

Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy



Purpose

This policy provides a transparent system of recording, solving and monitoring complaints and appeals about Access Australia Group (AAG), including staff, volunteers, clients, third parties, students or other stakeholders of AAG, any of its trading divisions, or any third party arrangements. Through this policy, suggested improvements and lodged complaints are taken as positive attempts to improve the services and operations of AAG. AAG will ensure that the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaints and appeals process.

Scope

This policy applies to management, staff, volunteers, clients, third parties, students, clients, staff and any other stakeholders of AAG and its trading divisions. The ultimate responsibility lies with the CEO of AAG.

Reference:

- Standard 6 of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015
- Skills First's VET Funding Contract.
- AAG's Feedback, Appeals Complaints procedure (QP1-001)
- AAG's Privacy Policy (QPOL1-008)

Definitions

Appeals

A request to review a judgement that has previously been made on a complaint.

Appellant

A person requesting an appeal to a previous judgement.

Complaint

The informal or formal expression of dissatisfaction or concern regarding any aspects AAG's operations, services, staff or candidates.

Complainant

A person making a complaint.

Stakeholders

Any person with an interest or concern with AAG. This may include clients, customers, jobseekers, staff, students, prospective students, etc.

Third party (Registered Training Organisation)

Any party that provides services on behalf of the RTO but does not include a contract of employment between an RTO and its employee.

Policy

Feedback

AAG encourages feedback and links it to improving its service. Feedback can range from letters, emails, cards, etc. expressing gratitude or suggesting improvements. AAG views feedback as a valuable opportunity to review policies, procedures and practices, and to make changes where necessary.

Feedback may consist of a compliment, suggestion, and / or complaint and may be provided by letter, email, verbally (in person or over the telephone) or by completing the feedback form found in reception at each of AAG's Campuses or on the 'Connect With Us' section of AAG's website (refer to:

<https://accessaustralia.org.au/connect-with-us/>)

Complaints and appeals

AAG does not dissuade stakeholders from making a complaint whether it comes from internal stakeholders or as a result of a third party agreement. AAG encourages staff and management to keep channels of communication open so that where issues arise, that those issues are addressed and acted upon, where appropriate, before getting to the formal complaint stage.

Complaints and appeals are a part of any business or organisation, and they are expected to be reduced through open and frank stakeholder feedback and continuous improvement processes. AAG will review and act on all complaints within our organisation including complaints about: programs, services, management; staff; third parties; volunteers; clients; and students.

AAG's complaints and appeals policy, procedure and form are accessible to all stakeholders through reception at each AAG site and on the Access Skills Training (AST) website www.ast.org.au/student-information. It is also available to staff via the intranet. The Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Form (QF1-003). The complaints and appeals process will be shared with clients, jobseekers and students at their initial meeting or through induction.

AST will ensure that the process of addressing the complaints and appeals process for third parties will follow the same process as for any AAG complaint or appeal.

It is expected that the complainant will seek a resolution to the complaint, through mediation of both parties, prior to it becoming a part of the formal complaints process.

Complaints and appeals should be made in writing using AAG's Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Form (QF1-003) and depending on the complaint:

- emailed, mailed or handed to the Senior Manager of the relevant service area; or
- mailed to: CEO, Access Australia Group, PO Box 276, Bendigo, Victoria, 3552; or
- where the CEO is a part of the complaint or appeal, mail to: AAG's HR Manager, Access Australia Group, PO Box 276, Bendigo, Victoria, 3552; or
- delivered to: Access Australia Group head office, 18 – 20 St Andrews Avenue, Bendigo, Victoria, 3550.

Relevant written information about the complaint or appeal is to be provided to all relevant parties regarding the investigation and its outcomes that will lead to an appropriate solution.

The relevant member of the Senior Management team nominate the appropriate person (independent of the parties named) to investigate the complaint. Complaints and appeals will not be investigated by person (s) who are a part of the complaint or appeal. That person will meet with the parties individually

named.

Issues such as assessment decisions, incidents or other issues are to be lodged using the Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Form (QF1-003). Each party shall be provided the opportunity, separately, to provide relevant information prior to a decision being taken by a neutral party who is independent of the decision being reviewed.

Appropriate nominated person/s investigating the complaint or appeal will meet with the parties individually. Issues such as assessment decisions, incidents or other issues are to be lodged using the Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Form (QF1-003).

