

STUDENT COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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| Policy / Document Approval Body: | Academic Board |
| Date Created: | 26 February 2010 |
| Policy Custodian: | Dean of Engineering |
| Policy Contact: | Operations Manager |
| Location on EIT website: | https://www.eit.edu.au/about/policies-procedures/ |
| Review Period: | Every Three Years from Commencement |
| Revision No: | 10 |
| Date of Revision: | 04 March 2025 |
| Date Approved: | 01 October 2025 |
| Date Commenced: | 03 October 2025 |

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline how the Engineering Institute of Technology (EIT) will ensure a high-quality, fair, and transparent process for managing student complaints, grievances and appeals in a timely, respectful and confidential manner.

2.0 Scope

This policy and procedure apply to all current and past students and staff involved with Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Professional Certificate of Competency courses. This policy does not apply to non-award micro-credential courses (please refer to the *Higher Education Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Policy*).

3.0 Objectives

EIT aims to:

- Provide students with accessible, fair, and timely mechanisms for resolving complaints, grievances and appeals.
- Encourage informal resolution of concerns, where possible.
- Ensure that students are not disadvantaged or discriminated against due to lodging a complaint, grievance or appeal.
- Maintain confidentiality and uphold principles of natural justice throughout the process.
- Offer access to external and independent mediation, where necessary.

4.0 Policy Principles

4.1 Commitment to Fairness and Resolution

- EIT encourages a culture of openness, fairness, and responsiveness to student concerns.
- All parties involved in the complaint, grievance, or appeal must be considerate, cordial and treat each other with respect, and allow no tolerance of intimidatory or threatening activity.
- All procedures used to resolve complaints, grievances or appeals are conducted with the principles of natural justice being paramount and the need to always be objective, fair, and respectful of all parties.

4.2 Key Principles

- All suggestions, concerns, complaints, or grievances from students will be acknowledged and treated promptly and fairly.
- No student should suffer any discrimination or unfair action as a result of making a complaint.
- Informal resolution of complaints is always the best option and should be harnessed as often and as quickly as possible.
- Professional staff who are experienced in dealing with these issues are critical in achieving successful outcomes in this policy area. This includes the use of appropriate student advocates and mediators.
- All parties want to achieve a win-win solution with good faith displayed throughout.
- If errors arise, these are to be acknowledged and then corrected so as to minimise losses to all parties affected.
- It is crucial that both parties put significant effort into detailed communications and understanding of all the issues.
- Consideration should be given to applying lateral thinking and creative strategies in resolving complaints (as opposed to the “winner-takes-all” strategy).
- All parties to the complaint should be regularly notified as to the progress of the procedure.
- All exchanges of information should rely on the utmost level of confidentiality.
- Once a decision has been reached, all parties should be informed as quickly as possible, in writing, about the results of the complaint.

4.3 Reasons for Complaints, Grievances or Appeals

A student may lodge a complaint, grievance or appeal for a variety of reasons across different areas, which may include:

- Academic matters, such as decisions relating to grades, program content or structure, teaching quality, research supervision, intellectual property, plagiarism, and cheating.
- Administrative matters, such as the inappropriate, irregular, or incorrect application of EIT policies and procedures, decisions made without consideration of all relevant facts, or denial of access to required resources.
- Unfair treatment, including perceived bias, prejudice, or inequity in decision-making or behaviour.
- Inappropriate conduct, such as negligent, unusual, or unprofessional behaviour by staff or other students.
- Interpersonal issues, including intimidation, harassment, or bullying by staff or other students.
- Collective complaints, raised by a number of students who have experienced a similar issue.

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Stages of the Complaint and Appeal Process

This procedure includes the following escalating stages:

1. Seeking Advice
2. Informal Resolution
3. Formal Complaint or Appeal
4. External Appeal/Mediation

5.2 Seeking Advice Before Lodging a Formal Complaint or Appeal

Students are encouraged to carefully evaluate the basis of any complaint or appeal before proceeding. It is important to reflect on the relevant facts, desired outcomes, and appropriate avenues for resolution. Where necessary, students should seek advice or guidance from an internal staff member, such as the VET College Manager or the Human Resources Manager, who can assist students in determining:

- The sequence of relevant events and the parties involved
- The core issues in dispute
- Whether a substantive issue exists
- The most appropriate resolution process
- The potential outcomes of each available option

here appropriate, informal resolution, such as direct communication with the person concerned, may offer a timely and effective solution. However, students should also consider whether a direct approach may place them at risk of further unfair treatment or inappropriate conduct. In such cases, further confidential assessment or a more formal process may be necessary.

Depending on the circumstances, a student may choose to:

- Take no further action
- Attempt informal resolution
- Lodge a formal complaint or appeal
- External appeal/mediation

EIT is a member of the Resolution Institute's Student Mediation Scheme, and all external appeals will be referred to them.

