



## Complaints & Appeals Policy & Procedure

<b>Approved By:</b>	Board of Directors	Minutes: BoD: 5/12/2017
<b>Authorised By:</b>	Chief Executive Officer	10/5/18
<b>Effective from:</b>	10/5/18	
<b>Review By:</b>	Chair, Board of Directors	
<b>Previous Review:</b>	8/2016	
<b>Next Review:</b>	5/2021	
<b>File Location:</b>	The current version of this policy can be accessed from EQUALS Quality Framework on <a href="#">smartsheet</a> . Externally, this document can be accessed from <a href="http://www.equals.edu.au">www.equals.edu.au</a> .	
<b>Relevant Legislation:</b>	<a href="#">Standards for RTO's 2015</a> <a href="#">Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000</a>	
<b>Related Documents:</b>	<a href="#">Student Handbook</a> <a href="#">International Student Prospectus</a> <a href="#">Enrolment Conditions</a>	
<b>Superseded Documents:</b>		
<b>Policy Subdivision</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporate or Academic Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Management <input type="checkbox"/> Operational Management	
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Chief Executive Officer	

### 1. Overview

The purpose of this document is to describe the policy and procedure for handling grievances and appeals within the organisation.

In this document the terms 'EQUALS International' refers to EQUALS International (Aust) Pty Ltd ACN 078 991 858.

"Student" means both students and potential students, enrolled, or seeking to enroll in a normal VET course of study. "Complainant" means the person making the complaint.

### 2. 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 International 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.

EQUALS International has implemented for Academic/Non-Academic student matters, a procedure that outlines the handling of complaints and appeals that is easily accessible to students, including those who are or would be entitled to VET Student Loans 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.



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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 or respondents 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.

### **What is a Complaint?**

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.

### **What is an Appeal?**

An appeal is an application by a student for reconsideration of an unfavourable decision or finding during training and/or assessment. An appeal must be made in writing and specify the particulars of the decision or finding in dispute. Appeals must be lodged within 20 working days of the decision or finding is informed to the student.

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.

### **Important Information:**

#### **Collecting feedback**

Students are regularly provided with the opportunity to provide feedback that enables them to express any concerns they may have encountered with EQUALS International in relation to academic and non-academic matters. Feedback is encouraged at any stage and common feedback collection tools include:

- training evaluation forms (sent by electronic form or handed in hard copy),
- feedback form on the EQUALS International website,
- feedback from phone surveys.

Where students have identified a rating below satisfactory or have made specific comments concerning their dissatisfaction, and where the student has identified themselves, the student is contacted and the issue is addressed in person with the Chief Operating Officer or their delegate.

#### **Record Keeping & Confidentiality**

A written record of complaints handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of time. Access to these records is available upon written request to the CEO. These records will be maintained in the student's communication record and/or central improvement register. Records relating to complaints and appeals will be treated as confidential and will be covered by the EQUALS International Student Privacy and Personal Information Policy.



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### Overseas students

It is important to consider the duration of overseas student's stay in Australia (as outlined in Standard 10 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 Student Loans Assistance.

### Recording & Actioning Student Complaints and Appeals

Complaints that the student does not wish to formalise in writing may be recorded in the central improvement register and the Chief Executive Officer notified (where applicable).

Formal complaints and appeals, and their outcome are recorded in the central improvement register.

Where complaints or appeals result in a decision that supports the students complaint, EQUALS International will implement corrective and/or preventative action and advise the student of the outcome. This will be done within 30 days of the result.

For students under the age of 18, a copy of their outcome will be sent to their parent, legal guardian or other nominated care giver (as applicable).

### Publication

This Policy and Procedure was ratified and approved by the governing body and authority, detailed below;

***Board of Directors – agreed and ratified on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017.***

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 International website (<http://equals.edu.au/current-students/>).

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 EQUALS policy framework.

### 3. Procedure:

- i. Students wishing to lodge a formal complaint and/or appeal are requested to do so in writing to the Chief Operating Officer at [mchittleborough@equals.edu.au](mailto:mchittleborough@equals.edu.au) or GPO Box 2443 Adelaide SA 5001, with the subject heading "complaint" or "appeal" (whichever is appropriate).
- ii. Complaints that are received in other forms such as phone or email, are to be detailed on the central improvement register by the person receiving the complaint and highlighted to the Chief Operating Officer.
- iii. Where a complaint and/or appeal is lodged, EQUALS International will contact the student within a reasonable timeframe (e.g. 10 working days) to further consult on the issue.
- iv. 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.
- v. An independent and impartial senior staff member who is nominated by EQUALS International discusses the complaint with the individual. The outcome may be recorded on the central improvement register or in the student's file, or otherwise as required. Students may obtain a copy of the complaint record by



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requesting a copy from EQUALS International.

- vi. 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.

### 4. Internal Appeals Process

Where a student is dissatisfied with a decision or action made by EQUALS International, 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.edu.au](mailto:kjones@equals.edu.au) or GPO Box 2443 Adelaide SA 5001.

### 5. 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, and will be advised of this right within 10 working days of the conclusion of the internal appeals process. An external appeal or request for a review by an external complaint handling process must be lodged with the relevant external body within 14 working days of the decision and outcome. In most cases, the purpose of an external appeals process is to consider whether EQUALS International has followed its policies and procedures, rather than make a decision in place of EQUALS International.

EQUALS International recommends that students contact one of the following organisations:

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

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](mailto:acpet@acpet.edu.au)

Australian Skills Quality Authority  
Website: <http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/complaints.html>

These services are free to the complainant and/or respondent. Complainants and/or respondents are welcome to be accompanied and assisted by a third party (e.g. a friend, advocate, mentor/buddy) at the time of discussing a grievance or dispute. Both EQUALS International 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.

EQUALS International 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.

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.

### Further Action for Complaints and Appeals regarding VET Student Loans.

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 1800 000 674.