ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT AND APPEAL Procedure

OFFICIAL

DOCUMENT REFERENCE:	**PPP140**
RESPONSIBLE MANAGER:	Executive Manager – Education
CATEGORY:	Academic & Student information
APPROVED DATE:	12 November 2026
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	November 2028

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS:

Legislation:
Standards for RTOs 2025
Education and Training Reform Act 2006
VET Student Loans Code of Practice
Privacy Information Act 1988
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
Gender Impact Assessment, Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)
Date completed: 22/09/2025

Documents:
PPP013 Inclusion and Diversity Policy
PPP046 Privacy Policy
PPP047a Privacy Statement (Easy English)
PPP163 Complaints and Appeals Policy
PPP141 Complaint Resolution and Appeal Procedure
PPP141a Student Complaints (Easy English)
PPP132 Assessment Guidelines
PPP138 Preventing and Managing Academic Cheating Guidelines
PPP073 Copyright Policy
PPP074 Copyright Guidelines
PPP074a Copyright Guidelines (Easy English)
PPP149 Student Code of Conduct
PPP149b Student code of Conduct addendum
PPP149c Student Code of Conduct – addendum (Easy English)

1. Introduction

South West TAFE (SWTAFE or the 'Organisation') is committed to ensuring a harmonious, fair and equitable learning environment by ensuring that past and present students have access to informal and formal processes that allow for grievances and complaints of an academic nature to be resolved.

SWTAFE aims to resolve complaints and appeals honestly, fairly and without bias. Wherever possible, grievances, complaints and appeals will be managed internally. SWTAFE actively seeks opportunities for continuous improvement and values all feedback as a means to enhance its services and practices.

The PPP140 Academic Grievance/Complaint and Appeals procedure outlines the structured steps for addressing complaints of an academic nature, ensuring each matter is handled consistently and thoroughly until resolution is achieved.

2. Principles

- SWTAFE has an obligation to resolve an academic grievance or complaint as early and simply as possible.
- Every student has the right to raise an academic grievance or escalate a grievance to a formal complaint regarding any matter related to their experience or involvement with SWTAFE.

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- Any academic grievance or complaint will be considered with courtesy and respect and dealt with in a timely, fair and consistent manner.
- The views of each complainant and respondent will be respected and any party to an academic grievance will not be discriminated against nor victimised.
- While the parties attempt to resolve the matter, the student can continue to attend classes as normal.

3. Scope

This procedure is applicable to all past and present students who have been enrolled at South West TAFE, who have a concern related to training delivery, teacher performance and/ or course expectations regardless of the location of the campus at which the academic grievance or complaint has arisen or the mode in which they study.

SWTAFE's *PPP140 Academic Grievance/Complaint and Appeals procedure* is designed to meet the requirements of Clause Part 4.6A — Complaint handling and dispute resolution of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006

Complaints regarding a non-academic matter should be referred to the *PPP141 Complaints Resolution and Appeal procedure*.

4. Definitions

Grievance	A concern about any act, behavior, omission, situation or decision that a student thinks is unfair or unjustified.
Academic grievance	A grievance specifically related to student progress, assessment, curriculum, or awards within a course of study.
Complainant	The individual who initiates the academic grievance process by formally lodging a complaint with an academic or administrative area of the organisation.
Complaint	A written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction with a service provided by the organisation, where a formal and personal response is requested.
Informal stage	The initial process of resolving an academic grievance directly between the involved parties, without formal mediation.
Formal stage	A sequence of mediated processes put in place to address a specific documented complaint.
Third party	An individual not directly involved in the grievance/ complaint who helps facilitates the resolution process. This may include external representatives, but not legal representatives.
Supporter	An individual who offers personal support to someone involved in the academic grievance process.
Mediation	A structured negotiation process led by a neutral third party to help resolve an academic complaint acceptably for all parties.