5.3 Informal Resolution

When a student raises a complaint or appeal informally with a staff member, a genuine effort will be made to resolve the issue fairly and appropriately.

Any staff member who is approached informally with a complaint or appeal is required to respond to the student within ten (10) working days. The response should include:

- Formal acknowledgement of the complaint or appeal;
- An offer to discuss the matter further in a format that best suits the student. This may include continuing the conversation via email (if that is sufficient to resolve the concern) or arranging a meeting (in person, by phone, or virtually) at a mutually convenient time.
- A clear summary of the key parameters of the issue, including:
 - Agreed and disputed aspects of the issue
 - Relevant policies, procedures, rules, or standards (written or implied)
 - The most appropriate method of resolution, including any other necessary participants (e.g. Human Resources Manager)

If informal resolution does not appear feasible, the student should consult with the VET College Manager and/or HR Manager and consider alternative pathways. The student should formally advise the respondent, within ten (10) working days, if they wish to pursue the matter through a formal grievance process or mediated discussion. The Human Resources Manager should be informed of this and may play a role in seeking an internal resolution.

5.3.1 Academic Review Requests

Two common areas of student complaints or appeals are requests to review assessment items and results. These matters follow specific informal resolution steps, which differ from the general informal complaint process outlined in Section 5.3.

Students may request a review of marked assessment items or results within three (3) months of receiving the outcome via the Learning Management System. No fee applies for these requests.

The procedure is as follows:

- The student contacts the Learning Support Officer (LSO) within the specified timeframe.
- The LSO will arrange for the original assessor to provide further explanation or feedback, and, if the student remains unsatisfied, coordinate a reassessment by a suitably qualified independent assessor.
- It is expected that clear and respectful communication between the student, LSO, and assessors will resolve most issues at this stage.
- If unresolved, the student may escalate the matter to the Deputy Dean in accordance with the formal grievance procedure.

5.4 Formal Complaint

Where informal resolution efforts have been unsuccessful, the student must lodge a formal complaint within ten (10) working days of the informal resolution process concluding.

5.4.1 Academic Complaints

For academic matters, including assessment or result reviews, students may submit a formal complaint or appeal directly to the VET College Manager. Where appropriate, the VET College Manager may refer the matter to the Deputy Dean within ten (10) working days of receipt.

If the Deputy Dean accepts the request for review, they will:

- Provide a written decision to the VET College Manager or Learning Support Officer (LSO) within ten (10) working days.
- Include recommended changes, if applicable, along with objective reasoning that can withstand third-party academic scrutiny.

The VET College Manager or LSO will then provide a formal written response to the student within ten (10) working days of receiving the Deputy Dean's decision.

5.4.2 Non-Academic Complaints

Students with non-academic complaints should approach either the VET College Manager or the Human Resources (HR) Manager.

Upon receiving the complaint, the VET College Manager or HR Manager will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within ten (10) working days.
- Provide a proposed timeframe for completion of the investigation.
- Recommend solutions in accordance with EIT policies and procedures, where appropriate.

Following the investigation, the VET College Manager or HR Manager will provide the student with a written outcome, including a rationale for the decision. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may submit an appeal within ten (10) working days of receiving the decision.

5.5 Appeals

To be eligible for an appeal, the student must:

- Submit the appeal within ten (10) working days of the initial decision
- Use the appropriate format and channel
- Provide valid grounds for appeal, which must include:
 - New evidence not previously considered
 - A procedural error in the original investigation

In the first instance, an appeal against a decision (academic or non-academic) should be directed to the person/s who made the decision, or the person/s who provided the notice of the decision. Should the issue not be resolved at this level, it will be taken through to the VET College Manager and/or Deputy Dean.

5.6 Special Cases

5.6.1 Repeated Complaints or Appeals

If a student repeatedly submits complaints on a specific matter and they are not upheld, further complaints will be dealt with by the HR Manager (or another appropriate, independent EIT staff member if the Human Resources Manager was involved in the original decision), who will investigate the complaint thoroughly and commence an investigation if it is considered to be warranted. If no basis for the complaint appears to exist, the student will be advised that it will not be pursued further unless further evidence comes to light. If the student is not happy with the decision taken by the HR Manager, they may appeal to the Academic Board.

5.6.2 Simultaneous Complaints or Appeals

Where multiple related complaints or appeals are submitted concurrently, EIT will attempt to consolidate them into a single investigation to ensure procedural efficiency and consistency.

5.7 Withdrawal of Complaints or Appeals

A student may withdraw a complaint or appeal at any point during the process. In most cases, withdrawal reflects successful informal resolution. Upon withdrawal, the complaint will be considered resolved and closed.

