



COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Introduction

The Australian Academy of Commerce (AAC) is dedicated to ensuring that all students, staff and stakeholders have access to a fair, transparent, and accessible process for addressing complaints and appeals. This policy ensures compliance with the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR Act), the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000, and associated standards, including the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, the ESOS National Code 2018, and the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) Standards 2018.

Purpose

The purpose of the Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure is to:

- Ensure that all students, staff, and stakeholders have access to a fair, transparent, and accessible process for resolving complaints and appeals.
- Comply with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Provide a structured framework for addressing grievances promptly, equitably, and consistently.
- Safeguard the rights and well-being of individuals engaging with AAC services, fostering a supportive and respectful environment.
- Promote continuous improvement through the review of complaints and appeals outcomes, ensuring policies and procedures remain effective and aligned with best practices.

Principles

- AAC encourages informal resolution where possible.
- Complaints and appeals will be acknowledged within five (5) business days.
- Timelines for resolution will be clearly communicated.
- Complainants will not face any disadvantage or reprisal as a result of lodging a complaint or appeal.

Scope

This policy applies to all complaints and appeals submitted by students, staff, or other stakeholders, whether related to academic or non-academic matters, within AAC's control.

Policy Statement

AAC ensures:

1. All complaints and appeals are addressed promptly and impartially.
2. Complainants are informed of their rights, procedures, and timelines.
3. Procedures are accessible, inclusive, and protect confidentiality.
4. All outcomes are documented and reviewed for continuous improvement.

Complaints and appeals may relate to:

- Academic decisions (e.g. assessments, course outcomes).
- Non-academic matters (e.g. enrolment issues, services, staff behaviour).
- Procedural errors or breaches of policy.



Definitions

Appeal	A request to review a decision made by AAC (e.g., assessment outcomes, disciplinary actions).
Complaint	A formal expression of dissatisfaction about an issue under AAC's control.
Confidentiality	Ensuring information is shared only with those directly involved in resolving the grievance.
Continuous Improvement	Ongoing efforts to enhance policies, processes and practices to achieve better outcomes.
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
Quality Management Team (QMT)	AAC's Quality Management Team play a critical role in maintaining regulatory compliance, upholding academic standards, and driving continuous improvement. Members include; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliance Officer• Director of Studies (VET)• Director of Studied (ELICOS)
VET	Vocational Education and Training, a sector of education providing practical and skills-based training.

References

- ESOS Act 2000
- ELICOS Standards 2018
- ESOS National Code 2018: Specifically, Standard 10
- NVR Act 2011
- Standards for RTOs (2015): Specifically, Standard 6

Related AAC Policies and Procedures

- All AAC VET and ELICOS Policies and Procedures

Complaints and Appeal Procedure

1. Accessibility

The Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure is available on the AAC website, in the student handbook, and during onboarding. It is provided in plain English and alternative formats are available upon request (e.g., large print, translated versions).

2. Complaints Process

2.1 Academic Complaints

- **Step 1- Initial Resolution**
 - Students should first discuss the issue with their trainer/assessor (VET) or teacher (ELICOS)



- **Step 2 - Formal Complaint**
 - If unresolved, the student submits a written complaint to the Director of Studies VET or Director of Studies ELICOS, as applicable, within five (5) business days via **AAC's Improvement Action Complaint Form** available on the AAC website.
- **Step 3 – Meeting**
 - The Director of Studies meets with the student within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint to seek resolution.
- **Step 4 - Escalation:**
 - If unresolved, the complaint is referred to the Quality Management Team (QMT), including the CEO, within five (5) business days.
- **Step 5 - External Mediation:**
 - If internal processes fail, the student has ten (10) business days to appeal the decision and request external mediation. Upon receiving the request AAC will refer the matter to an external mediator to ensure the appeal is handled within a timely manner.

