

Complaints and Feedback Procedure

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Introduction

TAFE Gippsland is committed to providing a high level of customer service to its learners, potential learners, industry and other members of the community.

This procedure has been prepared in consideration of Standard 6 of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015 and Principle 5 of the Victorian Training Guarantee Quality Charter.

The intent of this procedure is to encourage feedback from all stakeholders

Purpose

To explain the Institute's commitment to an effective complaints handling process and the action to be taken when a student, customer, staff member, client, employer or member of the public registers a comment, complaint or compliment. To explain how feedback will be utilised to drive continuous improvement.

Scope

Complaints, comments and compliments may be lodged about any matter to do with the operation of the Institute, or of third-parties providing services on behalf of the Institute.

An exception is where the matter is related to VET FEE- HELP and the student is accessing VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Higher

Education Support Act 2003 (the Act), or persons seeking to enrol in a VET course of study comprising VET units of study that meet the course requirements under subclause 45(1) of Schedule 1A of the Act with a VET provider and who are, or would be, entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act.

These students are entitled to pursue any issues in accordance with the TAFE Gippsland Grievance, Appeals and Reviews Policy (TL 034), regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the learner's or person's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

Rationale

Principles/Statement

As a Registered Training Organisation and provider of Nationally Recognised Qualifications, TAFE Gippsland welcomes feedback from all learners, potential learners, industry and other members of the community in order to establish best practice, and to promote continuous improvement of our service.

In the first instance, TAFE Gippsland will endeavour to resolve any issue through informal processes of discussion and negotiation between the customer and relevant staff and/or management. TAFE Gippsland expects staff to fulfil their professional duty to address the concerns of customers and to act responsibly when dealing with complaints or grievances.

TAFE Gippsland will handle all complaints, grievances and feedback, including positive feedback promptly without prejudice or bias and will at all times be honest and fair in dealing with those providing complaints, grievances and/or feedback. The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness will apply.

TAFE Gippsland acknowledges that a complainant may request to be accompanied or assisted by a third party during any part of the grievance process.

No cost will be associated as a result of making a complaint, unless an independent arbitrator is required or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal is engaged.

Procedure

1. Registration

Learners can lodge complaints or provide feedback by whatever means suit them. The Comments, Complaints and Compliments Form can be completed online or downloaded from the TAFE Gippsland Website Contact Us page. The completed form can also be submitted by email to QA@tafegippsland.edu.au or hand delivered to any campus reception point.

The public can also request to lodge a complaint or grievance verbally with any TAFE Gippsland staff member, who will complete and lodge the appropriate form on your behalf.

Upon receipt, the Manager Quality or Quality Administration Officer will register the customer feedback in the Customer Feedback Register, allocating the next consecutive number. After determining and recording who will be responsible for the investigation, action and report, the Manager Quality or the Quality Administration Officer will send a copy to the person(s) responsible for follow up and file the feedback in the customer's folder.

2. Investigation

Where investigation is required, Curriculum and Quality will request the relevant Head of Department or Manager to investigate and provide a response to Quality and Compliance or the individual who provided the feedback, as appropriate.

The investigation of complaints must include a process of verification that there is a justification for the complaint. The difference between an allegation and a substantiated claim needs to be clear and all parties must be given full opportunity to provide their view of the matter under investigation.

Any matter being investigated as a complaint must be treated with strict confidentiality and objectivity.

Serious issues will be managed and investigated by the Director, Academic Governance. In the case of highly complex or significant complaints, the investigation process contained in TL 012 Managing Student Suspension or Expulsion will be utilised.

3. Report

Straightforward issues should be resolved, and a report generated within one week. For more complex or significant issues the default service standard will be 2-3 weeks.

Where it is considered, or where it becomes evident, that more than 60 calendar days will be required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, TAFE Gippsland will:

- inform the complainant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required, and
- regularly update the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.

4. Follow up and Closure

Once the report is received the Manager Quality will note the date in the customer feedback register and, if appropriate, will follow up to ensure action has been taken, is deemed to be effective and that (where appropriate) preventative strategies are in place.

