

VET Student Loan Grievance Procedure

Purpose

Queensford College is committed to providing an effective, efficient, timely, fair and confidential academic and non-academic grievance handling procedure for all students. Academic matters include those matters which relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a VET course of study.

Non-academic matters include those matters which do not relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a course. Non-academic grievances tend to arise from events occurring at a provider or from decisions made by a provider.

In accordance with the *VET Student Loans Act 2016* and the associated VET guidelines, as an approved course provider the following policy and procedural document has been drafted to provide clarity around the processes and procedures for student grievances (*Subdivision F— Dealing with complaints, Subsection 88, VET Student Loan Rules 2016*)

Subsection 88 (Grievance Procedure) states:

- (1) An approved course provider must have a grievance procedure to deal with complaints from its students about:
 - i) academic matters (including matters relating to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards for an approved course); and
 - ii) non-academic matters (including matters relating to enrolment in a course and personal information held by the provider).

- (2) The grievance procedure must:
 - i) clearly set out the stages of the procedure; and
 - ii) encourage the timely resolution of complaints, including by specifying reasonable periods for dealing with each stage of the procedure; and
 - iii) contain the internal and external stages referred to in subsections (3) and (4); and
 - iv) clearly provide that there is no charge for either the internal stage or the external stage; and
 - v) provide for implementation of decisions made in following the grievance procedure; and
 - vi) provide for due consideration of recommendations arising from the external stage of the grievance procedure; and
 - vii) require the provider to allow parties who have used the procedure to access the records of that use, but otherwise keep the records confidential.

- (3) The internal stage of the grievance procedure must include:
 - i) a process for the lodging and hearing of a formal complaint; and
 - ii) a requirement for the complainant to be given written notice of a decision on the formal complaint, including:
 - (a) the reasons for the decision; and
 - (b) advice about how to appeal the decision; and

- iii) a process for appealing the decision to an independent senior officer of the approved course provider, or to an internal committee or unit with appropriate expertise; and
- iv) a requirement for the appellant to be given written notice of the decision on appeal, including:
 - (a) the reasons for the decision; and
 - (b) advice about how to have the decision reviewed; and
- v) provision for each party to this stage of the procedure to be accompanied or assisted by another person, at that party's cost.

(4) The external stage of the grievance procedure must include:

- i) a process for having a decision on appeal reviewed by an external and independent person or body with appropriate expertise; and
- ii) provision for each party to the review to be accompanied or assisted by another person at the review, at that party's cost; and
- iii) a requirement for each party to be given written notice of the decision on review, include the reasons for the decision.

Responsibility

The VET Provider Head of Operations is responsible for:

- implementation of this policy and procedure
- ensuring that all staff are notified in writing of this policy and procedure and are fully trained in its operation during orientation and thereafter as changes are made
- ensuring that the grievance procedure is complete, unambiguous, agreed to and ratified by the VET provider's governing body
- ensuring that an arrangement for handling complaints, whether formal or informal, is easily accessible to students without charge and encourages timely resolution of complaints
- ensuring an arrangement is in place for the internal review of complaints lodged

Principles

These principles apply to all stages of this grievance procedure, and will be adhered to by Queensford College.

- Before initiating the formal action, Complainants are encouraged to try to settle any Grievance directly with the person(s) concerned.
- A Complainant should raise their Grievance with the Respondent within 10 days of the issue arising.
- The Complainant and Respondent will have the opportunity to present their case throughout each stage of the Grievance Procedure process.
- At any time while trying to settle the Grievance, a Complainant or Respondent may consult confidentially with anyone they choose.
- The Complainant and the Respondent have the option of being accompanied/assisted by a third person (such as a family member, friend or counsellor) if they so desire.
- The Complainant and the Respondent will not be discriminated against or victimised.
- At all stages of the formal process, discussions relating to complaints, grievances and appeals will be recorded in writing. Reasons and a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of this procedure will be provided to the Complainant and/or the Respondent if requested.

- Records of all grievances will be kept for a period of five years. These records will be kept strictly confidential and stored within Queensford Colleges Cloud based Student management system. The Complainant shall have appropriate access to these records upon written request to VET Queensford College's Head of Operations.
- A Complainant shall have access to the internal components of this procedure at no cost. Queensford College and the Complainant will share costs for an external appeal equally.

Procedure

Phase One

In the case of a **non-academic complaint** or appeal where a person associated with Queensford College feels wronged by the actions of another person associated with Queensford College, the following procedure should be implemented:

- The person who feels wronged (the Complainant) should attempt to speak personally with the person responsible for the complaint, or seek clarification and/or assistance to do this by contacting the Administration Manager of Queensford College. The problem may simply be one of misunderstanding and may be quickly resolved.

Failing that:

- The Complainant person should document the facts of the complaint, taking care to ensure that the complaint is neither frivolous nor based on personal prejudices.
- The Complainant should deliver the documented complaint using words such as, "I believe we have a situation that is unresolved, and I have written it down so that you can see exactly what it is. Can we make a time to sort this out please?"

Any **non-academic complaint** regarding finance or refunds should be discussed with either the Head of Operations or the Administration Manager.

Any **academic complaint** regarding the structure, delivery, assessment or assessment result of a training program, should be discussed with the appropriate trainer(s).

Phase Two

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One, they may lodge an appeal in writing with the Head of Operations (HOO) at Queensford College, Level 2, 359 Queen Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000.

The Complainant's appeal will be determined by the HOO who will conduct all necessary consultations with the Complainant and other relevant persons and make a determination of the appeal. The Complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome of the appeal, including the reasons for the decision within 10 working days.

When the complaint is about:

- a person who is a paid or volunteer worker for Queensford College, then the HOO will delegate responsibility for the processing of that complaint to the nominated person, who will report back to the HOO about the action that is taken.
- finances or refunds related to a training program, then the HOO of Queensford College will delegate responsibility for the processing of that complaint to the nominated person in authority, who will report back to the HOO about the action that is taken.

- the structure, delivery, assessment or assessment result of a training program, then the HOO of Queensford College will consult with and discuss the matter with the nominated person in authority, and a decision will be made about which organisation will process the complaint. The HOO shall be informed about the action that is taken.
- the quality of administrative service for which Queensford College is directly responsible, then the HOO of Queensford College shall determine any action that should be taken as a result of the complaint.

The Complainant will be advised of their right to progress to Stage Three of the grievance procedure if they consider the matter unresolved.

Phase Three

If the complainant/s is not satisfied with the outcome of Phases One – Two and the complaint is of a major nature they may take the matter further by contacting in writing an independent and impartial senior officer of Queensford College (the PEO of Queensford College). The senior officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 10 working days. He/she will review all matters related to the complaint, and will make a decision on the outcome within 20 working days from the receipt of the complaint.

Phase Four

If the matter is not resolved in Phase Three to the satisfaction of the Complainant/s they may take the matter still further by contacting in writing another independent person or body that is established or nominated by Queensford College.

The details for the external body are:

Association of Dispute Resolvers (LEADR)

Level 1, 13-15 Bridge Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Website: <http://www.leadr.info>

Email: admin@leadr.info

Phone: 1800 651 650

Queensford College and the Complainant will share costs of such mediation equally. The Complainant may contact the PEO at Queensford College for full details of costs associated throughout Phase Four of the Grievance Procedure.

If the Complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of the mediator's decision, then they may contact the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). For contact details and information please refer to: <http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/making-a-complaint.html>

The VET Provider will give due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review and implement findings as applicable within 28 days.