

SC4-SF: Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedure

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to outline REIV’s approach to managing dissatisfaction, formal complaints and appeals of students, clients and other members of the community. It provides a transparent approach for complaints and appeals from the general public and students to be addressed in a fair, efficient and confidential manner.

This policy contributes to REIV’s compliance with the requirements of its registration as a training provider including Elements 1.1, 2.2, 2.7 & 3.2 of the AQTF as well as Guidelines 2.7 & 2.8 of the VRQA Guidelines.

While this policy is designed to comply with REIV’s RTO requirements, it is implemented across all of its Workforce Development division including non-accredited courses as a best practise approach to handling training and assessment related complaints.

Definitions

Appeal means a request for a decision made by REIV to be reviewed.

AQTF means the AQTF Essential Standards of Continuing Registration 2010

Complaint means a person’s formal expression of dissatisfaction with any product or service provided by REIV .

Contract means the 2019 VET Funding Contract for the Skills First Program issued by the Department.

Department means the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

Services means training, assessment, related educational and support services and/or activities related to the recruitment of prospective learners. It does not include services such as student counselling, mediation or ICT support.

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VRQA Guidelines means the VRQA Guidelines for VET Providers 2016

VRQA means Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority, the state VET regulator and REIV's registering body

Policy

1. Nature of complaints and appeals

- REIV responds to all allegations involving the conduct of:
 - The RTO, its trainers and assessors and other staff.
 - Any third party providing Services on behalf of REIV .
 - Any student or client of REIV .
- Complaints may be made in relation to any of REIV 's services and activities such as:
 - the application and enrolment process
 - marketing information
 - the quality of training and assessment provided
 - training and assessment matters, including student progress, student support and assessment requirements
 - the way someone has been treated
 - the actions of another student
- An appeal is a request for a decision made by REIV to be reviewed. Decisions may have been about:
 - course admissions
 - refund assessments
 - response to a complaint
 - assessment outcomes / results
 - other general decisions made by REIV

2. Principles of resolution

- REIV is committed to developing a procedurally fair complaints and appeals process that is carried out free from bias, following the principles of natural justice. Through this policy and procedure, REIV ensures that complaints and appeals:
 - Are responded to in a consistent and transparent manner.
 - Are responded to promptly, objectively, with sensitivity and confidentiality.
 - Are able to be made at no cost to the individual.
 - Are used as an opportunity to identify potential causes of the complaint or appeal and take actions to prevent the issues from recurring as well as identifying any areas for improvement.
- REIV will inform all persons or parties involved in any allegations made as well as providing them with an opportunity to present their side of the matter.

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- 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.
- Where a student chooses to access this policy and procedure, REIV will maintain the student's enrolment while the complaints/appeals handling process is ongoing.

3. Timeframes for resolution

Complaints and appeals will be finalised as soon as practicable or at least within 30 calendar days unless there is a significant reason for the matter to take longer. In matters where additional time is needed, the complainant or appellant will be advised in writing of the reasons and will be updated weekly on the progress of the matter until such a time that the matter is resolved.

4. Records of complaints and appeals

- REIV will maintain a record of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes on the *Complaints and Appeals Register*, which will be securely stored according to the Privacy Policy and Procedures. . These records are reviewed to identify areas of improvement in accordance with REIV's *Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure*.

5. Making a complaint or appeal

- Complaints about a particular incident should be made within ninety (90) calendar days of the incident occurring and appeals must be made within thirty (30) calendar days of the original decision being made.
- Complaints and appeals must be made in writing using the *Complaints and Appeals Form*, or other written format and sent to REIV 's head office at insert 335 Camberwell Road, Camberwell VIC 3124 attention to the Chief Executive Officer.
- When making a complaint or appeal, provide as much information as possible to enable REIV to investigate and determine an appropriate solution. This should include:
 - The issue you are complaining about or the decision you are appealing – describe what happened and how it affected you.
 - Any evidence you have to support your complaint or appeal.
 - Details about the steps you have already taken to resolve the issue.
 - Suggestions about how the matter might be resolved.
- Your complaint or appeal will be acknowledged in writing via email or post within 7 days of receipt.

6. Resolution of complaints and appeals

- Some or all members of the management team of REIV will be involved in resolving complaints and appeals as outlined in the procedures.
- Where a complaint or appeal involves another individual or organisation, they will be given the opportunity to respond to any allegations made.
- Where a third party delivering Services on behalf of the RTO is involved, they will be included in the process of resolving the complaint or appeal.
- In the case of an assessment appeal, an assessor who is independent from the original decision will assess the original task again. The outcome of this assessment will be the result granted for the assessment task.

