
DOCUMENT REFERENCE:	PPP140
RESPONSIBLE MANAGER:	Executive Manager – Education
CATEGORY:	Student Services
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RELATED DOCUMENTS:	ASQA Standards for Registration – Standard 1 Privacy Information Act 1988 Higher Education Support Act, 2003 (HESA) PPP007 Statement of Intent – Teaching & Learning PPP009 Access and Equity Policy PPP163 Complaints and Appeals Policy PPP132 Assessment Guidelines PPP138 Plagiarism Guidelines PPP149 Student Code of Conduct PPP129 Skills Recognition Guidelines

Introduction

South West TAFE is committed to ensuring a harmonious, fair and just learning environment by ensuring that students have access to processes that allow for grievances, disputes, problems and complaints of an academic nature to be resolved.

Principles

- South West TAFE has an obligation to resolve grievances as early and simply as possible.
- Every student has the right to register a complaint or grievance about matters or issues relevant to their involvement with South West TAFE.
- Any grievance will be considered with courtesy and respect and dealt with in a timely, fair and consistent manner.
- The views of each complainant and respondent will be respected and any party to a complaint will not be discriminated against nor victimised.
- While the parties attempt to resolve the matter, the student can continue to attend classes as normal.

Scope

This guideline is applicable to all enrolled students of South West TAFE or who have a concern of an academic nature regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the student's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

South West TAFE's Academic Grievance Guidelines are designed to meet the requirements of Clause 19 of Schedule 1A and Subdivision 4-D of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA).

Issues of a non-academic matter should be referred to the *PPP141 Complaints Resolution procedure*.

Definition

Grievance	is a concern or complaint about any act, behaviour, omission, situation or decision which a student thinks is unfair or unjustified.
Academic grievance	relates to student progress, assessment, curriculum and/or awards in a course of study.
Complainant	person with a grievance
Respondent	person or entity that the grievance is with

Complaint procedures

Students enrolled in any course delivered by South West TAFE have access to processes by which a complaint may be addressed. There is no cost imposed by South West TAFE to the complainant in making or resolving a grievance; however an external agency engaged for support may choose to charge the complainant a fee for service.

Reasons for decisions and actions taken as part of the procedures will be given if so requested by any party and at any stage of the process.

The complainant and the respondent have the right to be represented by a third person (such as a family member, friend, counselor or other professional support person) if desired. Legal representation is not permitted unless either party elects to take the grievance externally.

Informal stage

In the first instance, complaints should be discussed as soon as possible with the person/s involved. However, if this is impractical, students should make a complaint to the relevant Senior Educator.

The Senior Educator will consider the complaint and attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution within 10 business days.

Formal stage

Where consideration at the informal level does not lead to a satisfactory resolution or the complainant is not satisfied with the Senior Educator's decision, the complainant may proceed to a formal grievance.

The grievance must be submitted in writing to the Executive Manager Education. The Executive Manager Education will inform the Audit Risk and Compliance Manager, who is South West TAFE's nominated Complaints Manager. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Executive Manager Education and Audit Risk and Compliance Manager will determine the process to be followed and who will oversee the complaint.

Where a grievance includes allegations concerning the conduct or actions of a staff member, and the substance of those allegations is not minor in nature, the staff member will be immediately notified of the grievance by the Executive Manager Education. The affected staff member will be given an adequate opportunity to respond.

The Executive Manager Education will determine appropriate processes to investigate and make a decision. This may involve the parties to the complaint being interviewed. An outcome will be advised in writing within 10 business days.

Appeal

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcomes of the complaint, they may appeal to the CEO in writing within 21 days of receiving this advice.

The CEO determination in the matter will be final within South West TAFE's processes.

External agency for grievances

If the complainant is still dissatisfied or is unsatisfied with the fairness of the process, the complainant has the right to lodge a complaint externally with an appropriate authority such as:

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
GPO Box 9928
Melbourne 3001

Tel: 1300 701 801
Website: www.asqa.gov.au/complaints
Email: feedback@asqa.gov.au

If ASQA makes recommendations in relation to a grievance they have received, they will forward these recommendations to South West TAFE's CEO who will consider the recommendations for implementation.

Withdrawal of a grievance

A student may withdraw a complaint or grievance at any time during the grievance resolution process and in this case the matter will be concluded and deemed to be resolved. If the original complaint or grievance was made in writing then the withdrawal must also be in writing to the relevant staff member or external entity who is handling the matter at the time the withdrawal is lodged.

Confidentiality and record keeping

Once formal grievance procedures are invoked, details of allegations and investigatory notes will be kept in confidential files. During the investigation process, these shall be kept separately from either the student or the staff member's HR file.

South West TAFE will take all necessary steps to ensure that information regarding the grievance shall be disclosed only to those persons who have a right to the information by virtue of their role in the appeals process.

Following resolution of the complaint, records will be kept in accordance with Student Management Records Procedures and maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the complaint appropriate access to these records upon written request. Where a complaint is proven, the outcome may be placed on the student's or staff member's HR file.

Assistance with a grievance

In addition to external supports, South West TAFE staff are available to assist students with lodging a grievance. Students may contact a member of the Student Support team via any campus reception.

Awareness and training

All policies, procedures and required documents and information relating to VET Student Loans (VSL) will be published on the South West TAFE website and will therefore be accessible to all members of the public and students regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the student's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

Information will be available to staff from South West TAFE's intranet and will form part of staff professional development and staff induction. Any significant changes in this policy or process will be advised to staff through South West TAFE's staff newsletter, intranet and if appropriate, training workshops will be offered.