

1. PURPOSE

The Quality Training and Hospitality College, trading as Quality College of Australia (QCA), is committed to providing a fair, transparent and accessible process for receiving and managing feedback, complaints and appeals.

QCA recognises that feedback, complaints and appeals provide valuable opportunities to improve the quality of training, assessment, student support and business operations. QCA encourages students, prospective students, employers, staff and other stakeholders to raise concerns or provide feedback without fear of disadvantage or victimisation.

This policy ensures feedback, complaints and appeals are managed fairly, confidentially, consistently and in accordance with the principles of natural justice, procedural fairness and the Standards for Registered Training Organisations.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Prospective students (Domestic and International);
- Current and former students (Domestic and International);
- Employers and workplace supervisors;
- Apprentices and trainees;
- Education agents;
- Third-party service providers;
- QCA staff, contractors and trainers/assessors; and
- Any other individual or organisation interacting with QCA.

This policy applies to matters relating to all aspects of QCA's operations.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

QCA is committed to ensuring that:

- All feedback is welcomed and valued;
- Complaints and appeals are managed promptly, fairly and objectively;
- All parties are treated with courtesy, dignity and respect;
- Procedural fairness and natural justice are maintained throughout every process;
- Confidentiality is maintained wherever practicable;
- Individuals are not disadvantaged because they have made a complaint or appeal;
- Decisions are evidence-based;
- Opportunities for continuous improvement are identified from feedback and complaint data; and
- Records are maintained in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

There is no cost to students for accessing QCA's internal feedback, complaints or appeals process.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

QCA manages all feedback, complaints and appeals in accordance with the following principles.

4.1 Accessibility

Information about this policy is made available to prospective students, students and staff through the Student Handbook, website and enrolment information.

Reasonable assistance will be provided to any person who requires support to lodge feedback, a complaint or an appeal, including those with disability, language or literacy needs.

Feedback, complaints and appeals may be submitted verbally or in writing. Where received verbally, QCA will document the matter and confirm the details with the person making the submission.

4.2 Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

All parties involved will be provided with:

- An opportunity to present their version of events;
- Access to relevant information used in making decisions;

- Impartial consideration by an appropriately authorised person;
- Written advice of outcomes and reasons for decisions; and
- Information regarding any further review options.

No person who is the subject of a complaint or appeal will be responsible for investigating or determining the outcome of that matter.

4.3 Confidentiality

Information relating to feedback, complaints and appeals will only be disclosed to those directly involved in managing or resolving the matter, unless disclosure is required by law.

Records will be stored securely in accordance with QCA's Privacy and Personal Information Policy.

4.4 Timeliness

QCA aims to resolve matters as quickly as possible while ensuring fairness to all parties.

Where additional time is required, the person lodging the complaint or appeal will be kept informed of progress and provided with revised timeframes.

5. FEEDBACK

QCA actively encourages feedback from students, employers, staff and stakeholders regarding all aspects of its operations. Feedback may be positive, constructive or identify opportunities for improvement.

Feedback may relate to any aspect of QCA's operations.

Feedback may be provided through:

- Student surveys;
- Employer surveys;
- Trainer evaluations;
- Verbal discussions;
- Email;
- The QCA website;
- Meetings; or
- Directly to any QCA staff member.

Anonymous feedback will be accepted and considered wherever sufficient information has been provided to enable appropriate review.

Where appropriate, QCA will acknowledge receipt of feedback and advise of any resulting improvements. Feedback requiring immediate action may be managed as a complaint under this policy.

6. COMPLAINTS

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction regarding a decision, service, behaviour or action undertaken by QCA, its staff, trainers, contractors or other students.

Complaints may relate to any aspect of QCA's operations.

Where possible, QCA encourages concerns to be resolved informally before commencing the formal complaints process.

7. TIMEFRAMES

Unless exceptional circumstances apply, QCA aims to:

- Acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint or appeal within five (5) business days;
- Commence assessment promptly;
- Finalise investigations and provide a written outcome within 30 calendar days of receiving all relevant information.

Where a matter cannot be finalised within 30 calendar days, QCA will:

- Advise the complainant or appellant of the reasons for the delay;
- Provide regular progress updates; and
- Advise of the revised expected completion date.

8. INFORMAL RESOLUTION

QCA encourages concerns to be raised as soon as practicable so they may be resolved quickly and informally where appropriate. Staff will:

- Listen to the concern respectfully;
- Clarify the issues raised;
- Discuss possible solutions with the person raising the concern;
- Attempt to resolve the matter promptly; and
- Document the outcome where appropriate.

Informal resolution is not appropriate where the matter involves:

- Allegations of misconduct;
- Bullying, harassment or discrimination;
- Fraud or criminal activity;
- Serious breaches of legislation or QCA policies;
- Repeated complaints about the same issue; or
- Situations where the complainant requests a formal investigation.