AAG's complaints and appeals process will ensure that the person making a complaint or an appeal will have their right to privacy protected at all times. Only those people who need to know the details of the complaint or appeal will be allowed to review those parts of the complaint or appeal that they are required to access. Additional support may be provided to the client to ensure their issues are appropriately presented.

The complainant or appellant will be treated with fairness and respect and will be dealt with objectively. At every stage of the complaint and appeal process principles of natural justice and procedural fairness will be maintained and AST will ensure that all reasonable measures will be undertaken to ensure that the complaint or appeal will be finalised as soon as practicable. AAG will ensure that the privacy of the complainant / appellant is protected (refer to AAG's Privacy Policy - QPOL1-008, Section 11: Security of personal information).

All matters to do with the client feedback, complaint or appeal should be lodged through the Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Form (QF1-003).

The decision maker of the outcome will be independent of the decision being reviewed.

Where the complaint or appeal remains unresolved, the complainant may appeal to the CEO. If the issue remains unresolved, an independent mediator will be appointed by the CEO or his/her representative, on a needs basis,.

As part of AAG's ISO Quality Assurance processes, AAG will ascertain the type of complaints, frequency, and the reasons for their occurrence. In this way, we aim to continually improve the quality of our services and internal processes.

Customer feedback and complaints are logged in the Customer Feedback and Complaints Log (QF1-003.1) and reviewed at Quality Management Review meetings.

Timeframes for resolution

Complaints about a particular incident are to be made within 90 calendar days of the incident occurring and appeals must be made within 30 days of the original decision being made.

The person making the complaint or appeal will be notified of the timeframes of their complaints / appeals process in writing.

The timeframes listed below commence from the time the formal written receipt of the complaint or appeal has been received by AAG:

- The complainant will be notified by the manager by email or post **within ten (10) days** of:
 - having received the complaint;

- confirmation of the nature of the complaint;
- timelines of the process of the complaint or appeal; and
- the progress of the complaint or appeal.
- Regardless of the outcome, all parties are to be notified, in writing, of the outcome **within thirty (30) days**.
- When **more than sixty (60) calendar days** are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, AAG will inform the complainant or appellant in writing of why this time is required and will regularly update the complainant or appellant of the progress of the complaint or appeal.

AAG will take all reasonable steps to finalise the complaints process as soon as practicable or at least **within 30 calendar days** unless there is a significant reason for the matter to take longer. In matters where additional time is needed, the complainant or appellant will be advised in writing of the reasons and will be updated weekly on the progress of the matter until such a time as the matter is resolved.

Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of an individual to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws and it does not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

Outcomes of feedback, appeals and complaints

Where changes are required to be made to the AAG's process as a result of issues obtained from reviewing AAG's feedback, appeals and complaints, AAG will adopt these changes and promote a culture of continuous improvement.

Changes to AAG's processes, because of the responses to the feedback, appeals and complaints processes may include, where relevant:

- understanding and satisfying the needs of the complainant / appellant's grievance
- regularly reviewing approaches and methods with improvement cycles and conclusions implemented
- benchmarking and regularly measure the performance of key processes;
- maintaining a culture of clear, open communication;
- developing a culture wherein continuous improvement involves everyone and the process of change becomes routine; and
- developing and valuing key partnerships with staff, volunteers, clients, customers students and other stakeholders.

As a part of the finalisation of the complaint and / or the appeal, recommendations are listed of the changes that may be required to be made to AAG's processes so that a reoccurrence does not take place.

These changes are reviewed in the Quality Management Review meeting, held twice a year, to ensure that the new changes have been adopted and that old processes have been removed from the organisation.

For more information:

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA):

Website: <https://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints>

Phone: ASQA info line 1300 701 801 between 9.00 am and 7.00 pm

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service

<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/crrs>

Phone: 1800 880 052.

Department of Education and Training: *(Government subsidised training: Skills First VET Funding Contract)*

Website: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/compliancecomplain.aspx>

Email vtg.feedback@edumail.vic.gov.au

Disputes Settlement Centre of Victoria

Website: <http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au>

Phone: 1300 372 888

National Training Complaints Hotline:

Website: <https://www.education.gov.au/NTCH> or <https://www.education.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-12>

Phone: 13 38 73 (Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm nationally)

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Website: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/hotline>

Phone: 1800 880 052.

Note: If a criminal offence has been committed, it must be reported to the police.