5. Confidentiality

In seeking to resolve an academic grievance or complaint, either informally or formally, confidentiality will be maintained as far as legally possible. The organisation is bound by the requirements of the ***Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*** **(Vic)** and ***Privacy Act 1988.***

6. Key Roles and Responsibilities

Board	has responsibility for oversight and review annual reporting
Chief Executive Officer	is responsible for ensuring that the academic grievance and appeals procedure and related systems are established, implemented and maintained in accordance with this procedure. The CEO is integral to the appeals process
Executive Managers	have responsibility for oversight and reviewing complaint reporting and may form part of the appeals process.
Executive Manager - Education	will oversee the formal stage complaint and has responsibility for oversight and reviewing complaint reporting
Head of Division (Teaching) / Teaching Education Managers/ Teachers	Oversight of the informal stage and involved in resolving the complaint and ensuring remedies are implemented
Complaints Manager	will facilitate and coordinate the formal stage listed below. Regularly analyse complaints to see what is going wrong. Will maintain the complaint register. Will provide an annual report to the Board on the complaint and appeals received for the calendar year, identifying any trends or concerns. SWTAFE's nominated Complaints Manager is the Audit and Compliance Officer.
Volunteers	Promptly report complaints, concerns and disclosures to an appropriate SWTAFE employee and comply with child safety, confidentiality and reporting requirements. Volunteers are not authorised to investigate complaints or determine outcomes.

7. Academic Grievance/ Complaint & Appeal Procedure

Current, past or prospective students in any course delivered by SWTAFE have access to processes by which an academic g**rievance** (informal stage) or complaint (formal stage) may be addressed. There is no cost imposed by SWTAFE to resolve a grievance or complaint; however, an external agency engaged for support may choose to charge the complainant a fee for service.

Reasons for decisions and actions taken as part of the procedure will be provided to the complainant at any stage of the process.

The complainant and the respondent have the right to be represented by a third person (such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person) if desired. Legal representation is not permitted unless either party elects to take the grievance externally. Please note that due to privacy, written permission is required from a complainant who is 18 years or older when a family, friend, counsellor or other professional support person wish to act on their behalf.

Where any party to the grievance/ complaint is a Minor, it is mandatory that they have an adult support representative with them throughout all stages – both informal and formal. It is preferred that the representative is the minor's parent or guardian. No conversation in relation to the issues raised are to be undertaken without an appropriate representative present. Any written communication must be issued to both the minor and their representative.Volunteers who receive a grievance, complaint, concern or disclosure from a student must promptly refer the matter to an appropriate SWTAFE employee for action in accordance with this procedure. Where the matter involves the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, volunteers must immediately escalate the concern in accordance with SWTAFE's Child Safety and

Wellbeing requirements. Volunteers are not authorised to investigate complaints or determine outcomes.

7.1 Informal stage

In the first instance, an academic grievance should be discussed as soon as possible with the person/s involved. However, if this is impractical, students should make a complaint to the relevant Teaching Education Manager.

The Teaching Education Manager will consider the academic grievance and attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution within 15 business days.

1. Parties to the academic grievance are encouraged to resolve the grievance through open discussion with the person who is the subject of the grievance, or is responsible for acting on the complaint.
2. Parties to the academic grievance can have a supporter assist and support them during discussions.
3. Informal diary notes should be kept by the parties involved.
4. The parties to the academic grievance may choose to prepare and sign off on an agreed outcome.
5. If there is no immediate resolution, a staff member may agree to support or mediate between the parties to the academic grievance.
6. If the matter of the academic grievance is not resolved, and if the complainant wishes to take the matter further, the complainant should submit a formal complaint. South West TAFE will accept any form of formal notification. The methods of lodgement are:

   a) Online Feedback Portal

   The complainant can locate a Formal Complaints Form under the “Contact us” link on the SWTAFE website. The feedback will be sent to the Complaint Manager who will commence the formal stage.

   b) Feedback Form

   A feedback form is available at the Front Reception of each campus and once completed should be placed in the Feedback Box or another designated secure location for collection by the Complaint Manager.

   c) Over the phone

   Formal complaint can be taken over the phone and passed onto the Complaint Manager to place on the Register and address with the relevant Staff

   d) In writing

   Formal complaint may be placed in writing either through email or letter which will be passed onto the Complaint Manager.

