

Academic and Non-Academic Complaint Policy

Introduction

The Institute approaches and devises strategies for student complaints that ensures resolution occurs according to the following guiding principles:

- student complaint policy is easily accessible to students;
- it is provided at no cost, or at a reasonable cost, which encourages timely resolution of complaints;
- student complaints will be addressed as close as possible to the source of student dissatisfaction;
- complaints will be resolved expeditiously and with due regard for confidentiality, with accurate records kept for a minimum of five (5) years;
- the resolution of student complaints will be handled informally where possible;
- student complaint processes will promote the principles of natural justice and students will be treated equitably without discrimination or victimisation;
- the policy includes provision for independent internal investigation of complaints which remain unresolved;
- the policy includes provision for external review of decisions made following any internal investigation, and a mechanism for considering any recommendations arising from external review;
- effective, reciprocal communication and feedback will underpin the relationship between the Institute and the students (all policies are communicated to staff, who are trained in their application);
- complaints will be regarded by staff as valuable input to the continuous improvement of programmes, policies, procedures and services, and monitored and acted upon accordingly;
- the policy is complete, unambiguous, is agreed to and ratified by the Institute's Board of Directors; and
- complaint procedures and the support available to students will be publicised to facilitate access to the complaint resolution process.

The Academic and Non-Academic Complaint Policy is designed to facilitate confidential resolution of complaints in an expeditious manner for any student who believes they have been unfairly treated. Complaints may include, but are not limited to academic matters, discrimination, complaints related to conditions, teaching, facilities, and support services.

All students of the Australian Institute of Applied Sciences ("AIAS") or those seeking to enrol in a VET course of study with the AIAS are entitled to access the complaint procedures set out in this policy, 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 of study. This policy is published on the

Institute's website at www.aias.com.au as part of our Policies and Procedures. This policy is communicated to academic and support staff through the Institute's website, Intranet, Handbooks and via the Lecturer Induction or Support Staff Induction process. The Institute Director is responsible for the training of academic staff and support staff in the application of the policy. Institute Director, with the assistance of IT department and Policy Officer will email all staff (lecturing and administrative) of updated versions of the Complaints Policy.

All students of the Australian Institute of Applied Sciences can use these procedures to submit a complaint about an academic or non-academic matter. Academic Complaint Procedures are for those grievances which relate to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study.

Students or people seeking to enrol in any accredited VET course or VET course of study offered by the AIAS have three stages at which a complaint may be addressed. Each stage is free of charge/costs.

Stage 1

In the first stage, complaints should be discussed with the person/s involved. However, if this is impracticable, complainants should communicate with one of the staff listed (a) through (e) below. Students or people seeking to enrol may take the complaint to any of the following depending on the nature of the complaint, i.e. academic or non-academic: (a) Customer Service Officer; or (b) Student Services Officer, or (c) Institute Director for Non-Academic complaints or (d) the lecturer concerned, and if unresolved the (e) Institute Director, for Academic complaints. The complaint must be dealt with in a reasonable time; every effort is made to ensure this is within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the complaint. This arrangement is free of charge.

The complaint is recorded within the Student Information System (Database) upon receipt using the descriptor "Complaint". A brief note as to what was received, and to whom this was provided to must be noted by the receiver of the complaint. The staff member handling the complaint must record all of the relevant information and outcome within the designated section of the Student Information System.

Stage 2

The second stage of the process at which a complaint is addressed is as follows:

If unsatisfied with the response to the complaint or the time taken to resolve the matter at Stage 1, the complainant may submit the complaint in writing to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will deal with the complaint within a reasonable time, normally within 30 days of receipt of the complaint. This arrangement is free of charge.

Stage 3

The third stage of the process at which a complaint is addressed is as follows: If not satisfied with a decision of the Chief Executive Officer, the complainant may request that the matter be dealt with through an external dispute resolution process by the person/body appointed by the provider for that purpose.

The details of these persons/bodies are as follows:

The **ACT Office of Fair Trading** provides information and assistance in areas such as mediation. *Hours are* Mon to Fri 8.30am to 4.30pm. *Location:* 12 Moore St, Canberra City *Phone:* 02 6207 0400. At present there is no charge for utilising this service, however this is subject to change.

