

Complaints And Appeals Policy and Procedure

Purpose

This policy is to address and respond to student complaints and appeals to ensure appeals are managed equitably, efficiently and effectively.

Background

Complaints arise when a student or client is not satisfied with an aspect of The Change Network's services and requires action to be taken to resolve the matter.

Appeals arise when a student or client is not satisfied with a decision that The Change Network has made. Appeals can relate to assessment decisions, but they can also relate to other decisions, such as an outcome of complaints.

Scope

This policy and procedure apply to students and clients who have a complaint or wish to appeal a decision. It establishes both the formal and informal internal processes. It does not cover the external process, which is to be undertaken according to the external party's requirements.

Students and clients may raise any matters of concern relating to course progress, training delivery and assessment, trainers/assessors and support staff, other learners, the quality of the teaching or training materials, student amenities, discrimination, harassment, privacy or any other issue that they may be confronted with, including services provided on behalf of The Change Network, and their staff.

Policy

This policy sets out The Change Network's approach to manage and respond to

- complaints involving the conduct of The Change Network, its trainers, assessors or other staff, a third-party providing services on The Change Network's behalf, its trainers, assessors or other staff; or a learner of The Change Network.
- requests for a review of decisions, including assessment decisions, made by The Change Network or a third-party providing services on The Change Networks' behalf.

The Change Network's complaints and appeals policy:

- will ensure the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaint and appeal process.
- are included in the Student Handbook
- are publicly available on The Change Network website.
- set out the procedure for making a complaint or requesting an appeal.
- ensure complaints and requests for an appeal are acknowledged in writing and finalised as soon as practicable; and
- provide for review by an appropriate party independent of the RTO and the complainant or appellant, at the request of the individual making the complaint or appeal, if the processes fail to resolve the complaint or appeal.

Where more than sixty calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, The Change Network will:

- inform the complainant or appellant in writing, including reasons why more than sixty calendar days are required; and
- regularly update the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.

The Change Network will

- securely maintain records of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes.
- identify potential causes of complaints and appeals and takes appropriate corrective action to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.
- ensure that its complaints and appeals mechanisms are confidential, objective, easily and immediately accessible to clients, including students with disabilities or language barriers, and resolved within realistic and fair timelines.
- develop, maintain and publish on its website its complaints, appeals policy, and procedure.

Procedure

The process of handling complaints and appeals includes the following steps:

Informal procedure for complaints and/or assessment appeals

In the first instance, you are encouraged to raise your issue of concern or assessment result directly with the relevant person.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome or feel that the matter is not resolved, you may choose to go through a formal complaint and/or appeal.

Formal internal procedure for complaints and/or assessment appeals

For your complaint to be considered, you must complete a [Complaints and Appeals Form](#).

The Change Network will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two working days.

The RTO Manager will review your complaint and/or assessment appeal and provide a resolution in writing within ten business days of receipt of your complaint and/or assessment appeal.

If you are satisfied with the resolution, the matter is closed. If not, you may choose to appeal the decision.

Internal appeals

If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of your initial complaint and/or assessment appeal, you have ten business days from the date of response to lodge an appeal.

Your appeal must be put in writing to the RTO Manager detailing why you are appealing the decision, the reasons why you feel the initial decision was unfair and a solution to your issue or concern.

The RTO Manager will investigate and provide a final decision in writing within ten business days of receipt of the appeal.

If you are satisfied with the resolution, the matter is closed. If not, you may choose to appeal with an external third party.

External process for complaints and/or appeals.

This step should be taken only upon exhausting all internal processes.

If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of your internal appeal, you may lodge a complaint or appeal with an external mediator.

The external mediator will investigate and either uphold The Change Network's decision or provide a different resolution and the issue will be closed.

Guidelines

Students are encouraged to first seek complaint or appeal resolution using The Change Network's free complaints and appeals mechanisms. If they are not satisfied with the outcomes of these processes, they will be referred to an independent, external party.

Whilst The Change Network's complaints and appeals processes are provided at no cost to the student, external parties' mediation services may be free of charge or provided on a fee-for-service basis.

If a matter cannot be resolved via the informal process, the next steps included in the internal formal process should be undertaken, before going to an external mediator. It is the students' right to access The Change Network's formal internal complaints and appeals process, upon the unsuccessful informal attempt to resolve their issue.

As part of the internal resolution process, students may also be asked to attend an interview or meeting with the RTO Manager and other relevant parties.

Each party involved in the process (i.e. the student and The Change Network representative) has the right to be assisted or accompanied by a support person at all meetings, and at any stage throughout the formal process.

The role of the support person is to provide practical and emotional support. A support person is a witness to a meeting or interview, to safeguard against unfair practices.

A support person must be someone 18 years or older, and may be a colleague, a staff member, an adult family member or friend, a representative of a union or a legal representative.

Students are advised to seek resolution to their issues as soon as practicable after the event occurs, so that The Change Network can investigate and provide a decision as efficiently and effectively as possible. For instance, if a complaint or appeal is raised months after the event or after the student has finished the course, the validity of the claim and the resolution process could be negatively impacted.

The RTO Manager will consider students' complaints or appeals and will provide a resolution in writing within ten working days of the [Complaints and Appeals Form](#) being received. If a resolution could not be reached within this time, an acknowledgment and progress notification will be sent to the student, which will include the expected date for a resolution or the request for further action.

The [Complaints and Appeals Form](#) is available in the Student Handbook and publicly available on The Change Network website.

Anyone lodging a complaint must follow The Change Network's complaints process before making a complaint to ASQA.

Continuous Improvement

- The complaints and appeals can provide invaluable data about aspects of the organisation that can be improved, and, as such, will be monitored and reviewed and integrated with the continuous improvement and self-assurance process.
- A summary of the improvement actions, including corrective and preventive actions, will be recorded in the Continuous Improvement Register.

Review / Access

Policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated, and revisions will be made as and when required to reflect any content or regulatory changes.

Relevant Forms will be reviewed and updated as needed.

All approved current policies and procedures are stored electronically where all staff can access them.

Record Keeping

The Change Network will keep records of all formal complaints/ appeals, decisions, outcomes and related actions and correspondence in the complaints file and complaints register.

Records will not be kept in the student's file.

Responsibilities

CEO or delegate

- ensuring compliance by monitoring the current policies, procedures and documentation are implemented across all RTO's operations.

RTO Manager

- managing the complaints and appeals process.
- developing, reviewing, updating and issuing policies, procedures and documentation.

- maintaining the Continuous Improvement Register.

Training Coordinator

- assisting with the assessment appeals and other complaints/ appeals during all stages, as requested.

Trainers/ Assessors

- managing the assessment issues during the informal process
- assisting with the assessment and any other complaints/appeals during the formal process as requested.