

PP47 VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure

PURPOSE

This policy outlines Southern Cross Education Institute's commitment to ensuring that students and clients feel comfortable and supported in raising issues of a serious nature, having them addressed in a timely manner, and in a way that applies the principles of natural justice and ensures all parties are dealt with fairly and objectively.

SCOPE

This policy applies to students seeking to enrol that are, or would be, entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act.

This policy relates to *academic* matters which include, but are not limited to, issues such as: enrolment outcomes; teaching; course delivery; graduation; teaching facilities and learning resources; the curriculum and courses; the process of assessment and assessment tasks; the results and awards given for their work.

DEFINITIONS

The Act	refers to the Higher Education Support Act 2003
FEE-HELP	a Commonwealth Government loan scheme helping eligible students to defer paying fees for undergraduate and postgraduate units.
VET FEE-HELP	an income contingent loan scheme for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector that is part of the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). VET FEE-HELP is an extension of FEE-HELP.
Student	Refers to students, who are Australian citizens or permanent humanitarian visa holders who will be resident in Australia for the duration of their VET Units of study, and who access VET FEE-HELP for payment of their tuition fees in respect of the VET unit of study in which they are enrolled.
Complainant	Refers to Students (as defined above) who have lodged an academic complaint with Southern Cross Education Institute.
Academic matters	Includes those matters which relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a VET course of study.
Tuition Fees	Fees paid for a VET Unit of Study that is approved for VET FEE-HELP and applies to students who are, or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act.
Grievance	An expression of an issue, resentment or displeasure about a decision service or product. This will be a cause of dissatisfaction where the complainant has an honest belief, based on reasonable grounds, that a non-academic decision and/or action, or the behaviour of another student or staff member associated with academic matters, is unfair and/or unreasonable. Grievances arise from decisions made by SCEI.
Formal Grievance	If a person is still aggrieved at the completion of an informal process they may lodge a formal grievance that will be reviewed by a senior manager within SCEI.
Informal Resolution	If a person wishes to lodge a grievance it is recommended the matter is first discussed directly with the respondent. Informal grievance resolution often proves to be quick and effective when a person is encouraged to resolve the matter.

POLICY

1. Southern Cross Education Institute is committed to providing an effective, efficient, timely, fair and confidential academic grievance handling procedure for all students.

2. SCEI will ensure that any complainant will have access to support and advice from Student Services staff and will allow a third party support person to be present at any relevant meeting.
3. Throughout the grievance procedure SCEI will not:
 - 3.1. charge students or prospective students any fees in relation to the grievance processes;
 - 3.2. neither victimise nor discriminate against any complainant or respondent.
4. Records relevant to the implementation of this policy will be managed in accordance with the PP25 Effective Records Management Policy and Procedure. Records of all grievances will be kept for a period of 5 years, will remain strictly confidential and will be stored securely. Supervised access to these records will be provided to parties to the grievance.
5. Access to records and information relevant to the implementation of this policy will be in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Freedom of Information Act (1991)*.

PROCEDURE

1. Informal Grievance Procedure

- 1.1. Where possible all non-formal attempts shall be made to resolve the Complaint & Appeal. This may include advice, discussions, and general mediation in relation to the issue and the student's Complaint & Appeal. Any staff can be involved in this informal process to resolve issues but once a student has placed a formal complaint / appeal the following procedures must be followed.

2. Formal Grievance Procedure

- 2.1. General principles applying to all stages of this grievance procedure which will be adhered to by Southern Cross Education Institute, are:
 - 2.1.1. The Complainant and respondent will have the opportunity to present their case at each stage of the procedure.
 - 2.1.2. 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.
 - 2.1.3. The Complainant and the respondent will not be discriminated against or victimised.
- 2.2. 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 and/or the respondent if requested.
- 2.3. Records of all grievances will be kept for a period of five years. These records will be kept strictly confidential and stored within the Student Administration File. The complainant shall have appropriate access to these records.
- 2.4. A Complainant shall have access to this grievance procedure at no cost.

3. Stage One

- 3.1. Formal grievances should be submitted in writing to the Training Manager using FOR120 Grievance Form.
- 3.2. The responsible officer, Training Manager, within Southern Cross Education Institute will then assess the grievance, determine the outcome and advise the Complainant in writing of their decision within ten (10) working days.
- 3.3. The Complainant will be advised of their right to access stage two of this procedure if they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One.

4. Stage Two

- 4.1. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One they may lodge an appeal in writing with the

Campus Manager.

- 4.2. The Complainant's appeal will be determined by the Campus Manager, an independent and impartial officer of Southern Cross Education Institute (the Reviewer).
- 4.3. The Reviewer 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 their appeal, including the reasons for the decision, within ten (10) working days.
- 4.4. The Complainant will be advised of their right to progress to Stage Three of the grievance procedure if they consider the matter unresolved.

5. Stage Three

- 5.1. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage Two they may request that the matter be referred to an external dispute resolution process by a body appointed for this purpose by Southern Cross Education Institute.
- 5.2. The details for the external body and contact person are:

LEADR - Association of Dispute Resolvers

Level 1, 13-15 Bridge Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: (+61 2) 9251 3366

Fax: (+61 2) 9251 3733

Freecall: 1800 651 650

Email: leadr@leadr.com.au

Website: www.leadr.com.au

6. Southern Cross Education Institute will give due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review within ten (10) working days.

7. Publication

- 7.1. This Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure will be made available to Students enrolled with Southern Cross Education Institute through publication on the website www.scei.edu.au and in our Student Handbook.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

PP11 Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
PP25 Effective Records Management Policy and Procedure

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) - Schedule 1A

VET Guidelines 2015

<https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2015L00430>

Current legislation and Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations are provided by the **National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011** at <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2011A00012>.

The Australian Skills Quality Authority may impose sanctions on Registered Training Organisations for breaches of registration requirements; for example, suspension or cancellation of RTO registration.

Privacy Act 1988
Freedom of Information Act (1991).

RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance Manager is responsible for:

- ensuring relevant staff are familiar with this Policy
- publishing this Policy on the College website

Campus Manager and Training Manager are responsible for:

- implementation of this policy and procedure and ensuring that all staff are fully trained in its operation and Students and Complainants are made aware of its availability.

Author	Compliance Manager
Approved by	Campus Manager
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Review date	The policy review should be scheduled 2 years from the approval date