If the initiator indicated they wish to be advised of the outcome and the person responsible has not yet responded to them, the Director Academic Governance will ensure this is done. All documents relating to the complaint or OFI are to be filed with the original feedback form in the customer's folder.

Final closure of the file will occur once the follow up indicates that all action has been taken and is deemed effective, the initiator has been notified of the outcome and the details and the date of closure recorded in the Customer Feedback Register.

TAFE Gippsland will securely maintains records of all complaints and appeals and the outcomes.

5. Compensatory Action

If the Manager Quality deems that the initiator may have been disadvantaged, a recommendation will be made to the Director, Academic Governance for some form of compensatory action. The final decision on compensatory action will rest with the Director, Academic Governance.

6. Unresolved complaints

In cases where the initiator is not satisfied with the outcome they have the option to pursue a formal grievance through the Institute's Grievance, Appeals and Reviews Procedure

TL 034. This procedure outlines the generic grievance and appeals process and sets out the relationship between it and more specialised appeals processes relating to academic assessment - Assessment Appeals TL 007 and Managing Student Suspension or Expulsion TL 012.

External assistance with complaints may also be sought through the Victorian Ombudsman

The Victorian Ombudsman's role is to ensure fairness for all Victorian in their dealings with public authorities (including TAFE's) and to improve public administration. The Ombudsman's services are free.

The Ombudsman can make enquiries and assist in resolving complaints informally. The Ombudsman can also investigate individual complaints or systemic problems and make recommendations for change if necessary.

You can find the Ombudsman's website at www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Appointment of an Independent Review body

In the event that the applicant remains unhappy with the outcome of the review and seeks further review, TAFE Gippsland nominates the following organisation as its independent external arbitrator.

Contact Organisation:

McMahon Consultancy Services (Vic) Pty Ltd
ABN: 99 140 848 728
P.O. Box 189, Mooroolbark Vic 3138
Tel: 0419 260 069

The applicant and TAFE Gippsland will jointly share the cost of an independent review, which will be arranged by the Director Academic Governance.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

Should the review decision not be in favour of the applicant, the applicant will be advised that they may wish to contact the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal can be contacted as follows:

Deputy Registrar
Administrative Appeals Tribunal
Level 4/15 Williams St, Melbourne Vic 3000
Tel: 1800 228 333
<http://www.aat.gov.au/contact-us>

Applications to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for review of a decision may include an application fee in excess of \$750.

Applications cannot proceed until the application fee is paid or the fee has been waived. The application fee is refunded when the review is completed if the AAT decides that it is finalised in the applicants favour.

In certain circumstances, the application fee is not payable.

7. Continuous Improvement

In some instances, the investigation and report may indicate the need to review existing business processes and policies or develop new ones. The Director Academic Governance will be responsible to ensure this is done and that Institute-wide preventive and corrective

action is taken to eliminate the root cause of complaints and improve the quality of products and services.

References and Supporting Documentation

External Legislative Context

- Higher Education Support Act 2003
- Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2012
- Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015

Internal documents

- Managing Student Suspension or Expulsion TL 012.
- Grievance, Appeals and Reviews Procedure TL 034
- Comments, Complaints and Compliments form CM 006 Form 1

Responsibility

Director – Academic Governance

| Item | Summary of Update | Version Control | Review Date |
|------|--|-----------------|-------------|
| 1 | Original Policy Document | 1.0 | 01/2015 |
| 2 | Renamed from Customer Feedback | 1.1 | 14/04/2016 |
| 3 | Table of Procedure for complaints added | 1.2 | 22/08/2016 |
| 4 | Procedure table removed and more detail included in registration of complaints process. | 1.3 | 30/11/2016 |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 6. Unresolved Complaints. Clause advising external assistance with complaints is available through the Victorian Ombudsman. • Title changes due to restructure | 2.0 | 27/11/2017 |
| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Review Body updated from RSM Bird Cameron to McMahon Consultancy. Address of Administrative Appeals Tribunal amended. | 2.1 | 21/09/2018 |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedure rebranded – TAFE Gippsland | 3.0 | 16/5/2019 |