



Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

This Policy and Procedure for managing complaints and appeals enables ACS to contribute to the capability of Australia's existing and emerging ICT workforce by providing quality ICT education support and experiences for its students. This is achieved by compliance with:

- Users' guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015
- CRICOS requirements incorporating ESOS Framework
- Other statutory obligations

ACS works within the above regulatory framework to support students' education journey resulting in workforce ready ACS ICT graduates.

Definitions

RTO	Registered Training Organisation
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority is the regulator
Students	Domestic and overseas students
ACS education partners	RTOs delivering education services on behalf of ACS
Compliance	Requirement to meet or exceed legislated minimum standards
Third-party provider	External organisation that delivers education services on behalf of ACS under formal arrangements
PRISMS	Provider Registration and International Student Management System
VETtrak	Records management system that securely stores student data
Complaints and Appeals Tribunal	External arrangement of third-party Tribunal agreed by both parties. Department of Home Affairs (formerly Department of Immigration and Border Protection - DIBP) - When you are planning to visit Australia, there are important things you should know such as what visas to apply for and requirements for the visa application, your obligations while in Australia and information about complying with the conditions of your visa. For further information www.border.gov.au
Department of Education, Skills and Training	The Department of Education, Skills and Training is responsible for national policies and programmes that help Australians access quality and affordable early childcare and childhood education, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, international education and research. For further information www.education.gov.au
Overseas Students Ombudsman	The Overseas Students Ombudsman investigates complaints about problems that intending, current or former overseas students have with private schools, colleges and universities (education providers) in Australia, further information can be found www.oso.gov.au



Responsibility

- The Director Education and Workforce Development is responsible for this policy.
- The Education Operations Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- The Education Compliance Manager and Education Product Development Manager are responsible for the maintenance of this policy.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this document is to ensure ACS responds to and manages complaints involving:

- ACS, its trainers/tutors, assessors, or other education staff
- a third-party providing education services on behalf of ACS
- any student.

This Policy and Procedure applies to current and prospective students at who are enrolled in a course delivered by ACS or one of its third-party providers.

ACS and third-party providers are located across multiple states and territories across Australia.

Complaints and Appeals Policy

ACS takes a preventative approach to complaints and appeals by providing students with robust administrative, academic and ICT industry support spanning the scope of the student experience with ACS. The ACS student experience includes:

- how ACS promotes course/s
- enrolment
- course orientation
- course delivery
- ICT industry networking
- professional development
- assessment
- evaluation of the student experience.

Complaints and appeals are considered valuable feedback from students, thus providing ACS with opportunities to continue to build on its extensive student support services.

Student support services include targeted education administrative and academic support. This maintains effective communication channels between ACS, its students and third-party providers.

Education administrative support comes in the form of a dedicated education administration team. The dedicated education administration team is made up of:

The *Education Operations Manager* oversees the day to day operations across ACS education and our education partners.

The *Education Product Development Manager* updates and creates new education products according to ACS and ICT industry requirements.

The *Education Compliance Manager*, with the support of the *Quality Assurance Officer*, oversees compliance according to ASQA, CRICOS and ESOS requirements across ACS education and ACS' third party providers.

The *Internship Coordinator* assists students in obtaining an internship and supports students during their internship, whether it be remote, virtual or onsite.



The *Education Program Administrators* provide a range of administrative services including;

- enrolling students
- responding to student and third-party provider queries by phone or email
- setting up students in Canvas, ACS' learning management system (LMS)
- providing technical support for students using Canvas
- recording student results in VETtrak
- recording student complaints and appeals in VETtrak
- following up on students who are not progressing as planned throughout their studies.

Together, the *Education Program Administrators* form the front line of ACS Education.

An *Education Program Administrator* is usually the first point of contact for a complaint. *Education Program Administrators* are skilled in a range of administrative and customer service tasks such as:

- identifying if the student concern relates to an existing process or complaint
- resolving a potential complaint informally with the student
- supporting a student to make a formal complaint
- recording details of a formal complaint in the student file in VETtrak
- providing a VETtrak report on the record of formal complaints when requested by the *Education Operations Manager*
- deciding when it is appropriate to escalate a complaint to *the Education Operations Manager*.

ACS tutors provide academic support for students. Each student is part of a cohort with a dedicated tutor. The tutor's role includes supporting students to resolve complaints informally. If this is not possible, the tutor may be the first point of contact for a complaint or an appeal, usually within their cohort.

A complaint is defined as a student grievance relating to:

- ACS or third-party provider facilities
- lack of student services such as academic or LMS support
- tutor behaviour
- ACS Student Code of Conduct
- student results
- a PRISMS entry.

An appeal is defined as a student challenging a decision made by ACS or one of its third-party providers. Examples of appeals include:

- a student challenging the decision by ACS to send them an *ACS Notice of Course Exclusion* letter for unsatisfactory academic progress or academic misconduct
- a student not being satisfied with a complaint resolution
- a student not satisfied with the result awarded for an assessment
- a student is rejected when they applied for:
 - a release letter to transfer to another registered provider
 - a refund of tuition fees



- a change of course
- leave of absence
- course credit.

An appeal is usually preceded by a complaint. Complaints and appeals are dealt with in accordance with *ACS Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Students are encouraged to resolve their grievances through informal avenues such as talking directly to the person(s) of concern or discussing the situation with their trainer/tutor. At this point the student may engage a support person such as a friend or fellow student. The tutor may also seek advice from peers.

Where informal approaches resolve the grievance, no further action will be taken.

Where informal approaches to resolve a complaint or appeal does not find a resolution, the student has the right to make a formal complaint.