A person may choose to lodge a formal complaint at any time without first attempting informal resolution.

9. LODGING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Where a matter cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant wishes to proceed directly to a formal process, a complaint may be lodged in writing using the QCA Feedback, Complaint and Appeal Form or by submitting the complaint via email or other written correspondence.

A complaint should include, where applicable:

- The complainant's name and contact details;
- Details of the complaint;
- Relevant dates, locations and persons involved;
- Any supporting documentation or evidence;
- The outcome being sought.

Anonymous complaints may be accepted where sufficient information has been provided to enable investigation. However, anonymous complaints may limit QCA's ability to investigate the matter fully or advise the outcome.

Complaints should normally be lodged within twelve (12) months of the event giving rise to the complaint. QCA may accept complaints lodged outside this period where reasonable grounds exist.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COMPLAINT

QCA will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within five (5) business days.

The acknowledgement will include:

- Confirmation that the complaint has been received;
- The name or position of the person responsible for managing the complaint;
- The expected timeframe for investigation;
- Any additional information required; and
- Information about the complaint process.

11. ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPLAINT

Following receipt, the complaint will be reviewed to determine:

- Whether sufficient information has been provided;
- Whether the matter falls within QCA's responsibility;
- Whether immediate action is required to protect any person involved;
- Whether the matter should be managed under another QCA policy or legislative process; and
- The appropriate person to investigate the complaint.

Where the complaint concerns the Managing Director or another senior decision-maker, the complaint will be referred to an independent person or appropriate external authority for investigation.

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12. INVESTIGATION

Investigations will be conducted fairly, objectively and without bias.

The investigating officer may:

- Interview the complainant;
- Interview the respondent;
- Interview witnesses;
- Obtain written statements;
- Review student records;
- Review assessment evidence;
- Examine policies, procedures and documentation;
- Obtain specialist advice where appropriate; and
- Consider any other relevant evidence.

Both the complainant and respondent will have a reasonable opportunity to present information before a decision is made.

Either party may be accompanied by a support person during meetings. Support persons may provide emotional support but must not answer questions or advocate on behalf of the individual unless approved by QCA.

13. DECISION MAKING

Complaint outcomes will be determined by an appropriately authorised person who has not been directly involved in the matter wherever practicable.

In determining an outcome, QCA will consider:

- All available evidence;
- Relevant legislation;
- The Standards for Registered Training Organisations
- QCA policies and procedures;
- Procedural fairness; and
- The circumstances of the individual case.

Possible outcomes include:

- Complaint substantiated;
- Complaint partially substantiated;
- Complaint not substantiated;
- Complaint resolved through agreement between the parties; or
- Complaint unable to be substantiated due to insufficient evidence.

14. NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME

The complainant will receive a written outcome which includes:

- The decision reached;
- The reasons for the decision;
- Any actions to be taken;
- Expected implementation timeframes where applicable; and
- Information regarding the right to appeal the decision.

Where privacy obligations apply, QCA may limit the information provided regarding actions involving another individual.

15. CORRECTIVE AND PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

Where a complaint identifies deficiencies or opportunities for improvement, QCA will implement appropriate corrective and preventive actions.

Actions may include:

- Reviewing policies or procedures;
- Improving training or assessment practices;

- Updating learning resources;
- Staff coaching or professional development;
- Process improvements;
- Additional monitoring activities;
- Communication improvements; or
- Other actions identified through the investigation.

Corrective actions will be recorded in QCA's Continuous Improvement Register and monitored until completed.

16. WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any time by notifying QCA in writing.

Where the complaint raises significant compliance, safety or legislative concerns, QCA may continue its investigation despite the withdrawal of the complaint if it is considered necessary to protect students, staff or the integrity of QCA's operations.

17. RECORD KEEPING

QCA will maintain secure records of:

- All formal complaints received;
- Supporting documentation;
- Investigation notes;
- Correspondence;
- Decisions;
- Corrective actions;
- Appeal outcomes (where applicable); and
- Continuous improvement actions.

Complaint records will be maintained in accordance with QCA's Records Management Policy and Privacy and Personal Information Policy.

Access to complaint records will be restricted to authorised personnel.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

18. PROTECTION FROM VICTIMISATION

QCA is committed to ensuring that no person is disadvantaged, discriminated against or victimised because they

- Provide feedback;
- Make a complaint;
- Participate in an investigation;
- Act as a witness; or
- Lodge an appeal.

Any allegation of victimisation will be treated as a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with QCA policies.

19. RIGHT TO APPEAL

Any person who is dissatisfied with a decision made by QCA may lodge an appeal.