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7. Independent parties

- REIV acknowledges the need for an appropriate independent party to be appointed to review a matter where this is requested by the complainant or appellant and the internal processes have failed to resolve the matter. Costs associated with independent parties to review a matter must be covered by the complainant/appellant unless the decision to include an independent party was made by REIV .
- REIV may also appoint the independent party to be involved in the resolution of a complaint or appeal where it is deemed necessary.
- REIV will provide complete cooperation with the external mediator investigating the complaint/appeal and will be bound by the recommendations arising out of this process.
- The CEO will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within twenty (20) days of being notified of the recommendations. The complainant or appellant will also be formally notified in writing of the outcome of the mediation.

8. External complaint avenues

Complaints can be made externally through the following avenues:

- 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. Consumers can register a complaint with the National Training Complaints Hotline by:

- Phone: 03 9205 6666 13 38 73, Monday - Friday, 8am to 6pm nationally.
- Email: ntch@education.gov.au

For more information about the National Training Complaints Hotline, refer to the following webpage: <https://www.education.gov.au/NTCH>

- Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA):

Complainants may also complain to REIV's registering body, Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

VRQA can investigate complaints about REIV in relation to:

- the quality of our training and assessment
- our marketing and advertising practices
- If your complaint does not fall within VRQA's jurisdiction, it may be resolved more quickly if you directly contact the agency responsible as listed on the following website: <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/who-can-help-you-with-complaints-not-for-us.aspx>
- Please refer to the following webpage below before making a complaint to VRQA: <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/complaints.aspx>

For students:

- VRQA may not be able to investigate complaint if you do not include evidence that you have already exhausted our formal internal complaints process as above.

- Department of Education and Training

Complaints relating to government funded training under the Skills First Funding Contract can be made to the Department of Education and Training. The Department is principally concerned with complaints regarding RTO misconduct including unethical and fraudulent practices. If a party wishes to make a complaint to the Department, they can do so by:

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- Downloading the Department’s complaint form, available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/compliancecomplain.aspx>; and
- Returning the completed form to the following email 335 Camberwell Road, Camberwell VIC 3124 vtg.feedback@edumail.vic.gov.au; or
- Alternatively, the party can post the completed complaint form to:
Deputy Secretary, Higher Education and Skills Group
c/- Executive Director, Training Market Operations
GPO Box 4367
Melbourne, Victoria 3001

9. Publication

- This policy and procedure will be published on REIV’s website and students will be informed of this in the student handbook.

Procedures

1. Complaints management

Procedure	Responsibility
<p>A. Receive and acknowledge complaint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per policy, complaints are to be made in writing by the complainant, attention to the CEO. • The CEO should review all complaints upon receipt. • Acknowledge receipt of complaint in writing by sending a letter to complainant within 3 working days of receipt. Use <i>Complaint/ Appeal Acknowledgement Letter</i>. • Record details of the complaint on the <i>Complaints and Appeals Register</i>. 	CEO and Training Manager
<p>B. Investigate the complaint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon receiving the complaint, the matter is to be investigated to ensure all relevant information is available and it is accurate and complete. • Further details from the complainant, respondent or other involved parties may be requested during this stage. This may be in writing, over the phone, or face-to-face. • If the matter is in relation to a third party delivering Services on behalf of the RTO, the third party should be involved in the resolution of the complaint. • The CEO will review the information and decide on an appropriate response. Where deemed necessary by the CEO, the matter may be reviewed by other members of the management team to arrive at an appropriate resolution. • <i>Note: The complaint must be completely resolved within 30 calendar days of receipt of the original complaint. If the matter is particularly complex and it is going to take longer to resolve, the complainant is to be advised in writing along with reasons for the extra time. They must be provided with updates on</i> 	CEO

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Procedure	Responsibility
<i>progress on a weekly basis thereafter until the matter is resolved.</i>	
<p>C. Advise of the outcome and update records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a written response to the complainant outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – REIV’s understanding of the complaint – The steps taken to investigate and resolve the complaint – Decisions made about resolution, with reasons for the decisions made – Areas that have been identified as possible causes of the complaint and improvements to be recommended – Their right to access the appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints process. • Update the <i>Complaints and Appeals Register</i> so it includes the outcome of the complaint. • Update the <i>Continuous Improvement Register</i> if applicable for any improvements to be made as an outcome. • Keep a copy of the complaint and supporting documents in the Complaints file and in the student or staff file (where relevant). 	CEO or their delegate
<p>D. Review complaints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the complaints process and its outcome at the next management meeting to consider whether there are any improvements to be made to prevent recurrence. (Refer to CG3 for procedure). 	Training Manager