2.2 Non-Academic Complaints

- **Step 1- Initial Resolution**
 - Students should first discuss the issue with the Student Services Officer (SSO).
- **Step 2 – Formal Complaint**
 - Non-academic complaints must be submitted in writing to the Student Services Officer (SSO) by completing **AAC's Improvement Action Complaint Form** available on the AAC website.
- **Step 3 - Assessment**
 - The complaint is then forwarded to the QMT, for initial review and resolution.
- **Step 4 - Resolution**
 - If unresolved, the complaint is escalated to the CEO within ten (10) business days.
- **Step 5 - External Mediation**
 - The complainant may access external mediation via ASQA or another approved mediator if internal processes are unsatisfactory.

2.3 External Resolution Options

In the event of the complainant reporting, they are dissatisfied with the proposed solution; the following avenues are available:

1. **ASQA: Australian Skills Quality Authority**
Phone: 1300 701 801
Email: feedback@asqa.gov.au
2. **National Training Complaints Hotline**
Phone: 1800 000 674
3. **NSW Ombudsman (Domestic Students)**
Website: ombo.nsw.gov.au
4. **Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (International Students)**



Website: ombudsman.gov.au

Please Note: The ombudsman cannot change the decision. They consider the way the decision was made and whether the provider's policies were followed and make recommendations on how the decision or process could be improved.

3. Appeals Process

3.1 Grounds for Appeal

- Perceived bias or procedural errors in assessment.
- Unreasonable application of assessment criteria.
- Clerical errors in recording results.

3.2 Steps

- **Step 1** - Appeals must be lodged in writing within twenty (20) business days of the original decision via **AAC's Appeal Form** available on the AAC website.
- **Step 2** - An independent assessor will review the appeal and arrange reassessment if necessary.
- **Step 3** – If unresolved, the appeal may proceed to external mediation.

4. Timelines

Step	Timeframe
Acknowledge complaint/appeal	Within 5 business days
Initial resolution (informal)	Within 5 business days of submission
Escalation to senior management	Within 10 business days
External mediation (if unresolved)	Within 10 business days of escalation

5. Confidentiality and Recordkeeping

AAC ensures strict confidentiality throughout the process. All complaints and appeals are documented in the Complaints and Appeals Register. Outcomes are communicated in writing and reviewed for systematic improvements.

Students requiring additional support (e.g. interpreters, disability accommodations) will be provided with necessary assistance.

6. Staff Training

Staff involved in handling complaints and appeals receive biannual training in areas such as conflict resolution, compliance, and effective communication.

7. Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances

Compassionate or compelling circumstance by definitions are generally those circumstances beyond the control of the student and they have an impact on the student's capacity and/or ability to progress through a course and could include:

- Serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the students was unable to attend class.



- Serious illness or death of a close family member (independent evidence of the exceptional circumstances is required).
- Major upheaval, unrest or natural disaster in the home country requiring the student's emergency travel and this has impacted on his/her course progress.
- A traumatic experience which could include, but is not limited to, involvement in or witnessing of an accident or a crime committed against the student, or the student has been a witness to a crime (police or psychologist's reports are required).

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
CEO	Ensure compliance with relevant legislation. Approve updates to the policy. Review escalated complaints and appeals.
Quality Management Team (QMT)	Oversees the implementation of continuous improvements strategies across all areas of operation. Ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements and maintain quality assurance.
Compliance Officer	Oversee the resolution on non-compliance issues and maintains quality assurance records, including the Deferment, Suspension, Intervention and Cancellation Register.
Director of Studies VET / Director of Studies ELICOS	Ensures training and assessment compliance with Standards for RTOs and ELICOS Standards. Implement quality improvements in course delivery, student outcomes and compliance processes,
Student Services Officer (SSO)	Assist students in completing forms and provide information about the complaints and appeals process. Identifies student concerns and reports them to QMT for quality improvement considerations.

Monitoring and Review

The complaints and appeals policy is reviewed annually to ensure alignment with legislative changes and best practices. Findings from the review are documented, and action plans are developed to address any gaps.



Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Approved by	Approval date	Author	Review date
V1.0	Jan 2024	Original policy	CEO	Jan 2024	Compliance Team	Jan 2025
V2.0	9 Dec 2024	Revised policy formerly Grievance, Student Complaint & Appeal Policy	CEO	Feb 2025	Compliance Team	Dec 2025

Policy and Document Information

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