There is a Dispute Resolution Branch located in Queensland through the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General. There are six Dispute Resolution Centres throughout Queensland. The Brisbane Centre is located on Level 13 of the Central Court Building, 170 North Quay, Brisbane Ph. 3239 6269. Currently there is no fee for the use of this service but this may change.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) provides a mediation service. This is available currently at no charge to the applicant/complainant, however this may change in the future.

ACPET can be contacted at their National Office:

Suite 12, Level 14, 329 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW Australia

Box Q1076, QVB PO, Sydney NSW 1230

Ph: (02) 9264 4490 Fax: (02) 9264 4550

E-mail acpet@acpet.edu.au; Website www.acpet.edu.au

The maximum timeframe for the processing of written complaints from the date of receipt from the student to the referral to an external mediator, if required, is fourteen (14) days. Should the matter continue to be unresolved after external mediation, the mediator will provide the complainant with information about appropriate bodies to which they can lodge their complaint.

If the external dispute resolution body chosen by the complainant makes recommendations in relation to a grievance they have reviewed, the person in charge of the external dispute resolution process chosen will forward those recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer within 14 days who will ensure that the recommendations are implemented within 14 days of receipt of said recommendations.

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other VET provider

policies or under statute or any other law. There are no aspects in the Institute's policy negates the complainant of the option to take action under Australian Consumer Protection laws or other legal remedies where the complaint is in the form of a financial dispute. This applies to both domestic and international students.

At no time during three stages of the investigation will the complainant and respondent be victimised or discriminated against in any way shape or form. The policy as described will be adhered to at all times.

Students or people seeking to enrol (claimants) in any VET course or VET course of study at the AIAS and those staff acting on behalf of the AIAS (respondent) have the right to be accompanied, assisted or represented by a third person (such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person) if they so desire.

At all stages of the process, reasons and a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the procedures must be given if so requested by the complainant and/or respondent. Records of all grievances and applications for review of decisions must be kept and be accessible to all interested parties for a period of seven (7) years. Records of complaints and their outcomes will be kept strictly confidential and filed in a separate file (not kept on the student or staff file) and stored in the office of the Institute Director for a period of 7 years. Parties to the complaint will be allowed supervised access to these records. A formal request for access must be made in writing to the Institute Director. This will be processed and a meeting time arranged within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the formal written request.

Where a student complaint remains unresolved at internal level and is taken to stage three (3) external mediation, any recommendations made by the external mediator will be considered by the Institute's Senior Management Team. When appropriate these recommendations will be incorporated into the Institute's policies and procedures for implementation ensuring the continuous improvement of service and quality education to our students.

This policy has been approved by the Institute's Senior Management Team on 3 June 2010.

