



Complaints and Appeals Policy/Procedure

Procedure No: 3-3100

Issue date: 5.5.11

Issue No: 10

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Purpose: To describe the policy/procedure for handling student grievances within the organisation.

Responsible Person: Chief Executive Officer

In this document the terms 'EQUALS International', 'EQUALS', 'College' and 'Institute' refer to EQUALS International (Aust) Pty Ltd ACN 078 991 858.

In this document:

"Student" means both students and potential students, enrolled, or seeking to enrol in a VET course of study.

"Complainant" means the person making the complaint.

Policy:

The Complaints and Appeals Process has been established to ensure that Academic/Non-Academic student concerns (or matters) are treated in a transparent, timely and just matter. EQUALS ensures that students have access to a fair and equitable process for dealing with grievances and provides an avenue for students to appeal against decisions that affect their progress.

Academic student concerns may include the provision of training and assessment within a VET course of study, including quality of teaching, classroom issues, availability and standard of instructional resources, course content, student progress, scheduling, training facilities and discrimination.

Non-Academic student concerns may relate to the provision of support services such as those associated with the enrolment process, finance functions, job placement assistance, the handling of personal information and access to personal records.

The policy applies regardless of the location of the campus of the Institute at which the complaint has arisen, the student's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

Procedure:

EQUALS International has implemented for Academic/Non-Academic student matters a procedure which outlines the handling of complaints and appeals which is easily accessible to students, including those who are or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance. This process is to be undertaken without charge or at a reasonable cost to the complainant and encourages the timely resolution of the complaint.

This procedure:

- includes the provision for appeal through an independent internal investigation of complaints which remain unresolved,
- includes the provision for external review of decisions made following any internal investigation,
- includes consideration of any recommendations arising from the external review,
- ensures that complainants are not victimised or discriminated against; and
- will be complete, unambiguous and agreed to and ratified by the Institute.

This procedure does not apply in instances where a complaint or appeal received from a student relates to behavior which is illegal, harmful to the complainant or others, or where the Institute or community is at risk.

1. Students are regularly provided with the opportunity to complete an evaluation form which enables them to express any concerns they may have encountered with EQUALS in relation to academic and non academic matters. Where students have circled a rating below satisfactory or have made specific comments concerning their dissatisfaction, the student is contacted and the issue is addressed in person with the Chief Operations Officer.
Students wishing to lodge a formal complaint are requested to do so in writing to the Chief Operations Officer at mchittleborough@equals.com.au or GPO Box 2443 Adelaide SA 5001.
2. Where a complaint is lodged, EQUALS will contact the student within a reasonable timeframe (e.g. 10 days) to further consult on the issue.
3. An independent and impartial senior staff member who is nominated by the Institute, discusses the complaint with the individual. The outcome is recorded on an Improvement Report F 024 or as required. Students may obtain a copy of the Improvement Report by requesting a copy from EQUALS.



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Procedure continued:

4. A verbal and/or written response will be issued to the student lodging the complaint, informing them of the outcome and any other relevant information including their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint.
5. Overseas students: It is important to consider the “duration of overseas student’s stay in Australia” (as outlined in Standard 8 of the National Code). Every effort must be made to ensure the safety, security, quality-learning environment, emotional and physical health of the Student and appreciation given for their circumstances whilst away from home. The nominated senior staff member will assist the student on an individual needs basis. 24 hour support is available for students. **Note: Overseas students are not eligible to access VET FEE-HELP Assistance.**
6. An independent and impartial senior staff member who is nominated by the Institute, discusses the complaint with the individual. The outcome is recorded on an Improvement Report F 024 or as required. Students may obtain a copy of the Improvement Report by requesting a copy from EQUALS.
7. A verbal and/or written response will be issued to the student lodging the complaint, informing them of the outcome and any other relevant information including their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint.
8. Overseas students: It is important to consider the “duration of overseas student’s stay in Australia” (as outlined in Standard 8 of the National Code). Every effort must be made to ensure the safety, security, quality-learning environment, emotional and physical health of the Student and appreciation given for their circumstances whilst away from home. The nominated senior staff member will assist the student on an individual needs basis. 24 hour support is available for students. **Note: Overseas students are not eligible to access VET FEE-HELP Assistance.**
9. **Internal Appeals Process:** Where a student is dissatisfied with a decision or action made by EQUALS, the student may appeal the decision/action within **20 working days**. Students may lodge an appeal in writing addressed to the CEO, Katina Jones at kjones@equals.com.au or GPO Box 2443 Adelaide SA 5001.
10. Once an appeal has been received, the CEO or nominated independent staff member will contact the student within 10 working days to discuss the matter further and work to resolve the issue.
11. **External Appeals:** If the issue is unable to be resolved within the organisation, then the student has the right to escalate the issue to an external body (independent body) who will review the issue. EQUALS recommends that students contact one of the following organisations:

Australian Council for Private Education and Training
PO Box 551, East Melbourne, Vic 8002
Ph: (03) 9412 5900 4490 Fax: (03) 9416 1895 Toll Free in Australia: 1800 657 644
Email: acpet@acpet.edu.au

Quality & Tertiary Education Policy Directorate
Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Training
08 8226 3065
www.dfeest.sa.gov.au

Office of the Training Advocate
Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Training
Toll Free: 1800 006 488
www.trainingadvocate.sa.gov.au

Further External Grievance Contacts are available in the Student Handbook (F 002)



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These services are free to students. Students are welcome to have a friend, advocate or mentor/buddy present at the time of discussing a grievance or dispute. Both EQUALS and the above organisations are committed to the prompt resolution of complaints/disputes, particularly in consideration of the limited stay of an overseas student in Australia.

12. EQUALS aims to resolve reported grievances within a short timeframe, typically between 24 hours and up to 14 days. This is subject to the nature and complexity of the complaint, together with any other constraints that may be experienced in resolving the problem.

13. Further Action for Complaints and Appeals regarding VET Fee Help.

If a complaint/appeal still remains unresolved after the external appeal, the individual may decide to refer the matter to the National Training Complaints Hotline on 13 38 73.

14. Record Keeping & Confidentiality

A written record of all complaints handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the complaint/appeal appropriate access to these records. Access to these records is available upon written request to the CEO. These records will be maintained in the student's file.

All records relating to complaints and appeals will be treated as confidential and will be covered by the EQUALS Student Privacy and Personal Information Policy.

15. Publication

This Policy and Procedure was ratified and approved by the governing authority;

Katina Jones, CEO – ratified on 5 May 2011.

For the purposes of communicating to students, this Policy and Procedure will form part of the orientation process and will be published on the EQUALS website (www.equalsonline.edu.au/downloads).

For the purposes of communicating to and training staff, this Policy and Procedure will form part of the induction process and will be published in the Staff and Educator Handbook and the EQUALS Operating System.

Documents:

- F 002 Student Handbook
- F 771 International Student Prospectus
- F 024 Improvement Report
- F 059 Student Evaluation Form
- F 079 Staff and Educator Handbook