

Student Complaints and Appeals

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to define the procedure, process and resources available to students for dealing with their concerns, complaints and appeals.

Authorisation

Chief Executive Officer to authorise policy;

Director of Education to implement operational strategies.

Scope

This policy applies to all students of Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd. who acknowledges that students who believe they have been adversely affected by its operations have a right to complain and have their complaint dealt with in a fair, accountable and transparent way in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

Comm Unity Plus Services is committed to responding promptly and efficiently to complaints and appeals and has developed and implemented a process for handling complaints efficiently.

This policy is made available to all students via publication on the website and in the Student Handbook.

Definitions

Complaints include but are not restricted to matters of concern to clients accessing any program or service

Appeals can be made when a student is not satisfied with a decision that Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd. has made in relation to a complaint, assessment arrangements or outcomes and/or decisions made that impact academic progress.

Natural Justice is concerned with ensuring procedural fairness such as:

- Decisions and processes free from bias;
- All parties having the right to be heard;
- The right of the respondent to know of what s/he is accused; and,
- All parties being informed of the decision and the reasons for the decision.

Complainant/s: The person or persons making the complaint.

Respondent/s: The person or persons about whom the complaint has been made.

Principles

The following principles should be adhered to following a complaint/appeal:

- **Confidentiality** - Only those directly involved in handling the complaint or appeal should have access to information on the complaint;
- **Access and transparency** – information about how and where to lodge a complaint/appeal is easily accessible;
- **Impartiality** - No decisions or judgments will be made until all information has been impartially considered by those responsible for handling the complaint;
- **Respect** - Those responsible for handling the complaint must be sensitive to the needs of those directly involved and to those who may be affected by the grievance; and,
- **Prompt Action** - All complaints must be dealt with promptly and a response to a complaint must be received within 7 days from the date the complaint is received.

Policy

A student who has a complaint or appeal, has the right to raise the complaint or appeal and expect that every effort will be made to resolve it in accordance with this policy and its accompanying procedures, without prejudice or fear of reprisal or victimisation. They have the right to present the complaint or appeal informally, as well as in writing.

Verbal complaints will be accepted where the Complainant makes it clear that they are making a formal complaint and not giving general feedback. Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd recognises that critical comment and response are an important part of the collective endeavour to improve the quality of educational programs and community strengthening activities, and such feedback would not normally be viewed as a complaint unless specific action was requested.

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd will manage all complaints and appeals as fairly, effectively and efficiently as possible. We will encourage the parties to approach the complaint or appeal with an open mind and to resolve problems through discussion and conciliation.

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd will take action to deal with identified causes of complaints and appeals and will then monitor and improve systems and operations if and as required. Where a complaint or appeal cannot be resolved through discussion and/or conciliation, Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd acknowledges the need for an appropriate external and independent person to mediate between the parties. The parties will be given the opportunity to formally present their case to the independent person.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process of making and resolving complaints.

Records

All details regarding student complaints and appeals, including outcomes, will be recorded on the **Complaints Register** located at <E:\Compliance\Continuous Improvement\Complaints Register>.

Completed **Complaint/Appeal Forms** and **Complaint/Appeal Action Record** should be stored in the same folder as the Complaints Register.

Procedure

If a student has a complaint or appeal, the following steps are to be followed:

1. The complainant should discuss the issue / complaint / appeal with the person involved to try and resolve it verbally.
2. If no resolution is reached, the student should discuss the issue / complaint / appeal with his or her teacher / trainer to see if it can be resolved.
3. If following step 2 there is no resolution, the student can choose to complete a **Complaint/Appeal Form** in writing.
4. The student should bring the complaint/appeal to the attention of the trainer/teacher or a Training Manager within seven (7) days or as soon as possible after the issue has taken place.
5. If the complaint or appeal is not dealt with to the student's satisfaction within a seven (7) day period after being formally lodged, s/he may bring it to the attention of the Director of Education. The Director of Education will either deal with the issue directly or arrange for it to be dealt with by someone from the management team. This process must commence within 48 hours from the time the Director of Education receives written notification from the student about their dissatisfaction to the response received from their teacher / trainer and a response / resolution must be presented within 7 days.
6. Should the issue still not be resolved to the student's satisfaction, Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd. will make arrangements for an independent external person (at no cost to the student) to resolve the issue. The student will be given the opportunity to formally present his or her case. The time frame for this process may vary but should take no longer than 14 days.
7. If a student is still not happy with external mediation, he / she may take the complaint to the Complaints Unit of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). There are a variety of processes for contacting the VRQA and making a complaint. These are outlined on the VRQA website:

<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/making-a-complaint.aspx>

Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for adopting this policy.

The Chief Operation Officer will delegate the responsibility for the implementation of this policy to the relevant authorised delegates of the Education team.

Supporting Documents

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd. Student Handbook

Complaint Register

Complaint/Appeal Form

Complaint/Appeal Action Record