An appeal is a request for a formal review of a decision where the appellant believes:

- The decision was inconsistent with QCA's policies or procedures;
- Relevant information was not considered;
- The decision was unreasonable or unfair;
- There was an error in the decision-making process; or
- New evidence has become available that may affect the original decision.

Appeals may relate to, but are not limited to:

- Assessment outcomes;
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL) decisions;

- Credit transfer decisions;
- Complaints outcomes;
- Enrolment decisions;
- Issuance of AQF certification documentation;
- Fees and refunds;
- Disciplinary actions;
- Cancellation or deferral decisions; or
- Other administrative decisions made by QCA.

20. LODGING AN APPEAL

Appeals must be submitted in writing using the QCA Feedback, Complaint and Appeal Form or by written correspondence.

Appeals should normally be lodged within 20 business days of the appellant receiving written notification of the original decision.

An appeal should include:

- The decision being appealed;
- The reasons for the appeal;
- Any supporting evidence;
- The outcome sought.

Where an appeal is lodged outside the specified timeframe, QCA may accept the appeal where reasonable grounds exist.

21. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF APPEAL

QCA will acknowledge receipt of an appeal within five (5) business days.

The acknowledgement will include:

- Confirmation that the appeal has been received;
- The person responsible for managing the appeal;
- Expected investigation timeframes;
- Any additional information required; and
- Advice regarding the appeal process.

22. INTERNAL REVIEW

Appeals will be reviewed by an appropriately authorised person who:

- Was not involved in the original decision wherever practicable;
- Has appropriate knowledge and authority to review the matter; and
- Can make an impartial decision.

The reviewer may:

- Examine all original documentation;
- Interview relevant parties;
- Obtain additional evidence;
- Seek specialist or independent advice;
- Review applicable legislation, standards and QCA policies.

The appellant will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to present additional information before a final decision is made.

Where appropriate, the appellant may be accompanied by a support person during meetings.

23. ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Students have the right to appeal an assessment outcome where they believe:

- Assessment processes were not conducted in accordance with the Principles of Assessment or Rules of Evidence;
- Assessment conditions differed significantly from those advised;

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- Relevant evidence was overlooked;
- Assessor bias may have affected the outcome; or
- An administrative error occurred.

An assessment appeal will not be accepted solely because a student disagrees with the assessor's professional judgement.

Where appropriate, assessment appeals may include:

- A review of assessment evidence;
- Reassessment by another qualified assessor;
- Consultation with subject matter experts; or
- Moderation of assessment decisions.

The outcome of an assessment appeal may result in:

- The original assessment decision being confirmed;
- Reassessment being required;
- Additional evidence being accepted;
- Amendment of the assessment outcome; or
- Another appropriate action determined by QCA.

24. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS

Administrative appeals relate to decisions concerning QCA's administration or management processes.

Examples include:

- Enrolment decisions;
- Fee or refund determinations;
- Issuance of qualifications or Statements of Attainment;
- Recognition decisions;
- Disciplinary actions;
- Student support arrangements;
- Access to services.

Administrative appeals will be reviewed against:

- Relevant legislation;
- QCA policies and procedures;
- Available evidence;
- Principles of fairness and consistency.

25. APPEAL OUTCOMES

Following completion of the review, QCA will provide the appellant with a written outcome that includes:

- The decision;
- Reasons for the decision;
- Any corrective actions to be taken;
- Implementation timeframes (where applicable); and
- Information regarding any further review options.

Appeals will normally be finalised within 30 calendar days of receiving all necessary information.

Where additional time is required, QCA will advise the appellant in writing of:

- The reason for the delay;
- Progress made;
- The revised expected completion date.

26. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT APPEALS (CRICOS)

This section applies to overseas students studying with QCA under the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) legislative framework.

Where an overseas student appeals a decision that may affect their enrolment, QCA will maintain the student's enrolment until:

- The internal appeals process has been completed;
- Any external appeal has been finalised; or
- The student withdraws from the process.

This does not prevent QCA from taking immediate action where there is a risk to the safety or wellbeing of students, staff or others, or where required by law.

Where an appeal relates to QCA's intention to report a student for unsatisfactory course progress, attendance or other matters under the ESOS framework, QCA will not report the student through PRISMS until the internal complaints and appeals process has concluded, unless an exception applies under the ESOS legislation.

Students will be advised in writing of:

- The outcome of the appeal;
- Any implications for their enrolment;
- Any further review options available.

27. INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Where an appeal identifies significant concerns regarding the impartiality of the original decision-maker, QCA may appoint an independent person to conduct or assist with the review.

Independent reviewers may include:

- Another suitably qualified staff member not previously involved;
- An external consultant;
- An industry expert; or
- Another appropriately qualified independent person.

Recommendations made through an independent review will be considered by QCA before a final decision is made.

