

Academic and Non-Academic Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure - V2.1

1. Policy

Uniting Institute of Education Ltd (UIE) is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system which is easily accessible to all complainants.

UIE aims to:

- Develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works;
- Set in place a grievance handling system that is client focussed and helps UIE to prevent grievances from recurring;
- Ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality;
- Ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against nor victimised;
- Ensure that there is a consistent response to grievances.

A grievance can be defined as a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any respect of UIE's services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters, such as:

- The enrolment, induction/orientation process;
- The quality of education provided;
- Academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study;
- Handling of personal information and access to personal records;
- The way someone has been treated.

These grievance procedures are designed to ensure that UIE responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

2. Policy coverage

This policy is designed to cover all complainants including:

- Individuals who are, or would be, entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance (Australian citizens or permanent humanitarian visa holders who are resident in Australia for the duration of a VET unit of study);
- Individuals who are not eligible for VET FEE-HELP assistance (permanent residents who are not permanent humanitarian visa holders and New Zealand citizens).

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term "complainant" applies to both current students of UIE and persons seeking to enrol with UIE.

These grievance procedures will be made available to complainants regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence.

3. Before an issue becomes a formal grievance

Complainants are encouraged wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. There are staff members available to assist the resolution of issues at this level. Complainants may raise an informal grievance by contacting the Learning Support Officer in person or by phoning (02) 8830 0755.

4. Procedure

This procedure can be utilised by complainants to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study. Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all matters including grievances in relation to personal information that UIE holds in relation to an individual.

During all stages of this procedure UIE will take all steps to ensure that:

- The complainant and any respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against;
- The complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case and each party to a grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings;
- A full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided if so requested by the complainant or a respondent;
- Where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, UIE will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome;
- There is no cost to the complainant to access this grievance procedure.

4.1 Stage one – formal grievance

Formal grievances must be submitted in writing marked to the attention of the RTO & Learning Manager as follows:

RTO & Learning Manager
learn@uniting.org
PO Box 607
Parramatta NSW 2124

Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged in writing. The grievance handling process will commence within ten working days of the receipt of the formal grievance and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.

The RTO & Learning Manager, or their nominee, will then, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve.

Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request or by a face-to-face interview with the complainant. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview the complainant or respondent may ask another person to accompany them.

The RTO & Learning Manager, or their nominee, will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and will provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within ten working days. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance.

4.2 Stage two – internal appeal

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with the Director of UIE (who is senior to the original decision maker) within 20 working days of receiving notification of the outcome of their formal grievance.

Appeals must be submitted in writing marked to the attention of the Director as follows:

Director
learn@uniting.org
PO Box 607
Parramatta NSW 2124

The Director will appoint an appropriate person or committee to consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within ten working days.

Where possible such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to these interviews.

Following the consultation, the Director, or their nominee, will provide a written report to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within ten working days. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

4.3 Stage three – external appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may lodge an external appeal to the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) within 20 working days of receiving notice of the outcome of their appeal.

Contact details for ACPET:

Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET)
PO Box 551, East Melbourne, Vic 8002
Ph: 1800 657 644 Fax: (03) 9416 1895
Email: acpet@acpet.edu.au

Complainants who wish to lodge an external appeal must complete the form for domestic students available at <http://acpet.edu.au/students/student-support/appeals> and email it to: studentappeals@acpet.edu.au or post it to: PO Box 551, East Melbourne, Vic 8002.

Once an application is made, ACPET will advise UIE of the external review application made by the complainant. Both the complainant and UIE will be requested to provide documents in support of the application within 14 days, including student files and records, to ACPET. ACPET will then forward all documents to an external reviewer.

The external reviewer considers the documents and makes a determination. The decision and determination is forwarded to ACPET. ACPET will then send the decision to all parties. Turnaround time for an appeal is within 4 to 6 weeks of lodgement.

UIE agrees to be bound by the external reviewer's recommendations and the Director will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report from the external reviewer.

5. Further action

If a grievance still remains unresolved after the external appeal, the complainant may decide to refer the matter to the National Training Complaints Hotline on 13 38 73.

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of the individuals to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

6. Enrolment status

Where a current student chooses to access this policy and procedure, UIE will maintain that person's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

7. Record keeping & confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the RTO & Learning Manager. These records will be maintained at Level 4, 146 Marsden Street, Parramatta, NSW 2150.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by UIE's *Privacy and Personal Information Policy*.

8. Approval, publication and training.

This Policy and Procedure will be made available to complainants through publication in the Student Handbook and on UIE's website (www.uie.edu.au).

For the purposes of communicating to and training staff, this Policy and Procedure will form part of the staff induction process.