

Grievance Policy

Advanced Education Australia (AEA) ensures that any grievance (academic or non-academic) from prospective or enrolled students is handled in a constructive, timely, fair and equitable manner which is easily accessible and offered to the student at no charge. This policy and procedure is designed to ensure that AEA responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction associated with our obligations and services. In this document, “student” refers to both current students and potential students, enrolled, or seeking to enrol, in a course of study with AEA.

1. Definition

A non-academic grievance can be defined as a student’s dissatisfaction with any aspect of AEA’s services and activities, such as:

- The enrolment or induction process
- Handling of personal information and access to personal records
- The way someone has been treated

An academic grievance is defined as

- The quality of education provided
- Academic matters, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study.

This policy and procedure is designed to ensure that AEA responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction irrespective of the terminology used such as complaint or grievance.

2. Informal procedure: before an issue becomes a formal grievance

Students are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. A student may raise an informal grievance by contacting their educator or alternatively any staff member with whom they feel comfortable.

3. Formal procedure: when an issue cannot be solved informally

This procedure can be utilised to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include matters related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study. Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all other matters including grievances in relation to personal information that AEA holds in relation to the student or staff member.

During all stages of this procedure, AEA will take all steps to ensure that:

- The student will not be victimised or discriminated against;
- The student has an opportunity to formally present their case, and each party to the grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings;
- A full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided to the student;
- Where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the student, AEA will immediately implement any corrective and preventative actions required and advise the student of the outcome as quickly as practicable.

There is no cost to the student for utilising the grievances and appeals process.

At all meetings, the student may have a support person present. If the student is under the age of 18 years, a parent or guardian must also be present.

3 a. Stage one of the formal grievance procedure

Formal grievances must be submitted in writing to the student services officer on a grievances form which is available from any staff member of AEA. The grievances process will commence within five working days of the receipt of the written grievance, and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable. The student will also receive an acknowledgement within five days of the receipt of the formal grievance by the student services officer.

The student services officer will seek to clarify the outcome that the student hopes to achieve. If the grievance concerns the student services officer, the grievance may be heard by the chief executive officer. Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request or by a face-to-face interview with the student. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview, the student may be accompanied by another person.

The student services officer or the chief executive officer will endeavour to resolve the grievance and provide in writing to the student the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within five working days of the grievance process commencing. A student may appeal the grievance outcome decision.

3b. Internal appeal

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal grievance process, the student may lodge an appeal with the chief executive officer within five working days of the grievance process outcome. The chief executive officer may decide on the appeal or arrange a review panel within five working days of receiving the written request. If heard by a review panel, the panel will review the dispute between AEA and the student, reporting to the CEO within five working days of receiving the appeal.

The chief executive officer will provide a written report to the student advising the outcome of the appeal, additional steps taken to address the grievance, and the reasons for the decision within five working days of receiving the appeal decision. The report will further advise the student of his or her right to access the external appeals process if he or she is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal appeal.

3c. External appeal

If the matter remains unresolved after the internal review panel process, the appellant may make a written request to the chief executive officer to request that the matter be dealt with through an independent external dispute resolution process. AEA, in consultation with the student, will appoint a mutually agreed independent external mediator within five working days. AEA will bear any costs associated with the mediation. The student may ask another person to accompany them to meetings with the mediator. Once the chief executive officer receives the report of the outcome from the independent mediator, the chief executive officer will provide a written report to the student within five working days on the actions recommended by the mediator to resolve the appeal.

AEA agrees to be bound by the independent mediator's recommendations and the chief executive officer will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within five working days of receipt of such decision.

3d. Administrative Appeals Tribunal

In the event that the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the mediation, the student has the option of escalating the matter to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, for which, a fee of \$861 may be payable by the student.

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under any legislation. This policy and procedure does not limit the rights of individuals to pursue other legal remedies.

4. Enrolment status

Where a student chooses to access this policy and procedure, AEA will maintain the student's enrolment in the course of study while the grievances and appeals process is ongoing. Additionally, the process will be kept confidential and the student will in no manner be victimized or discriminated against from their decision to access the grievance and appeals policy and procedure.

5. Process outcome

If the decision supports the student, AEA will immediately implement any decision and corrective action required. This action will be notified to the student (and parent or guardian if the student is under 18 years of age).

6. Record keeping and confidentiality

A record of all grievances and appeals handled under this procedure and their outcomes are confidential and shall be maintained for a period of at least two years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records. For access to the records, a written request may be made to the chief executive officer. These records will be maintained at the college premises at Level 1, 375 Pennant Hills Road, Pennant Hills NSW 2120.

The confidential record of the grievance or appeal process will be part of the student record held securely within the student information area in locked filing cabinets. For further details of how confidentially is maintained, please see the AEA's privacy policy.