28. IMPLEMENTATION OF APPEAL OUTCOMES

QCA will implement any actions arising from a successful appeal as soon as practicable.

Actions may include:

- Amending student records;
- Updating assessment outcomes;
- Issuing or reissuing certification documentation;
- Adjusting fees or refunds;
- Revising administrative decisions;
- Implementing corrective actions; or
- Reviewing policies, procedures or training practices.

Where systemic issues are identified, they will be recorded in the Continuous Improvement Register and monitored until completed.

29. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

QCA will maintain records of:

- Appeals received;
- Supporting evidence;
- Correspondence;
- Investigation notes;
- Review findings;
- Decisions;
- Corrective actions; and
- Continuous improvement outcomes.

Appeal records will be stored securely and treated as confidential in accordance with QCA's Privacy Policy and Records Management Policy.

Access to appeal records will be restricted to authorised personnel only.

30. EXTERNAL REVIEW

If a complainant or appellant is dissatisfied with the outcome of QCA's internal process, they may seek an external review where appropriate.

QCA will provide information about suitable external review options relevant to the nature of the complaint or appeal.

Where an external review is undertaken, QCA will:

- Cooperate fully with the external reviewer;
- Provide requested documentation and information;
- Consider any recommendations made; and
- Implement any agreed actions arising from the review.

Any costs associated with an external review will generally be the responsibility of the person requesting the review unless otherwise determined by the external review body or required by legislation.

31. REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

Nothing in this policy prevents a person from seeking advice from, or lodging a complaint with, an appropriate external agency.

Depending on the nature of the matter, external agencies may include:

- The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA);
- Relevant State or Territory consumer protection agencies;
- Anti-discrimination or human rights bodies;
- The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC);
- The Overseas Students Ombudsman; or
- Other relevant regulatory authorities.

QCA encourages individuals to utilise its internal complaints and appeals process wherever appropriate before seeking external review. However, this policy does not restrict a person's right to access external agencies at any time.

32. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

QCA recognises feedback, complaints and appeals as valuable sources of information for continuous improvement.

Information collected through this policy will be regularly analysed to identify:

- Recurring issues or trends;
- Opportunities to improve student outcomes;
- Improvements to training and assessment practices;
- Improvements to student support services;
- Opportunities to improve communication;
- Administrative improvements;
- Staff development needs; and
- Potential compliance risks.

Where improvement opportunities are identified, QCA will:

- Determine appropriate corrective or preventive actions;
- Allocate responsibility for implementation;
- Establish completion timeframes;
- Monitor implementation; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of improvements.

Improvement actions will be recorded and monitored through QCA's Continuous Improvement Register.

33. MONITORING AND REPORTING

The Compliance Manager will monitor the implementation of this policy by reviewing:

- The number and type of feedback received;

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- Complaint and appeal trends;
- Response timeframes;
- Outcomes achieved;
- Recurring issues;
- Corrective actions implemented; and
- Opportunities for organisational improvement.

Summary reports may be provided to senior management to support decision-making and quality assurance.

34. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

QCA will maintain accurate and secure records of:

- Feedback received;
- Complaints;
- Appeals;
- Investigation documentation;
- Correspondence;
- Decisions;
- Corrective actions;
- Continuous improvement activities; and
- External review outcomes.

Records will be:

- Stored securely;
- Treated as confidential;
- Protected from unauthorised access;
- Retained in accordance with QCA's Records Management Policy and legislative requirements; and
- Made available to authorised persons where required by law.

35. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Managing Director is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented;
- Ensuring complaints and appeals are managed fairly;
- Determining outcomes where delegated;
- Approving corrective actions arising from complaints and appeals; and
- Ensuring adequate resources are available to implement this policy.

The Compliance Manager is responsible for:

- Overseeing complaint and appeal investigations;
- Ensuring procedural fairness;
- Maintaining complaint and appeal registers;
- Monitoring response timeframes;
- Identifying trends;
- Reporting outcomes to management; and
- Ensuring continuous improvement actions are implemented.

Employees are responsible for:

- Encouraging feedback;
- Responding professionally to concerns
- Attempting early resolution where appropriate;
- Referring formal complaints and appeals promptly;
- Cooperating with investigations; and
- Maintaining confidentiality.

Students and Other Stakeholders are expected to:

- Provide complete and accurate information;
- Participate respectfully in the resolution process;
- Respond to requests for additional information;
- Maintain respectful behaviour throughout investigations; and
- Comply with reasonable requests made during the process.

36. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Student Handbooks
- Assessment and Validation Policy
- Student Support and Wellbeing Policy
- Privacy and Personal Information Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Fees, Charges and Refunds Policy
- Issuance of AQF Certification Policy
- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Code of Practice
- Feedback, Complaint and Appeal Form
- VET Quality Framework
- Privacy Act 1988
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Framework