Purpose
This Complaints and Appeals Policy and related procedure are designed to ensure that Integrity Education Group ("IEG") responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction. This policy outlines Integrity Education Group’s approach to managing complaints and appeals and ensures that all clients, students, staff and other stakeholders are aware of the steps to take to have their dissatisfaction addressed appropriately.

This policy provides an avenue for all complaints and appeals to be addressed in a fair, efficient and confidential manner.

An essential part of developing that environment is ensuring that staff and students are encouraged to come forward with their complaints in the knowledge that the responsible staff members will take prompt and effective action to address complaints.

Complaints and appeals that are not addressed have the potential to grow into major problems that can cause tension, low morale and reduced learning and academic achievement. Unresolved or poorly handled complaints can also lead to legal action against IEG.

The procedures aim to avoid blame and undue investigation. This policy applies to all students undertaking training in courses offered by IEG as well as IEG staff and clients. All parties have the right to be accompanied and assisted by a support person in every relevant meeting they attend.

The Complaints and Appeals process does not remove the right of the appellant to take action under Australia’s Consumer Protection Laws.

Definitions
Complaint – a person’s expression of dissatisfaction with any service provided by Integrity Education Group.
Appeal – a request to review a decision that has previously been made.

Scope
This policy applies to all students, prospective students, clients, staff and other stakeholders of Integrity Education Group.

Policy
1. Complaints and appeals systems
   1.1 Despite all efforts of Integrity Education Group to provide satisfactory services to its students, clients, and other persons, complaints and appeals may occasionally arise requiring formal resolution.
   1.2 Integrity Education Group is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable complaints and appeals system which is easily accessible and offered to complainants at no charge. Integrity Education Group aims to:
      a) develop a culture that views complaints and appeals as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works;
      b) set in place a complaints and appeals handling system that is client focused and helps Integrity Education Group to prevent events that cause complaints and appeals from recurring;
      c) ensure that any complaints and appeals are resolved promptly, objectively, with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality;
      d) ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a complaint or appeal is not discriminated against nor victimized;
      e) ensure that there is a consistent response to complaints and appeals.
1.3 All formal complaints and appeals and their outcomes will be recorded on the Complaints and Appeals Register. In addition, the register will be regularly reviewed by management and used as an opportunity for improvement and reflection.

1.4 All formal complaints and appeals will be responded to efficiently to ensure an effective resolution within a reasonable timeframe, usually no later than FOURTEEN (14) days or as soon as practicable – the practice is to confirm receipt of a formal complaint by email to the student with a response period being up to 14 days. However in some cases, particularly if the matter is complex, the resolution may take longer.

1.5 Where a student chooses to access this policy and procedure, Integrity Education Group will maintain the student’s enrolment while the complaints/appeals handling process is ongoing. Any complaint will in no way adversely affect a student’s enrolment or academic endeavours.

2. Nature of complaints and appeals

2.1 Complaints and appeals may be made be in relation to any of Integrity Education Group’s services, activities and decisions such as:

   a) the application and enrolment process
   b) the quality of training and assessment provided
   c) training and assessment matters, including student progress, assessment and outcomes
   d) access to personal records
   e) decisions made by Integrity Education Group
   f) the way someone has been treated.

3. Resolving issues before they become a complaint (informal complaint/issue)

STAGE 1 – Informal Complaints / Issues

3.1 Students and clients are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned to deal with the issue before it becomes a formal complaint. Integrity Education Group’s trainers/assessors and administration team are available to assist students to resolve their issues at this level.

3.2 Where possible all non-formal attempts shall be made to resolve the complaint. This may include advice, discussions, and general mediation in relation to the issue and the student’s complaint. 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.
STAGES 2 & 3 – Formal Complaints and Appeals Resolution

4. Lodging a complaint

4.1 Formal complaints and appeals may be made in writing to the Student Services Officer (which will then be passed directly to the CEO upon receipt). All parties are encouraged to approach matters with an open view and to attempt to resolve problems through discussion and conciliation. The complaint must be recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register by the Student Services Officer who will then notify the Complainant that the complaint has been formally recorded and the process begun.

4.2 Complaints are to include the following information:
   a) Submission date of complaint
   b) Name of complainant;
   c) Nature of complaint;
   d) Date of the event which lead to the complaint
   e) Attachments (if applicable);

4.3 Complaints will be investigated by the CEO/Operations Manager or their delegate and a proposed resolution provided in writing within fourteen (14) days.

4.4 The complaint is monitored and updated by the Operations Manager on a regular basis noting information relating to:
   a) Name of complainant;
   b) Description of complaint / appeal
   c) Determined Resolution; and
   d) Date of Resolution.

4.5 In the case of a student, once a complaint has been filed and logged in the 'Complaints & Appeals Register' the Operations Manager shall notify the CEO of the complaint (within 24 hours or as soon as possible) and provide any further documentation related to the matter.

4.6 The CEO will consider the formal complaint within 14 days by reviewing, clarifying, investigating and discussing the matter with other relevant staff and examining all documentation provided by Student. The student will be given all opportunities to respond.

4.7 Complainants and/or appellants may be assisted or accompanied by a support person at any meetings (as required) regardless of the nature of the complaint. If any further information is required at this time the Operations Manager will contact the Complainant directly.

4.8 Copies of all documentation, outcomes and further action required will be placed into the ‘Complaints & Appeals Register’ by the Administration Manager and on the student’s file.

4.9 Within the notification of the outcome of the formal complaint, complainants and appellants shall also be notified that they have the right of appeal. To appeal a decision IEG must receive, in writing, grounds of the appeal.
5. Lodging an appeal of an assessment decision

5.1 All students have the right to appeal decisions made by IEG where reasonable grounds can be established.

5.2 Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the result or conduct of Integrity Education Group's internal procedures for handling of a complaint, the student has the right to lodge an internal appeal of the decision. An appeal must be lodged within 20 days of the decision being made.