7. At this point, the complaint will move to the formal stage for resolution.

7.2 Formal stage

Where consideration at the informal level does not lead to a satisfactory resolution or the complainant is not satisfied with the Teaching Education Manager’s decision, the complainant may proceed to a formal complaint.

Formal complaints must be submitted to the Complaint Manager. Upon receipt, they will notify the Executive Manager Education. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Head of Division and Complaint Manager will determine the process to be followed and who will oversee its resolution.

If the complaint relates to the performance or behaviour of a staff member of the organisation, the Complaints Manager will notify the Head of Division, Teaching Education Manager. The Head of Division/ Teaching Education Manager will inform the Staff Member of the complaint. The People & Culture Manager or CEO’s nominee will be involved in any formal proceedings involving the staff

member. Management of the complaint will transfer to the People & Culture Manager and will follow the requirements of the Staff Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures where relevant.

Upon receipt of a formal complaint:

1. The Complaints Manager will provide acknowledgement (in writing) of receipt of the complaint within two working days. A confidential file will be opened and maintained until resolution of the complaint is achieved. The complaint will be registered on the Complaints Register and be monitored throughout the process by the Complaints Manager.
2. The Complaints Manager will ensure that the complaint is passed onto the appropriate personnel for review and investigation as soon as possible. In some circumstances, the investigation may take longer than 15 days. In these situations, the Complaints Manager will communicate the need for additional time to the parties involved.
3. In situations where the organisation considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint written notification will be provided to the complainant including the reasoning why more than 60 days is required. The Complaints Manager and Manager/s involved in the complaint will ensure that the relevant parties are continually updated on the progress of the matter.
4. The Head of Division/Teaching Education Manager/Manager involved in resolving the complaint may choose to involve an internal or external mediator in order to resolve the issue, should the complainant approve of this.
5. Any parties to a complaint may have a supporter assist and support them during resolution proceedings.
6. Any person nominated in the complaint will be provided with written details of the allegation against them and will have the opportunity to respond before resolution is attempted.
7. A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any stage or choose to have the complaint resolved informally.
8. The relevant personnel conducting the investigation will be required to conduct interviews of relevant parties and maintain confidentiality.
9. The relevant personnel conducting the investigation will recommend action for resolution to any parties to the complaint.
10. Agreement on resolution of the complaint will be documented and sent to the Complaints Manager to be placed on the Complaints Register.
11. The relevant personnel involved in the investigation will provide a written report detailing the process followed and resolution to the complainant and send to the Complaints Manager to be filed on the confidential file.
12. The relevant personnel involved in the complaint will seek resolution of the complaint with the complainant.

8. Appeals

8.1 Internal Appeals

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcomes of the complaint, they may appeal to the CEO in writing within 21 days of receiving this advice.

1. The CEO will authorise a review of the decision and will meet with relevant staff.
2. The CEO may appoint an Executive Manager to undertake further investigations.
3. The complainant is then advised of the outcome within 15 working days, all matters raised will be addressed in writing.
4. The CEO determination in the matter will be final within South West TAFE's processes.

8.2 External Appeals

SWTAFE aims to resolve complaints and appeals honestly, fairly and without bias. Wherever possible, complaints and appeals will be managed internally.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied or is unsatisfied with the fairness of the process, the complainant has the right to lodge a complaint externally with an appropriate Government authority. The following Government authorities can be utilised when lodging an external complaint and are a free service:

The Victorian Ombudsman

Address: Level 2 570 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Tel: 03 9613 6222 or 1800 806 314 (Regional)
Website: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au
Email: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au

The Victorian Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament who investigates complaints about state government departments, most statutory authorities and local government.