2. Appeals management

Procedure	Responsibility
<p>A. Receive and acknowledge appeal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon receipt of a request for an appeal, acknowledge receipt of appeal in writing by sending a letter to appellant within 3 working days of receipt to ensure appellant receives it within 7 days. Use <i>Complaint/Appeal Acknowledgement Letter</i>. • Record details of appeal on the <i>Complaints and Appeals Register</i>. 	CEO or delegate
<p>B. Respond to assessment appeals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of appeals against assessment decisions, the original assessment decision will be reviewed by having an assessor independent of the original decision, mark the assessment task again. • The assessment decision made during the appeals process will be considered the actual assessment outcome for the task. • Advise the student of the outcome of the appeal as per point G below. 	Training Manager

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Procedure	Responsibility
<p>C. Respond to appeals against non-academic decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon receiving the appeal, the matter is to be investigated to identify the original decision made and the reasons for the decision. • Further details from the appellant, respondent, the person who made the original decision, or other involved parties may be requested during this stage. This may be in writing, over the phone, or face-to-face. • If the matter is in relation to a third party delivering Services on behalf of the RTO, the third party should be involved in the resolution of the appeal. • The appellant may request for an independent party (mediator) to be involved in the process. Where this is requested by the appellant, they will bear the costs associated. Additionally, REIV may decide to call upon an independent mediator to assist to resolve the issue where a decision cannot be reached internally. This will be at REIV's cost. • REIV's Management team will review all relevant information and decide on an appropriate response. • Note: The appeal must be resolved within 60 calendar days of receipt of the original appeal. If the matter is particularly complex and it is going to take longer to resolve, the appellant must be advised in writing along with reasons for the extra time. They must be provided with progress updates on a weekly basis thereafter until the matter is resolved. 	<p>Training Manager</p>
<p>D. Advise appellant of the outcome and update records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a written response to the appellant outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The RTO's understanding of the reasons for the appeal – The steps taken to investigate and resolve the appeal – Decisions made about resolution and reasons for the decisions – Areas that have been identified as possible causes of the appeal and improvements to be recommended • Update the <i>Complaints and Appeals Register</i> so it includes the outcome of the appeal. • Update the <i>Continuous Improvement Register</i> if applicable for any improvements to be made as an outcome. • Keep a copy of the appeal and supporting documents in the Appeals file and in the student or staff file (where relevant). 	<p>CEO or Training Manager</p>
<p>E. Review appeals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the appeal and its outcome at the next management meeting to consider whether there are any improvements to be made to prevent recurrence. 	<p>Training Manager</p>

3. Reviews by independent party

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Procedure	Responsibility
<p>A. Appoint and cooperate with mediator/ independent party</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A complainant or appellant may request that an independent party is involved in resolution of the matter. The independent party may use the RTO's selected mediator or may seek their own at their cost. • The CEO may also decide that an independent party is required to resolve particularly complex matters or in situations where there may be bias. • Referrals to relevant independent parties may be provided in accordance with this policy as needed. • Contact independent mediator to arrange mediation/ review. • REIV will co-operate fully in the process of the external party reviewing and investigating matter. This will include providing access to the relevant information surrounding the complaint or appeal and the internal complaints records where permitted to do so by law. • All staff must cooperate in such instances and to give an accurate account of the events as they understand them. 	Staff as required

4. External complaint or appeal

Procedure	Responsibility
<p>A. External complaint or appeal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If dissatisfied with the internal processes, the complainant/appellant may initiate an external complaint or appeal. • If requested, REIV will respond as necessary. REIV agrees to respond to and cooperate in good faith with any complaints handling mechanism or process established by VRQA or the Department from time to time for the purpose of resolving student complaints or other issues in relation to the delivery of services. • All records will be kept on file. • Fully co-operate with external party to respond to the complaint as required. • 	Staff as required
<p>B. Review external complaints or appeals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the external process and its outcome at the next management meeting to consider whether there are any improvements to be made to prevent recurrence. 	

Document Control

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