

P032	VET FEE-HELP Grievance procedure for Academic and Non Academic matters and Appeals Policy	
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Standard:

This Policy and Procedure is related to Standard 6 from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* as well as chapter 5 Student Fairness of the *VET Guidelines 2015* to the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

Policy Statement:

SGSCC is committed to providing a fair grievance procedure and appeals process that is easily accessible and transparent and are to be resolved promptly.

Definitions:

The Act: refers to the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*

Student: refers to all persons enrolled or seeking to enrol in a course with SGSCC (including persons who are, or would, be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act).

Complainant: refers to Students (as defined above) who have lodged a grievance.

What is a grievance?

A grievance is generally negative feedback about services or staff provided by SGSCC. These are categorised as academic and non academic matters.

Examples of academic matters include matters which relate to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards while non-academic matters include complaints in relation to student personal information that SGSCC holds as well as issues such as harassment, vilification, discrimination, financial matters, fines and payments, application procedures, exclusion from events and facilities.

A grievance may be received by SGSCC in any form and does not need to be formally documented by the student (complainant) in order to be acted on.

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Grievances may be made by any person but are generally made by students and/or employers.

What is an appeal?

An appeal is an application by a student for reconsideration of an unfavourable decision or finding during training and/or assessment. An appeal must be made in writing and specify the particulars of the decision or finding in dispute. Appeals must be lodged within 14 days of the decision or finding is informed to the student.

Early resolution or grievances and appeals:

In all cases, issues that arise during training and assessment that are the source of frustration or are in dispute should be resolved at the time they occur between the persons involved. The student's trainer is usually their first member of SGSCC staff to whom they make an oral grievance/complaint.

Relationship to continuous improvement:

Frequently, the complaints and appeals handling process will expose weaknesses in the training and assessment system that can flow into the continuous improvement system as opportunities for improvement. This outcome of grievances/complaints and appeals handling is very positive and should be actively applied by all persons involved.

Principles:

SGSCC undertakes to apply the following principles to its grievances and appeals handling:

- I. This grievance procedure and appeals process applies wherever and whatever mode of study SGSCC offers.

- II. This grievance procedure and appeals process will be published at www.sgsc.edu.au

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- III. All grievances and complaints are to be attended to and be resolved, where appropriate, in a timely manner. SGSCC considers that it would be extremely unlikely that grievances and appeals are not able to be resolved quickly within SGSCC's internal structures.
- IV. This Policy and Procedure applies to both potential and enrolled students at SGSCC.
- V. Each complainant or person lodging an appeal may be accompanied and/or assisted by a third party at any relevant meeting.
- VI. The complainant, or person lodging an appeal, is to be provided with a written statement of the outcome of the complaint and of any appeals, including details of the reasons for the outcome.
- VII. A complainant or person lodging an internal appeal is to be provided an opportunity to formally present his or her case at no cost.
- VIII. SGSCC is committed to providing a fair hearing of student grievances or complaints. During and after all stages of the grievance and appeals procedure SGSCC will not victimise or discriminate against any complainant or respondent.
- IX. A written record of all grievances and appeals is to be kept by SGSCC including all details of lodgement, response and resolution by the Workskills VET Business Manager. These records are to be kept for at least five years.
- X. All parties to the complainant are to be given appropriate access to records while maintaining confidentiality of these at all times.
- XI. This grievance and appeals policy is communicated to staff at their induction as well as contained in their Staff Handbook as well as are reminded of these, and of any updates, on an on-going basis.
- XII. The handling of a grievance or appeal is to commence within 14 working days of the lodgement of the grievance or appeal and all reasonable measures are taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.

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- XIII. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal then an independent mediator will be sourced by SGSCC through LEADR, the Association of Dispute Resolvers. Their website is <http://www.leadr.info/> Complainants may request that their grievance is referred to the independent mediator by writing to the Principal, SGSCC, PO Box 404, Jannali NSW 2226. Costs of such mediation will be shared equally by SGSCC and the Complainant. If the Complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of the mediator's mediation then they may contact Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). For contact details please see: <http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/make-a-complaint---domestic-students/make-a-complaint---domestic-students1.html>
- XIV. The procedures contained in this policy do not limit the rights of individuals under Australia's Consumer Protection laws.
- XV. SGSCC shall maintain the enrolment of the complainant or person lodging an appeal during the grievance or appeals process.
- XVI. Grievances and appeals are to be considered on the basis of procedural fairness and lead to opportunities for improvement as a Continuous Improvement Report. Decisions or outcomes of the grievance or appeals process that find in the favour of the student shall be implemented immediately.
- XVII. Grievances and appeals are to be handled in the strictest of confidence. No SGSCC representative is to disclose information to any person without the permission of St George & Sutherland Community College Principal. A decision to release information to third parties can only to be made after the complainant has given permission for this to occur by their completing the Information Release Form in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988. SGSCC complies with the Privacy Act 1988 and a student may apply for and receive a copy of their personal information held by SGSCC.

Grievance Procedure for Academic and Non Academic Matters

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Before an issue or complaint becomes a formal grievance students (or those seeking to enrol with SGSCC) are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties with the person(s) concerned. The student's trainer would usually be the first point of contact or the student support officer.

If the student is not satisfied with how their grievance has been attended to they are to be advised of the following formal Grievance Procedure:

Stage 1 – Formal Grievance	Formal grievances must be submitted in writing to WorkSkills Manager – Vocational Education and Business using the Grievance and Appeal Form. The grievance handling process will commence within 14 business days of receipt of the written grievance. The Manager will seek clarification with the student and will later advise them in writing of the outcome of their complaint. The student may wish to include another person to accompany them at a meeting. SGSCC will implement any decisions and/or corrective and preventative actions required. During this process, SGSCC will maintain the student's enrolment whilst the grievance process is ongoing. The student will be advised of and access their right of appeal.
Stage 2 – Internal Appeal	If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may apply in writing to the Principal to appeal the decision and complete a second Grievance and Appeal Form. The Principal will convene a panel when all evidence is reviewed and a judgement is made within 14 business days. The student is informed of the outcome in writing in full as well as their right to pursue the decision further with external agencies.
Stage 3 – External Appeal	If the student is not satisfied with the Internal Appeal they may have the decision mediated by LEADR, The Association of Dispute Resolvers. Their website is http://www.leadr.info/ Complainants may request that their grievance is referred to the independent mediator by writing to the Principal, SGSCC, PO Box 404, Jannali NSW 2226. Costs of such mediation will be shared equally by SGSCC and the Complainant. If the Complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of the mediator's mediation then they may contact Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). For contact details please see: http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/make-a-complaint---domestic-students/make-a-complaint---domestic-students1.html The procedures contained in this policy do not limit the rights of

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Person Responsible:

- Workskills Manager
- WorkSkills Assistant Manager
- Principal