewing each complaint or appeal in an objective and consistent manner.

AIO Training will appoint relevant person/s to manage complaints and appeals.

The internal complaints and appeals process will be conducted at no cost to students.

Potential causes of complaints and appeals will be investigated and corrective and preventative action will be taken in relation to complaint and appeals. Complaints and appeals will also be seen as an opportunity for improvement.

All individuals, including third parties will be informed of allegations made and will have the opportunity to present their case.

Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of an individual to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws and it does not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

AIO Training encourages complainants to first seek to address the issue informally by discussing it with the person involved. However, if the person is not comfortable with this or has tried this unsuccessfully, they are to follow the procedures below.

All records of complaints and appeals will be kept by AIO Training and entered into the complaints and appeals register.

All complaints and appeals involving or affecting a person aged under 18 will be handled with a youth-focused approach, prioritising the student's best interests, views and safety. Where appropriate, support will be offered to assist the student and their family through the process.

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, AIO Training 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.
- Where the complaint involves a child or young person, communication will be tailored to ensure the child understands the outcome (where appropriate), and that a support person is available throughout.

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.

If a child or young person is involved in the complaint or appeal, an appropriate adult (e.g. guardian, parent or support officer) will be invited to attend any related meetings.

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 AIO Training'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 AIO Training's decision to cancel their enrolment
- if the appeal is against AIO Training's decision to defer, suspend or cancel a student's enrolment due to misbehaviour, AIO Training 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 AIO Training that made the decision to appoint the independent party.

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

During the mediation process, AIO Training 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.

If the complaint involves a child or young person, AIO Training will ensure the mediator understands child-focused practices and that support is provided to the child throughout the external process.

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 AIO Training'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.

Note: if the complaint involves a child or young person, use methods to ensure that their voice is heard sensitively and that support is provided as appropriate.
- 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 Complete the investigation within 30 days, or if it is considered that it will take longer than 60 calendar days to process, 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. 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 AIO Training will take in response to the external mediator's decision.

3. MANAGE COMPLAINTS INVOLVING THOSE UNDER 18

- 3.1 Advise parents or guardians of students aged under 18 that they can raise concerns about child safety through:
 - the Complaints and Appeals Procedures
 - direct contact with the Child Safety Officer or Compliance Manager/RTO Manager.
- 3.2 Ensure that these complaints are:
 - treated seriously
 - responded to promptly and confidentially
 - used to improve practices, as relevant.
- 3.3 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and culturally diverse communities in a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive manner.

Where necessary, provide interpreters or cultural liaisons.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The CEO is responsible for:

- investigating complaints and appeals
- making decisions about complaints and appeals in conjunction with others.
- ensuring child-focused principles are embedded where complaints involve children or young people.

The RTO Manager is responsible for:

- investigating complaints and appeals
- making decisions about complaints and appeals in conjunction with others
- facilitating external decisions
- ensuring appropriate child safety procedures are followed.

The Administration and Student Support Officer is responsible for:

- processing complaints and appeals forms
- filing all documentation
- coordinating child-appropriate support where a complaint or appeal involves a child.