PURPOSE

This procedure provides information for VET FEE-HELP (VFH) students about the grievance procedure for decisions which they consider to be unfavourable and/or unreasonable. It also provides information to staff on how to conduct appeals.

TAFE Queensland Gold Coast will ensure that all grievances are handled promptly and without charge, and ensure that complainants and respondents are not victimised or discriminated against.

SCOPE

In relation to academic grievances the term “student” or “complainant” in this procedure refers to all students enrolled in a VET course of study at TAFE Queensland Gold Coast, including individuals who are or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA).

In relation to non-academic grievances the term “student” or “complainant” in this procedure applies to all students enrolled in a VET course of study at TAFE Queensland Gold Coast and persons seeking to enrol in a VET course of study at TAFE Queensland Gold Coast, including individuals who are or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA).

Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study. Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all other matters including grievances in relation to personal information that TAFE Queensland Gold Coast holds in relation to an individual.

This grievance and appeals procedure will be made available to students regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence.

OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Group</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students enrolled in a VET course of study and persons seeking to enrol in a VET course of study with TAFE Queensland Gold Coast</td>
<td>To promptly resolve grievances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE Queensland Gold Coast Staff</td>
<td>TAFE Queensland Gold Coast will communicate this grievance procedure in writing to staff and staff will be trained in its application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROCESS

General Information

During all stages of this procedure TAFE Queensland Gold Coast will take all steps to ensure that:

- the complainant and the respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against;
- the complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case and each party to the grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings;
- a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided if so requested by the complainant or the respondent;
- where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, TAFE Queensland Gold Coast will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome;
- there is no cost to the complainant to utilise this grievance and appeals procedure through TAFE Queensland Gold Coast.
PROCESS STEPS

Stage one – formal grievance:
If a student has a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature they may discuss the matter with the staff member(s) involved or the relevant Manager or Director of the Faculty. If this is not possible, or fails to resolve the grievance, the complainant should lodge a formal grievance in writing to the VET FEE-HELP Team, Customer Service Unit.

Formal grievances for VET FEE-HELP students should be sent to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance</th>
<th>VET FEE-HELP Non-Academic Grievance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Unit</td>
<td>Customer Service Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 5547, GCMC Bundall</td>
<td>PO Box 5547, GCMC Bundall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland 9726</td>
<td>Queensland 9726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 617 55818 200</td>
<td>Phone: 617 55818 200</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Team Leader, Customer Service Unit will acknowledge receipt of the grievance in writing and the grievance handling process will commence within ten working days of the receipt of the formal grievance. All reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the grievance handling process as soon as practicable.

The Team Leader, Customer Service Unit will consider the grievance and, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve. Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request or by a face-to-face interview with the complainant. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview the complainant or respondent may ask another person to accompany them.

The Team Leader, Customer Service will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within twenty working days of receipt of the formal grievance. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance.

Stage two – internal appeal:
If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with the Appeals Committee by completing an Appeal Application form within 20 working days of receiving notification of the outcome of their formal grievance.

Students must outline the reasons for their appeal, including any compassionate or compelling circumstances, and may provide documentary evidence in support of their appeal. All documentation lodged in relation to the appeal must be original documents or JP certified copies (no photocopies or facsimiles will be accepted).

Within 10 working days of receipt of the Appeal Application the Appeals Committee will consider the appeal via a hearing which the complainant or respondent may attend with a support person.

The Appeals Committee will review the grievance and provide a written statement including details of the reasons for its decision and any actions to be undertaken within 10 working days of the hearing. The written statement will further advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

Stage three – external appeal:
If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal, they may lodge an external appeal to the Queensland Ombudsman’s Office within 20 working days of receiving notice of the outcome of their appeal.

Queensland Ombudsman
Level 17, 53 Albert Street or GPO Box 3314
Brisbane QLD 4000 Brisbane QLD 4001
Tel: 07 3005 7000
Toll Free (outside Brisbane): 1800 068 908
Fax: 07 3005 7067
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au
The Queensland Ombudsman’s Office will investigate the case and make an assessment of the grievance and will advise the student and TAFE Queensland Gold Coast of the outcome of the external appeal.

TAFE Queensland Gold Coast agrees to be bound by the Queensland Ombudsman’s recommendations and the General Manager will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within thirty days of receipt of the report from the Queensland Ombudsman’s Office.

ENROLMENT STATUS
Where a student chooses to access this policy and procedure, TAFE Queensland Gold Coast will maintain the student’s enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

DISTRIBUTION
This procedure will be made available for students and persons seeking to enrol at all enrolment counters, located at each campus, and can be downloaded from the TAFE Queensland Gold Coast website http://www.goldcoast.tafe.qld.gov.au/

RECORDS MANAGEMENT
TAFE QUEENSLAND GOLD COAST will keep a record of all grievances and their outcome for at least five (5) years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records upon written request to:

Records Management Officer – Quality and Legal
PO Box 5547, GCMC Bundall
Queensland 9726

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered TAFE Queensland Gold Coast’s Privacy Procedure.

DEFINITIONS/GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>Request by a student to have a matter heard and/or re-considered after receiving an unfavourable decision in regards to a formal grievance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appeals Committee</td>
<td>A panel formed to hear student appeals. In the case of academic and non-academic appeals the panel will comprise of the Executive Director of Studies, the Director of the relevant Faculty and at least one independent Director who has no previous involvement in the matter under appeal.</td>
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</table>
| Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances | Circumstances considered to be beyond the control of the student and may include:  
- Serious injury (a medical certificate is provided);  
- Bereavement of close family members (a death certificate may be provided);  
- Major political upheaval or natural disaster in their home country;  
- A traumatic experience (i.e. car accident; witnessing a crime or being involved in a crime etc). |
| External Appeal               | Appeal heard by a party external to TAFE Queensland Gold Coast.                                                                    |
| Internal Appeal               | Appeal heard by staff within TAFE Queensland Gold Coast.                                                                            |
| Delivery Team                 | The particular teaching group (Faculty) in which the qualification is delivered.                                                       |
| Queensland Ombudsman’s Office | An independent complaints investigation agency. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about the actions and decisions of Queensland public agencies and their staff that may be unlawful, unreasonable, unfair, improperly discriminatory or otherwise wrong. |
DOCUMENTATION AND REFERENCES

- FM-040 Student Authority to Release Information
- FM-549 Application for Re-crediting of a Student’s VET FEE-HELP Balance
- FM-636 VET FEE-HELP Application for Appeal
- POL-043 VET FEE-HELP Policy
- PR-112 Staff and Student Information Privacy Procedure

COMPLIANCE REFERENCE

- VET Guidelines
- Higher Education Support Act 2003

POLICY OWNER

Director, Domestic Business

POLICY AUTHOR

Educational Projects Officer VET FEE-HELP

REVISION HISTORY

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Revision</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Summary of Changes</th>
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<th>Revision #</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/01/2010</td>
<td>Draft</td>
<td>Initial document revised for resubmission to DEEWR</td>
<td>Educational Projects Manager VET FEE-HELP</td>
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<tr>
<td>20/01/2011</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Revision for change of Policy Owner</td>
<td>Director, Domestic Business</td>
<td>02</td>
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