If the student complaint or appeal involves an ACS third-party provider, the student will escalate their grievance according to the third-party providers' complaints and appeals procedure. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome after exhausting all options with the third-party provider, the student has the right to make a formal complaint/appeal with ACS. There is no cost for a student to make a formal complaint/appeal within ACS. The student may engage the assistance of a friend or support person to make a complaint. If the student seeks to engage the assistance of a friend or support person to make a complaint, any costs incurred are at the expense of the student.

To make a formal complaint/appeal with ACS, the student is required to complete the ***Student Complaints and Appeals Form*** and email it to education@acs.org.au. If the student has any questions about how to complete the form, they can contact the ACS Education team on 1800 671 003 or email their query to education@acs.org.au.

Upon receipt of the completed *Student Complaints and Appeals Form*, an *Education Program Administrator* will record the receipt of the complaint/appeal and any documented evidence accompanying it in *VETtrak*. The *Education Program Administrator* will then notify the *Education Operations Manager* of the complaint/appeal and their planned actions as soon as is reasonably practicable but no later than 10 business days.

The *Education Program Administrator* will seek to resolve the complaint/appeal as soon as is reasonably practicable using a professional investigative approach. The complainant/appellant is provided with the opportunity to ask and respond to questions throughout the investigation. The *Education Program Administrator* may also request evidence in the form of documents, witnesses or emails if applicable.

In the event the complaint/appeal is not resolved within 20 business days of receipt and acknowledgement of the complaint/appeal, an *Education Program Administrator* will email the complainant/appellant explaining reasons for the delay. ACS requires the grievance to be resolved within 40 business days. Upon the grievance being resolved to the satisfaction of the student and ACS, the student is advised of the outcome and the reasons behind the decisions made in writing and details of the resolution recorded in *VETtrak* and the *Continuous Improvement Register* if applicable.

In the unusual event that an *Education Program Administrator* is unable to resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the student, the grievance will be escalated to the *Education Operations Manager*. Upon the grievance being resolved to the satisfaction of the student and ACS, the student is advised of the outcome and the reasons behind the decisions made in writing and details of the resolution recorded in *VETtrak* and the *Continuous Improvement Register* if applicable.



In the unlikely event that the *Education Operations Manager* is unable to resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the student, the grievance will be escalated to the *Director Workforce Development and Education*. Upon the grievance being resolved to the satisfaction of the student and ACS, the student is advised of the outcome and the reasons behind the decisions made in writing and details of the resolution recorded in *VETtrak* and the *Continuous Improvement Register* if applicable.

In the extremely unlikely event that the *Director Workforce Development and Education* is unable to resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the student, the student may choose to escalate their grievance to an external party at their own expense.

External parties include the office of the state or territory Ombudsman in which the student lives. The office of a state or territory Ombudsman's scope of investigation is to decide whether ACS has followed its internal policies and procedures. Students can make a complaint to the Ombudsman in their state or territory by visiting the relevant website below:

- Victorian Ombudsman if the student lives in Victoria
<https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/>
- Queensland Ombudsman if the student lives in Queensland
<https://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au/>
- Ombudsman Tasmania if the student lives in Tasmania
<https://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au/>
- Ombudsman NT if the student lives in the Northern Territory
<https://www.ombudsman.nt.gov.au/>
- Ombudsman Western Australia if the student lives in Western Australia
<https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/>
- Ombudsman SA if the student lives in South Australia
<https://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au/>
- Ombudsman New South Wales if a student lives in New South Wales
<https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/>
- ACT Ombudsman if the student lives in Australian Capital Territory
<https://www.ombudsman.act.gov.au/>

Students may complain or appeal a decision made by ACS using alternative external parties. The student is responsible for all costs involved when engaging an external party.



End of Document

Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedure

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Version History

Date	Version	Revision History	Author /Reviser
September 2014	1	Original draft	DS
September 2014	2	Minor changes resulting from editing by AJ	DS
November 2014	3	Clarification of roles of ACS and Delivery Partner incorporated	DS
March 2015	4	Addition of CRICOS Code to header	DS
September 2015	5	Addition of RTO Code to header, new DIT Code, Education Program Manager replaced by Education Program Manager, and addition of new Version Control Panel	DS
October 2015	6	Policy changed to apply to any course and harmonised with ACS Assessment Policy	ST
April 2018	7	Updated policy to reflect Nat Code 2018 updates, was originally Standard 8 now Standard 10. Update to reflect current Complaints and appeals policy and procedure. Link to ESOS Enquiry Form updated.	Glanyce Attard and Derinda Smith
May 2018	8	Combining S10 (ESOS) policy with RTO policy. Removing references to attendance requirements.	Louise Smith, Derinda Smith, Glanyce Attard
August 2020	9.0	Improvements to provide clarity and consistency with procedure	Rosemary Dore Ciaran Doherty Louise Smith

Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Date of issue and version details must be entered upon approval.

Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version
Asheley Jones	Director, Education	September 2014	1
Asheley Jones	Director, Education	March 2015	2-4
Simon Taylor	Director, Education	September 2015	5
Simon Taylor	Director, Education	October 2015	6
Louise Smith	Director of Education		7
Louise Smith	Director of Education	May 2018	8



Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version
Louise Smith	Director Education & Workforce Development	August 2020	9

Distribution

Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version
ACS Website	https://www.acs.org.au/cpd-education/registered-training-organisation.html	8/09/2020	V9

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Responsible Business Group:	Education
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Content Security: Highlight which is applicable	Unclassified Confidential X-in-Confidence (e.g. Commercial-in Confidence)