

Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

Policy

Sherwood Institute of Australia (here after known as 'SIA') is committed to ensuring the highest quality support for our students.

This policy and procedure supports Standard for Registered Training Organization Standard 6 Clause 6.1-6.6 in providing a process for complaints and appeals to be heard and actioned.

Purpose

The intent of this document is to communicate the complaints and appeals processes, and provide provision regarding corrective actions.

Scope

The policy and procedure applies to all staff, contractors, and other personnel employed with SIA. SIA will provide students with access to a clear and consistent Complaints and Appeals process. Our staff will communicate an individual's rights, the RTO responsibilities and provide acknowledgement of any concerns as they arise. All staff will also ensure that a student does not feel intimidated or victimised for the lodgment of a complaint or appeal.

This policy and procedure relates to complaints and appeals related to:

- SIA
- SIA's staff
- Learners/Students
- Third parties

The policy and procedure is not implemented where complaints are anonymous.

Definitions

What is a complaint?

A complaint can be defined as a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of SIA's services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters.

Examples of complaints would be where a member of the public or a student considers that there has been:

- Harassment, bias or unfair discrimination.
- Dissatisfaction about the enrolment, induction/orientation process.
- Dissatisfaction about the quality of education provided.

- Academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study.
- Unauthorised handling of personal information and access to personal records.
- Failure to provide a service at the right time or to the standard expected of the service.
- Dissatisfaction in answering a query or responding to a request for a service.
- Failure to follow SIA's agreed policy, or procedures.
- Failure to take proper account of relevant matters in coming to a decision.
- Discourteous or dishonest behaviour by a member of staff.

If you are dissatisfied or have concerns about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by SIA or its staff, we have a formal complaints procedure.

What is an appeal?

An appeal is where a member of the public or student seeks a review of the decision made by the SIA. An appeal could relate to:

- Any decisions made in relation to a complaint outcome.
- Any decisions made in relation to a refund application.
- Any decisions made in relation to an academic decision, for example, about admission (or re-enrolment) to study, an assessment, a certificate, progression within a course of study or termination of study, etc.

Our service standard is to contact the complainant within 2 business days to acknowledge in writing receipt of their complaint/appeal.

Procedures

1. Complaints Handling

SIA is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable complaint handling system which is easily accessible to all complainants. SIA will investigate any complaints or appeal lodged for any of our business operations.

In handling complaints, SIA will maintain strict confidentiality to protect all parties involved in the complaint. The complainant and all parties involved will be informed of the complaint resolution procedures and outcomes. Exceptional case: if it affects the safety and wellbeing of the third parties involved, SIA reserves the right not to issue the notification. A complainant has the right to withdraw the complaint at any stage.

If a defendant is involved in the complaint, he/she will be made aware of the allegations and will be given the opportunity to present his/her side of the matter. SIA will ensure

that the defendant is kept informed of the process and outcomes during the complaints and/or appeals process, except where there is an “Exceptional Case” as explained above.

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to info@sherwood.edu.au or the address below:

HEAD OFFICE:

Level 1, 20 Otter Street

Collingwood VIC 3066

PHONE: (03) 90880287

Formal complaints must be submitted by filling in the Complaints/Appeal Form available on our website.

The complaint handling process commences upon receipt of a formal complaint and SIA will address all complaints as a matter of urgency. SIA processes the complaint/appeal within 10 working days of lodgment. SIA gives complainant every opportunity to present their case during this process and try to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant where possible.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint they may escalate it further by making an appeal. If the appeal cannot be resolved using SIA’s complaints and appeals process, then mediation by an external mediator (e.g. Training Ombudsman) is available. If there is a cost involved, the cost of the external mediator will be shared equally between SIA and the complainant. For financial complaints and appeals, information pertaining to financial matters will be provided. (See also Refund Policy and review Statement of Fees).

2. Complaint Process

- Initiate complaint process (as above)
- The complaint must be logged into our Complaint Register.
- Investigate complaint
 - Acknowledge the complaint and investigate the matter with all concerned parties. A written receipt will be sent to the complainant.
 - For complaints regarding assessment, organize, remarking or reassessment as necessary
 - For non-assessment complaints, ensure that the investigation is appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the complaint.
 - In all cases the investigation is to be conducted, fairly, openly, and impartially.
- Resolve complaint

- Notify all parties-complainant and defendant- of the complaint investigation decision
- Ensure that results of the investigation include any corrective actions necessary to prevent similar complaints, and ensure that the changes are implemented.
- Advise all parties of the complaints process and/or any external organisations that may assist, e.g. Police, Counselling Organisations, and Consumer Affairs etc. if the complaint is unresolved.
- Update records on the Complaints and Appeals Register. Update records on the Continuous Improvement Register in accordance to the Continuous Improvement procedures. Monitor the area of complaint to ensure that corrective action is taken and the problem resolved, any changes are implemented and that there is no recurrence of the problem.
- The procedure makes sure we properly look into the complaint and give the complainant a fair, objective and considered response.

3. Appeal Process

- Initiate appeal process
 - The complainant lodges an appeal in writing to info@sherwood.edu.au or the address below within 28 days of being advised of the outcome of a decision, complaint or assessment.
HEAD OFFICE:
Level 1, 20 Otter Street
Collingwood VIC 3066
PHONE: (03) 90880287
 - Formal appeals can also submitted by filling in the Complaints/Appeal Form available on SIA website.
- Resolve appeal
 - Acknowledge the appeal and alert all concerned parties – written receipt must be sent to the complainant
 - For appeals regarding assessment, organise remarking or reassessment acceptable to all parties to the appeal. Either the PEO or the appellant may seek reassessment, mediation or arbitration by a 3rd party/panel that is acceptable to all parties
 - For non-assessment appeals, first meet all parties to seek conciliation. If unsuccessful, refer the matter to a 3rd party/panel acceptable to all parties.

- In all cases the appeal is to be conducted, fairly, openly, and impartially.
- The Appeals handling process commences upon receipt of a formal appeal and SIA will address all appeals as a matter of urgency. SIA processes the complaint/ appeal within 10 working days of lodgement. SIA gives the appealing party every opportunity to present their case during this process and try to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant where possible.
- Notify appeal decision
 - Notify all parties-complainant and defendant- of the appeal decision.
 - Advise all parties of any external organisations that may assist, e.g. Police, Counselling Organisations, and Consumer Affairs etc. if the appeal is unresolved.
 - Recommend the use of external mediator if the complainant choose to engage one.
- Update records on the Complaints and Appeals Register.
- Update records in accordance to the Continuous Improvement procedures. Monitor the area of the appeal to ensure that corrective action is taken and the problem resolved, any changes are implemented and that there is no recurrence of the problem.
- The procedure makes sure we properly look into the complaint's appeal and give the complainant a fair, objective and considered response.