5.8 Recordkeeping

All parties involved in the complaint or appeal process must maintain confidential and accurate records of discussions and decisions. These records will be stored in the student's file. Mediators are specifically required to maintain comprehensive documentation of all mediation sessions and outcomes. All parties involved should confirm in writing that the mediator has accurately recorded the proceedings.

5.9 Reporting

It is vital that the Dean or the VET College Manager make available to the Academic Board a summary of incidents, concerns, complaints, and appeals of both a formal and an informal nature, where required.

5.10 External Appeal /Mediation

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal resolution process as outlined in Sections 5.4 to 5.6, they may request external mediation within ten (10) working days of receiving the decision.

Requests should be submitted in writing to the VET College Manager and/or Deputy Dean.

5.10.1 External Mediation Provider

EIT is a member of the *Resolution Institute's Student Mediation Scheme*, and all external appeals will be referred to the Resolution Institute in accordance with their Mediation Rules.

5.10.2 Costs

All mediation costs will be met by EIT.

5.10.3 Process Management

The HR Manager will provide an outline of the complaint to the Resolution Institute and all parties involved. The HR Manager will ensure that the mediator communicates only with the parties directly involved and that EIT staff are not in direct contact with the mediator during the process.

5.10.4 Resolution Institute Dispute Resolution

5.10.4.1 Discussion/Negotiation

The parties agree that in the event of a dispute arising, they shall first meet and attempt to resolve the issues of concern by means of discussion and personal negotiation. If this process does not resolve the issues, they shall refer the matter to mediation in accordance with section 5.10.4.2.

5.10.4.2 Mediation

The parties must endeavour to settle any dispute in connection with the contract by mediation. Such mediation is to be conducted by a mediator who is independent of the parties and appointed by agreement of the parties or, failing agreement within seven (7) days of receiving any party's notice of dispute, by a person appointed by the Chair of Resolution Institute or the Chair's designated representative.

5.10.4.3 Rules

The Resolution Institute Mediation Rules shall apply to the mediation (See *Appendix A*).

5.10.4.4 Arbitration or Litigation

It is a condition precedent to the right of either party to commence arbitration or litigation other than for interlocutory relief that it has first offered to submit the dispute to mediation.

EIT notes that the advice of external mediation bodies is that, ordinarily, students should first attempt to resolve complaints and grievances using the prescribed internal procedures of EIT before seeking external assistance.

5.10.5 Arbitration by a Local Academic for Offshore Students

For offshore international students, EIT may agree to an independent arbitration process conducted by a qualified academic in the student's country of residence as an alternative to the Resolution Institute's mediation process.

5.10.5.1 Eligibility and Process:

The student must:

- Confirm in writing to the VET College Manager and/or Deputy Dean that they do not wish to proceed with EIT's external mediation process
- Nominate a local accredited institution in their country of residence
- Provide a list of three potential arbitrators who:
 - Are academics in the nominated institution.
 - Hold qualifications recognised in Australian engineering, technology, or science disciplines.

The VET College Manager and/or Deputy Dean will select one arbitrator and:

- Conduct a preliminary discussion about the review process.
- Submit a mutually agreed statement of relevant facts for review.
- Arrange for an honorarium (approx. two hours of review) to avoid later claims of undue pressure.

The arbitrator must issue a written judgment within seven (7) days of review and provide copies to both the student and the Dean. The decision will be considered final and binding, with no further right of appeal.

6.0 Definitions

Please refer to the EIT Glossary that can be found [here](#) for all definitions used in this document.

7.0 Related Documents

- Academic Honesty and Misconduct Policy and Procedure.DS
- Assessment and Validation Policy and Procedure.VET
- Diversity, Fair Treatment and Equal Opportunity Policy.DS
- Ethics Statement.DS
- Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy.DS
- Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure.DS
- Information Management and Security Policy and Procedure.DS
- Privacy Policy.DS
- Records Management Policy.DS
- Student Code of Conduct.DS
- Student Consultation Policy.VET
- VET Regulatory Compliance and Cooperation Policy.VET
- VET Student Loans Policy.VET

8.0 Related Legislation

The following legislation is relevant to this policy; however, not all are mandatory for education providers:

- [Age Discrimination Act 2004 \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [Credentials Policy \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(WA\)](#)
- [Fair Trading Act 2010 \(WA\)](#)
- [National Vocational Education and Training Regulator \(Compliance Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations and Fit and Proper Person Requirements\) Instrument 2025](#)
- [National Vocational Education and Training Regulator \(Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations\) Instrument 2025](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [Racial Discrimination Act 1975 \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [VET Student Loan Act 2016 \(Cwth.\)](#)
- [VET Student Loan Rules 2016 \(Cwth.\)](#)

9.0 Accountabilities

The Academic Board is responsible for the review and approval of this policy.

The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and EIT's community via the website and other publications.