5.3 To activate the appeals process the student is to provide a summary of the grounds the appeal is based upon. The reason the student feels the decision is unfair is to be clearly explained and help and support with this process can be obtained from Student Administration. Any supporting documentation should also be attached to the appeal.

5.4 A request for an appeal decision may be made in writing to the CEO/Operation Manager providing reasons why the assessment appeal is being made. The Operations Manager shall ensure the details of the appeal are added to the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’. Appeals must be made within 20 days of the original decision being made.

5.5 An internal appeal will prompt the CEO/Operations Manager to review the decision made in response to the original complaint. The complainant may be asked to provide further information by phone, in writing or in person.

5.6 Integrity Education Group acknowledges the need for an appropriate independent party to mediate where an appropriate outcome cannot be reached internally. Additionally, the complainant may request that an independent party be included in the appeals process. Upon request or the decision by Integrity Education Group that this is required, Integrity Education Group will organise an independent mediator to be included in the appeals process at its own cost.

5.7 The outcome of the internal appeal will be advised in writing within 20 days and the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’ updated.

6. Internal appeal

Appealing Assessments

6.1 Where a student wishes to appeal an assessment they are required to notify their assessor in the first instance. Where appropriate the assessor may decide to re-assess the student to ensure a fair and equitable decision is gained. The assessor shall complete a written report regarding the re-assessment outlining the reasons why assessment was or was not granted.

6.2 If this is still not to the student’s satisfaction the student shall formally lodge an appeal in writing to the Operation Manager, outlining their reasons for the appeal. The appeal shall be entered into the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’.

6.3 The CEO shall be notified and shall seek details from the assessor involved and any other relevant parties. A decision shall be made regarding the appeal either indicating the assessment decision stands or details of a possible re-assessment by a ‘third party’. The third party shall be another assessor appointed by IEG.

6.4 The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome and the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’ updated.

Appealing Decisions to Report Breach of Academic or Attendance Requirements

6.5 Where a student wishes to appeal the decision of IEG for a breach of academic or attendance requirements the student shall lodge, in writing, a letter outlining the details of their appeal. The student
should have extenuating circumstances as to why they have breached their requirements and must be able to provide evidence of these circumstances.

6.6 The appeal shall be lodged with the Student Administration Office and the appeal entered into the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’.

6.7 The CEO shall be notified and shall seek details regarding the initial documentation of the breach and shall make a decision based on the grounds of the appeal.

6.8 The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome and the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’ updated.

6.9 Where a student has decided to access the appeals process in relation to a reportable breach, IEG will not report the breach until the appeals process has been undertaken. IEG is required to maintain all relevant responsibilities until the breach has been resolved.

Appealing Deferrals, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment Decisions

6.10 Where a student wishes to appeal a decision relating to deferment, suspension, or cancellation of their enrolment they are required to lodge an Appeal, outlining the details of their appeal. Students should have extenuating circumstances as to why the decision should be reviewed and any supporting documentation supporting their appeal.

6.11 The appeal shall be lodged with Student Administration Section and the appeal shall be entered into the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’.

6.12 The CEO shall be notified and shall seek details regarding the initial documentation of the decision and shall make a decision based on the grounds of the appeal.

6.13 The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome and the ‘Complaints and Appeals Register’ updated.

6.14 Where a student has decided to access the appeals process in relation to deferment, suspension or cancellation of their enrolment, IEG will not update the student's status until the appeals process is completed. IEG is required to maintain all relevant responsibilities until the change in enrolment status has been resolved.

STAGE 3 – External Appeals

7. External complaints and appeals

7.1 Where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal complaint and appeals process, the complainant can access an external complaints and there will be minimal or no cost to the appellant for this service. Complainants must ensure they have accessed the internal processes first.

7.2 Complainants have a number of external complaint or appeal options including:

- Consumer Affairs (Victoria)
- Administrative Appeals Tribunal (http://www.aat.gov.au)
- Integrity Education Group’s registering body:
  
  Note: ASQA can only deal with complaints about:
  - the information provided by an RTO about its course/s
  - the delivery and assessment of training received
  - the qualifications issued or to be issued.
7.3 Integrity Education Group will provide complete cooperation with the organisation investigating the complaint/appeal and will be bound by the recommendations arising out of this process. The CEO will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of being notified of the recommendations.

7.4 The decision of this independent mediator is final and any further action the student wishes to take is outside IEG’s policies and procedures.

7.5 Where a decision or outcome is in favour of the student IEG shall follow the required action to satisfy the student’s complaint as soon as practicable.

7.6 Where a decision or outcome is in favour of IEG, the student may exercise his/her rights to appeal under Australia’s Consumer Protection Laws.

8. Record keeping and confidentiality

8.1 A written record of all complaints and appeals handled under this policy and procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least seven (7) years to allow all parties to the complaint or appeal appropriate access to these records.

8.2 All records relating to complaints and appeals will be treated as confidential and will be covered by Integrity Education Group’s Privacy and Personal Information Policy.

9. Non-limitation of policy

9.1 This policy and related procedure do not replace or modify those or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and related procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under Australia’s Consumer Protection laws. Also, this policy does not circumscribe an individual’s rights to pursue other legal remedies.
BQ7: Complaints and appeals policy

Related policies

- BQ2: Continuous Improvement and Quality Assurance Policy
- BQ3: Privacy and Personal Information Policy

Related procedures and documents

- BQR2A: Continuous Improvement Register
- BQ7.1: Complaints and Appeals Procedure
- BQ7.1.1 Complaints and Appeals FlowChart
- Complaints Register
- Appeals Register

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