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

GPO Box 9928
Melbourne 3001

Tel: 1300 701 801
Website : https://www.asqa.gov.au/about/complaints/complaints-about-asqaasqa.gov.au/complaints
Email: feedback@asqa.gov.au

If ASQA makes recommendations in relation to a grievance they have received, they will forward these recommendations to South West TAFE's CEO who will consider the recommendations for implementation.

Appeals against School Assessment Outcomes within Senior Secondary Programs ONLY

An appeal can be made in writing against a SWTAFE decision to the **VCAA Chief Executive Officer (CEO).**

The appeal must be formally lodged with the VCAA no later than **14 days** after the student receives written notice of the SWTAFE decision. The written appeal must include the following:

- A clear explanation of why the decision or penalty is being challenged
- Relevant dates, times, and a clear description of the problem or incident.
- Copies of the original written notice, internal school meeting or hearing details, and any phone conversation records.
- All relevant SWTAFE -based evidence, teacher observations, or any independent professional or medical documentation if applicable.
- A specific statement of the outcome or remedy being sought by the student.

Following lodgment of the appeal the following will occur:

- SWTAFE will maintain all original materials and records relating to the allegation or assessment in case an appeal is active.
- A VCAA-nominated representative or appeals committee will review the documentation on the balance of probabilities.
- The outcome will be formally determined and communicated in writing once the evaluation is complete.

9. Withdrawal of a complaint

A student may withdraw a complaint at any time during the complaint resolution process and in this case the matter will be concluded and deemed to be resolved. If the original complaint was made in writing then the withdrawal must also be in writing to the relevant staff member or external entity who is handling the matter at the time the withdrawal is lodged.

10. Confidentiality and record keeping

Once formal grievance procedures are invoked, details of allegations and investigatory notes will be kept in confidential files. During the investigation process, these shall be kept separately from either the student or the staff member's P&C file.

SWTAFE will take all necessary steps to ensure that information regarding the grievance shall be disclosed only to those persons who have a right to the information by virtue of their role in the appeals process.

Following resolution of the complaint, records will be kept in accordance with Student Management Records Procedures and maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the complaint appropriate access to these records upon written request. Where a complaint is proven, the outcome may be placed on the student's or staff member's P&C file.

11. Assistance with a grievance

In addition to external supports, SWTAFE staff are available to assist students with lodging a grievance. Students may contact a member of the Student Support team via any campus reception.

12. Reporting and monitoring

SWTAFE always look for opportunities for improvement and always welcomes feedback from students. Recommendations for improvement and agreed outcomes are monitored for effectiveness.

SWTAFE Executive monitor the status of complaints through weekly meetings, and issues are discussed verbally. An annual report of de-identified information summarising complaint data is provided to the Board of Studies, Executive and the SWTAFE board. Any systemic issues identified will be logged on the Continuous Improvement Register as soon as practical.

13. Awareness and training

All policies, procedures and required documents and information relating to direct student services will be published on the SWTAFE website and will therefore be accessible to all members of the public and students regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the student's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

Information will be available to staff from SWTAFE's intranet and will form part of staff professional development and staff induction. Any significant changes in this policy or process will be advised to staff through SWTAFE staff newsletter, intranet and if appropriate, training workshops will be offered.

14. ASQA Alignment

SWTAFE is fully committed to maintaining compliance to the Outcome Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2025: specifically, Standard 2.7 and 2.8 which ensures students have fair processes to raise concerns, and appeal decisions. The policy supports procedural fairness, timely resolution and continuous improvement.

15. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

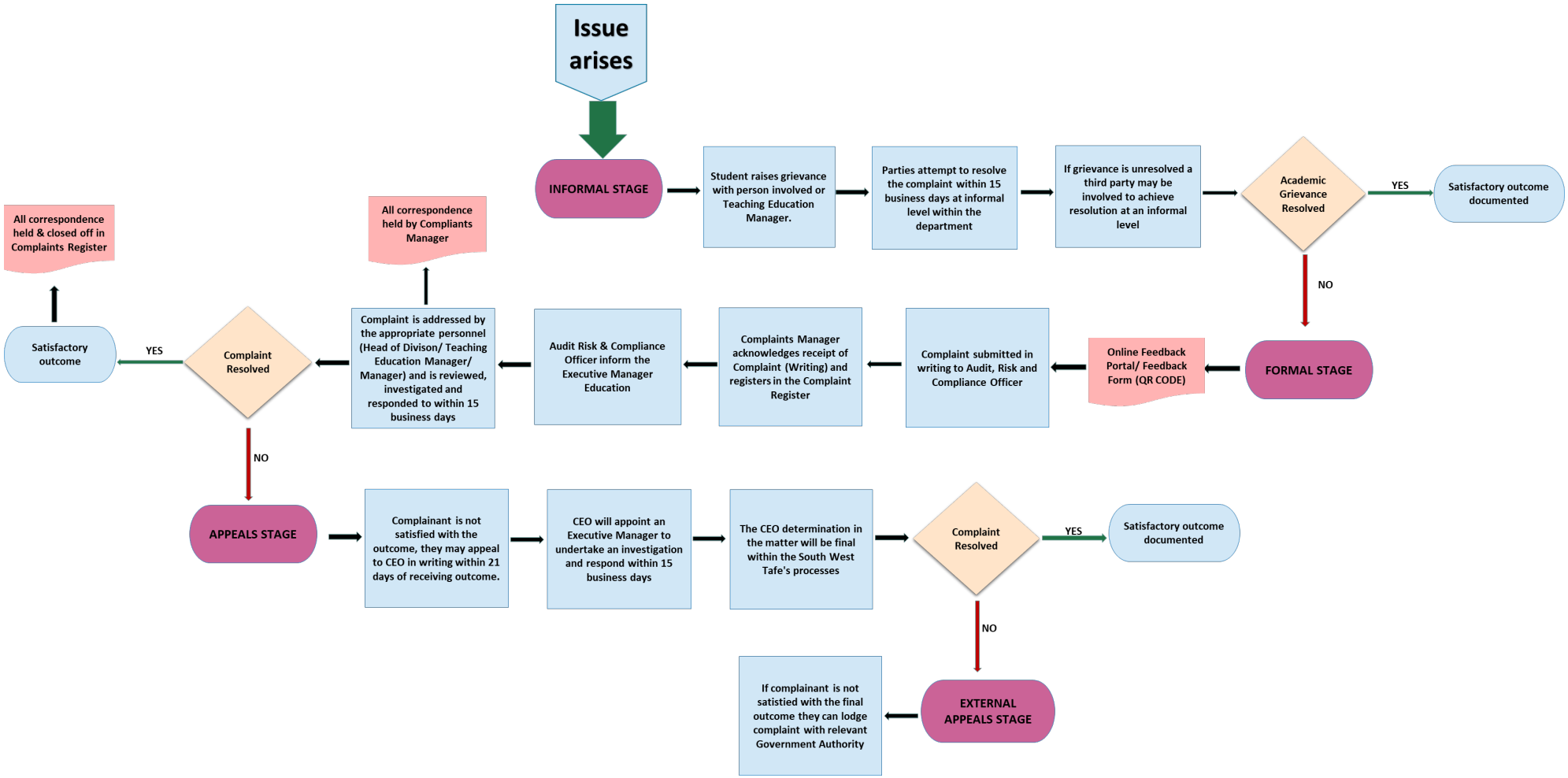
SWTAFE is committed to making diversity, equity and inclusion part of everything we do, including in the implementation of this policy/procedure/guideline. This document was the subject of a comprehensive access and equity assessment (also known as a Gender Impact Assessment), as per the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic). For more information, please visit the 'Our Values' page on our website or the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Homepage on ECHO [internal]. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

16. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

SWTAFE is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a Child Safe Program designed to keep children safe within our organisation. For Child Safe key documents, resources, contact officer details please go to: Child Safe Commitment

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