



## Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

### Purpose

To provide a framework available to students to submit a complaint/grievance or an appeal and also to define the procedure that Strathfield College follows to resolve the complaint/grievance or appeal.

### Scope

This policy applies to all students and staff of Strathfield College.

### Policy

Strathfield College (SC) ensures that students have ready access to a robust and fair complaints and appeals process. These processes are independent, easily and immediately accessible, and inexpensive for the parties involved. This policy establishes the rules under which Strathfield College must act in response to a student complaint or appeal against a decision made by Strathfield College.

- Strathfield College will ensure that students have a clear understanding of the steps involved in the procedure by providing procedural information on the Strathfield College website and in the student Written Agreement and by explaining the process on the orientation.
- All students submitting a complaint or appeal must be treated fairly, professionally, transparently and without repercussion for making such a complaint or appeal.
- The processing of a complaint or appeal must be commenced within 10 days of it being received by Strathfield College.
- Students should ideally attempt to resolve a complaint informally prior to lodging a formal complaint.
- In all cases where a formal complaint or grievance is made, Strathfield College will provide a response to the student.
- In all cases where an outcome has been reached, Strathfield College will inform the student (in writing) of the outcome of the appeal that clearly explains the reasons for that outcome. Strathfield College will retain copies of all such written communications, outcomes and reasoning.
- All students attending an appeal panel review are entitled to be accompanied by a support person of their choice.
- In situations where a student's internal appeal has been rejected, the student will be informed of the options available to them outside those offered by Strathfield College, if they wish to escalate the complaint or appeal beyond the Strathfield College processes. Strathfield College will inform students of their options for external appeal within 10 working days of making a decision.
- In a situation where an appeal (internal or external) is upheld, Strathfield College will immediately action that outcome and advise the student of the outcome and any follow up action.
- Strathfield College will ensure corrective action is taken in response to any complaint or appeal to mitigate any reoccurrence that may lead to similar complaints and appeals being lodged in the future.
- Strathfield College will collect the data about complaints and appeals and record the data in the Complaint Register.
- This data will include action taken to address the root cause of complaints, the follow-up and the outcome of the complaints/appeals. Evidence of complaints and appeals will be saved in the Complaints and Appeals folder, as well as the minutes of staff meetings at which actions arising from complaints were agreed and other relevant documentation. The folder will be managed by the Director of Studies and placed in a secured place.
- Complaints and appeals may be made in regards with but not limited the following issues:



- Enrolment process
- Education agents
- Campus facilities and resources (including the kitchen resources)
- Training
- Staff
- Academic results
- Course progress
- Discrimination, harassment and bullying
- Fees and refunds
- Other students of Strathfield College
- Any other party directly or indirectly related to Strathfield College

## Procedure

### Complaints

1. Students are encouraged to raise matters of concern informally with their trainers, Student Services Officers or the Director of Studies via email. All informal complaints will be attended within 10 business days of receipt of the complaint. The communication of any informal complaints will not be kept on the student file, unless requested to do so by the student.
2. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the student may lodge a formal complaint using the Complaints and Appeals Form, available on the Strathfield College website and the campus reception.
3. The student must send the completed Complaints and Appeals Form to Student Services.
4. All complaints will be handled professionally and confidentially. All Strathfield College staff members ensure that they comply with the Privacy Policy.
5. The Director of Studies will handle all formal complaints. If the complaint is in respect to the Director of Studies, the CEO will handle the complaint.
6. The complaints assessment process will commence within 10 working days of the Strathfield College receipt of the completed Complaints and Appeals Form. The complaint will be resolved fairly and equitably, and at the earliest possible time (no later than 20 working days).
7. The complainant/appellant will be given an opportunity to formally represent his/her case at no cost. The complainant/appellant can be accompanied or assisted by a support person during the meeting.
8. The outcome of the complaint, including the reasons for the outcome will be provided in writing to the student within 5 business days of a decision being made. The student will be advised that they have the rights to appeal.
9. In case the Director of Studies failed to draw a conclusion on a complaint within 45 days, the reason must be sent to the student in writing. The student must be updated regularly with the progress of the assessment.
10. Where a complaint cannot be resolved through the internal procedure, Strathfield College will give appropriate information to proceed with the Commonwealth Ombudsman whose role is to investigate official concerns, complaints and disputes raised by interested parties and stakeholders regarding the actions of a registered education and training provider.
11. If there is any matter arising from a student complaint that is a systemic issue, which requires improvement action, the complaint will be reported to the CEO as part of the continuous improvement process.

### Appeals



1. The essential nature of an appeal is that it is a request by a student to reconsider a decision made by Strathfield College.
2. All appeals will be handled with by an Appeals Committee consisting of at least 3 members. The Chair will be appointed by the CEO. The panel will be comprised of:
  - The Director of Studies
  - A trainer representative
  - A welfare counsellor

The panel decision should be unanimous and where there is a disagreement, the case will be escalated to the CEO to help resolve the case.

All appeals must be lodged by submitting the completed Complaints and Appeals Form to Student Services.

A student's enrolment must be maintained whilst an appeal is in progress and the outcome has not been determined.

The appeal assessment must commence within 10 working days of the receipt of the appeal.

A maximum time of 45 days from the appeal being lodged in writing will be allowed for the resolution unless all parties agree in writing to extend this time.

The Director of Studies will send the outcome of the appeal to the student in writing within 5 days from the date of the final decision. The letter will be archived in the student file as well as recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register.

If the student is not satisfied with the appeal outcome he/she will be advised in writing about his/her rights to access the external complaints handling and appeals process with the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The details of the ombudsman will be detailed in the letter. Following are the details of ombudsman:

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| <b>Organisation:</b>  | Commonwealth Ombudsman ( <a href="http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/">http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/</a> )   |
| <b>Contact point:</b> | <a href="https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/making-a-complaint">https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/making-a-complaint</a><br>Call: 1300 362 072 (within Australia) Outside Australia call +61 2 6276 0111.<br>Enquiries 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday (AEDT)<br>Postal: GPO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601.<br>Melbourne Office: Level 6, 34 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC 3000<br>Sydney Office: Suite 2, Level 16, 580 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000 |

In any circumstances, where Strathfield College is informed that the international student has accessed external appeals processes, the college will maintain a student's enrolment until the external appeal process is finalised.

There are no further avenues within Strathfield College for appeals after an internal appeal has been completed.

If the internal or external complaints handling or appeals process results in the decision or recommendation in the favour of the student, Strathfield College will immediately implement the decision or recommendation and take the preventive or corrective action/s required by the decision and advise the student of that action.