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Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

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Version Control

Date	Version	Changes made	Author
17 Oct 2018	V1.0_GD	Released for comment	Gay Doyle

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1. SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to outline Queensford College's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure for all academic and non-academic matters and applies to all Queensford College students, both international and domestic. Queensford College is committed to ensuring its complaints and appeals processes are freely accessible and managed in a fair, just and transparent manner.

2. Policy

The College undertakes to ensure that:

1. All disputes, complaints and appeals will be handled professionally, equitably, confidentially and in a timely manner, with a view to achieving satisfactory resolution;
2. All parties will have a clear understanding of the steps involved in the Complaints and Appeals procedure, prior to and during the carrying out of the procedure;
3. Prospective students are provided with a copy of the Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure document before making a contract to enrol, and again at course commencement;
4. There is no cost for a student to lodge an internal complaint or an appeal.
5. Queensford College is a member of the Resolution Institute's Student Mediation Scheme (Member No. 42713). Resolution Institute is an Australasian, not for profit membership organisation that promotes and facilitates the use of alternative dispute resolution.
<https://www.resolution.institute/>

Students are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. Queensford College teaching and administrative staff are available to assist students to resolve their issues at this level.

At all stages of the 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/appellant. Decisions will be made based on but not limited to current Government Legislation, Standards for RTOs 2017, Queensford College Policies and Procedures and, where applicable, The Rules of Evidence and The Principles of Assessment, providing a written report to the complainant/appellant within 20 working days, on the steps that will be taken to address the issue, clearly stating the reasons for the decision.

Complaints and Appeals Records

The Compliance Manger will maintain records of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes.

The Compliance Manager will table complaints and appeals in Queensford College Management meetings, identifying potential causes of complaints and appeals, the action/s taken to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.

All complaints and appeals paperwork is kept by the Compliance Manager in the Complaints and Appeals file and entered on the Complaints and Appeals Register.

3. Definitions

1. Academic Matters: student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards
2. Non-Academic Matters: including but not limited to those related to personal information, financial matters, behaviour of Queensford College staff and/or agents, and enrolment matters
3. Informal Complaint: informal discussion between a complainant and a member of the College.
4. Formal Complaint: A written statement from a complainant lodged with Queensford College
5. Appeal: A review of the outcome of a formal complaint by Queensford College
6. External Body Review: organisation external to and independent of Queensford College who can review and consider a decision Queensford College has made regarding a formal complaint or appeal
7. Complainant: Anyone making a complaint or raising a grievance with Queensford College and accessing the complaints and appeals process.
8. Appellant – person lodging an appeal.

4. Procedure

The following procedure outlines the four stages in the complaints and appeals process. If a student chooses to access the complaints and appeals processes, Queensford College will maintain the student's enrolment while the complaints/appeals process is being undertaken.

4.1. Stage One: Informal complaint

Any person wishing to make a complaint may do so in an informal manner by requesting to speak with any member of the Queensford College staff including trainers, administrative staff or a member of the management team. The complaint may bring a support person to accompany them to discuss their grievance.

Should the complainant feel that their grievance is not satisfactorily resolved, they may submit their complaint formally in writing.

4.2. Stage Two: Formal Complaint

Complaints must be submitted in writing to the International Student Engagement and Support Officer, using the Complaints and Appeals Form. Receipt of any complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 5 days, with the complaints process commencing within 10 days of the receipt of the complaint.

The Director of Operations or their nominee ("the RTO representative") will then review and investigate the complaint or appeal and seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant or appellant hopes to achieve. Should a face-to-face interview be required, the complainant or appellant may again ask another person to accompany them. A Queensford College representative will then endeavour to resolve the issue.

Reasons and a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of this procedure will be provided to the complainant/appellant.

4.3. Stage Three - Internal appeal

If the complainant/appellant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal the decision reached in stage two in writing to the Director of Operations within 14 days of receiving the written report of the outcome of stage two. The Director of Operations will appoint a person who was not involved in the original decision to consult with the complainant/appellant and other relevant parties. Where possible, such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews so that the complainant/appellant has an opportunity to formally present their case. The complainant/appellant may ask another person to accompany them to interviews.

Once the Director of Operations receives a report of the consultation procedure, a written report will be provided to the complainant/appellant on the additional steps taken to address the complaint, clearly stating the reasons for the decision.

4.4. Stage Four - External review

If the complainant/appellant is not satisfied with the result or conduct of the internal complaint handling and appeals process, Queensford College will assist the student to access independent mediation at minimal or no cost to resolve the dispute.

The mediator will report to Queensford College the outcome of the mediation, including any recommendations arising. Once the College receives the report of the outcomes from independent mediation, they will provide a written report to the complainant/appellant within 10 working days on the recommended actions to resolve the grievance.

Queensford College agrees to be bound by the independent mediator's recommendations. and should the complaint handling or appeal process result in a decision that supports the student, Queensford College will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventive action required and advise the student of the outcome. Queensford College will also ensure that any recommendations are referred to the Continuous Improvement Committee for action.

If, after following Queensford College's internal procedures, you still believe the College is breaching or has breached its legal requirements, you can submit a complaint to the Australia Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) by completing the online complaint form (<https://rms.asqa.gov.au/registration/newcomplaint.aspx>)

Except in exceptional circumstances, you must attach evidence to your complaint form showing that you have followed Queensford College's formal complaints procedure and the College's response.

ASQA's processes requires you to identify yourself to ASQA as a complainant, although you may request that your identity is kept confidential throughout any investigation that ASQA undertakes.

Nothing in this Dispute Resolution Policy denies the rights of students to pursue other legal avenues.

Students who are the subject of Queensford College initiated suspensions or cancellations will have access to Queensford College's Complaints and Appeals process. They will have 20 days in which to initiate the Complaints and Appeals process.

4.5. Assessment Results Appeals

Students wishing to appeal an assessment decision must submit their appeal in a period no longer than 3 months following the competency decision.

Please follow the procedure outlined above.