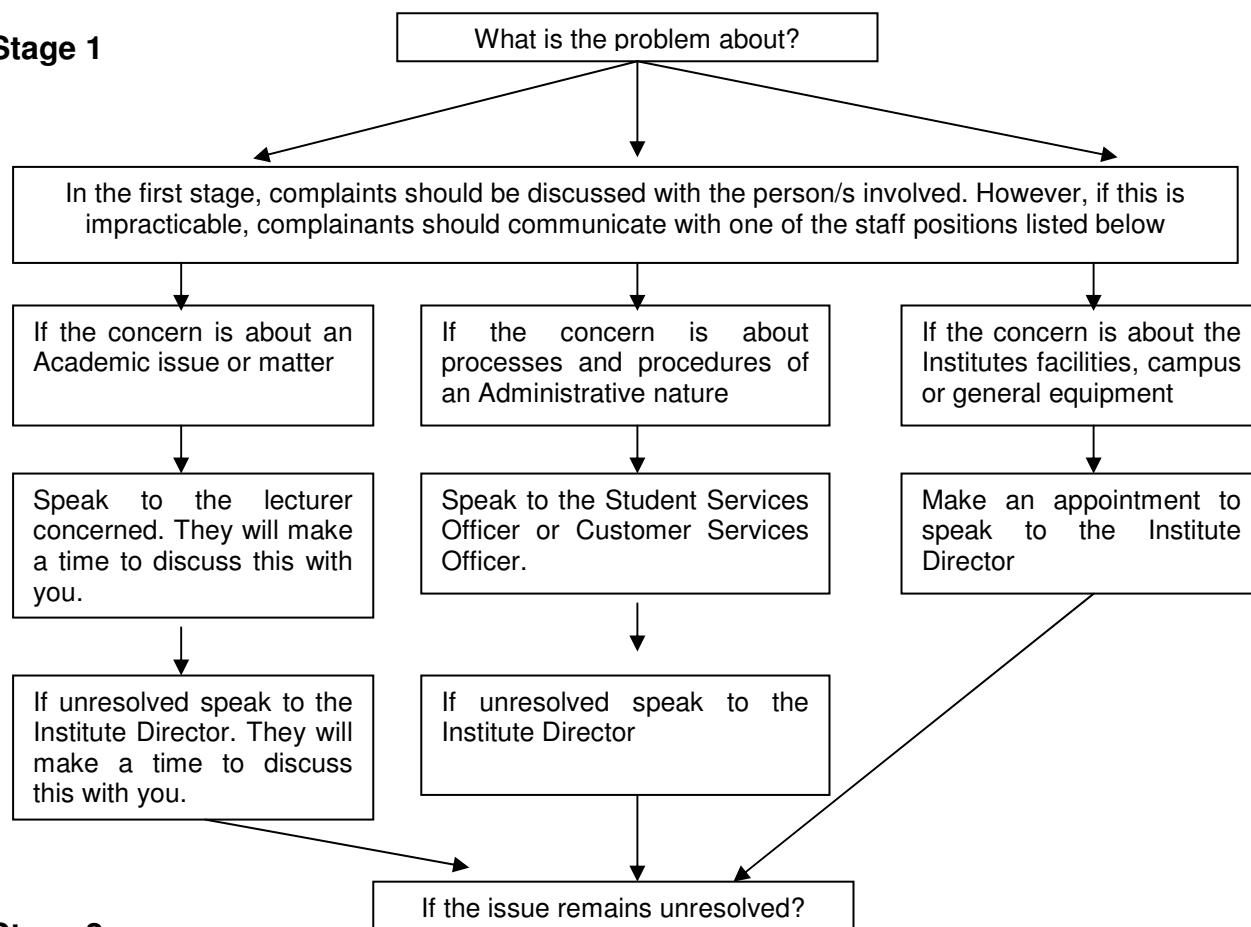
Timelines for Review of Complaints

Support Services Staff	14 days from date of initial complaint being lodged
Student Services Officer	14 days from date of initial complaint being lodged
Customer Services Officer	14 days from date of initial complaint being lodged
Lecturer	14 days from date of initial complaint being lodged
Institute Director	14 days from date of initial complaint being lodged
Chief Executive Officer	30 days from date of receipt of written request for review of complaint decision made at Stage 1.
External Mediation	14 days from date of complaint being lodged as requiring external mediation, the Chief Executive Officer must forward to external independent mediation. 30 Days to final decision.
External Dispute Resolution Report and or/ Recommendations	The External Dispute Resolution officer in charge of the process will provide a report to the Chief Executive Officer within 14 days of the resolution process being finalised. The Chief Executive Officer will implement the report recommendations within 14 days of receipt of said report.

A diagrammatic representation of the grievance mechanism is outlined in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Student Academic and Non-Academic Complaint Processes

Stage 1



Stage 2

If the issue remains unresolved?

Where an issue remains unresolved the student/ complainant must put their request in written form and submit it to the Chief Executive Officer

Stage 3

Where an issue remains unresolved the student/ complainant may request that the matter be dealt with via an independent external mediator. Details must be forwarded to an independent mediator within 14 days of receipt of the request.

The organisation seeks to prevent appeals by ensuring that students are satisfied with their education and services. All Staff are expected to be fair, courteous and helpful in all dealings with students.

NOTE:

This policy is located on the Institute's web site at www.ias.com.au under policies and procedures.