

## COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY

SERO Institute is committed to providing high quality outcomes to its Students. We hope that our students are satisfied with the quality of our programs and services.

However, we acknowledge that students may wish to lodge a complaint if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of our program and/or services. SERO Institute is committed to ensuring that any complaint from Students is dealt with fairly and promptly.

SERO Institute has a system in place to manage complaints effectively.

This policy is publicly available on SERO Institute's website.

### Purpose

The purpose of SERO Institute's Complaints and Appeals Policy is to provide Students with the opportunity to access procedures to facilitate the resolution of a dispute or complaint.

### Key legislation

- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*
- *The National Code 2007*
  - *Standard 8*

### Principles

SERO Institute will ensure that:

- All students have access to the complaints policy and procedures and their rights as consumers.
- SERO Institute will maintain the student's enrolment during the complaint process.
- The complainant is provided with information about the complaints procedure.
- All complaints are dealt with confidentially, fairly and promptly.
- The complaint process is commenced within 10 working days from the date of complaint.
- Due to confidentiality reasons, the number of people involved in the resolution process will be limited.
- Officials involved in any aspect of the process will maintain absolute confidentiality at all times.
- The complaint resolution procedure promotes a conciliatory approach using mediation and open communication while acknowledging that in some instances this may be challenging.
- The rights of the complainant and respondent will be protected throughout the complaint resolution process.
- All parties have the right to representation during the complaint resolution process.
- Victimisation of complainants, respondents or anyone one else involved in the complaint resolution process will not be tolerated.
- The complainant is provided with a written response including the outcome and reasons for the outcome within 20 business days.
- Complainants reserve the right to lodge a complaint with external agencies at any point during the complaint resolution process.

## Definitions

COMPLAINT – Dissatisfaction with a service offered by SERO Institute

APPEAL – Dissatisfaction with a decision made by SERO Institute

## Responsibilities

The PEO/RTO Manager is responsible for implementing and ensuring compliance with this policy.

## Types of complaints

The complaints may be about academic or non-academic matters including, but not limited to:

- Application procedures
- Marketing information
- Training delivery or content
- Trainers, Assessors or other staff
- Assessment methods or assessment content
- Student progress
- Issuing of Awards
- A third party delivering services on SERO Institute's behalf
- A student or group of students of SERO Institute
- Discrimination
- Harassment, bullying or victimisation
- Breach of privacy
- Individual conflict arising from perceived inappropriate behaviours
- Fees or other financial matters
- Fines and payments

## Procedure

### Internal complaints and appeals

The internal complaints and appeals processes are conciliatory and non-legal.

- 1) Complaints against other Students
  - a) Grievances brought by a Student against another student will be dealt with under the Institute's Code of Conduct Policy.
  
- 2) Informal Complaints Resolution
  - a) In the first instance, SERO Institute requests there is an attempt to informally resolve the issue through mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
  - b) Students should continue to attend classes (if applicable) while the complaint is being processed.
  - c) Students should contact their Trainer/ Teacher in the first instance to attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
  - d) If Students are not satisfied with the outcome, they should contact the Student Support Officer who will attempt to resolve the matter.
  - e) If the complaint is about the Student Support Officer, it can be directly brought to the PEO's attention.
  - f) If the matter cannot be resolved through mediation, the matter will be referred to the PEO in writing and SERO Institute's internal formal complaints and appeals handling procedure will be followed.

### 3) Formal Complaints Handling Procedure

- a) The process of the complaints procedure is confidential and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- b) The Student must notify the Institute in writing (completing a Students Complaints and Appeals Form) of the nature and details of the complaint or appeal.
- c) Written complaints or appeals are to be lodged with the PEO.
- d) Where the internal complaints and appeals process is being accessed by an international Student because the student has received notice by the Institute that the Institute intends to report him/her for unsatisfactory course attendance, unsatisfactory course progress or suspension or cancellation of enrolment, the student has 20 working days from the date of receipt of notification in which to lodge a written appeal.
- e) Complaints and appeals processes are available to students at no cost.
- f) Each complainant or appellant has the opportunity to present his/her case to the PEO.
- g) Students and / or the Institute may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at all relevant meetings
- h) The formal complaints process will commence within 10 working days of the lodgement of the complaint or appeal with the PEO.
- i) Once the PEO has come to a decision regarding the complaint or appeal, the Student will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome, and a copy will be retained on the Student's file. A copy will also be retained in the internal 'Complaints and Appeals Register'.
- j) If the grievance procedure finds in favour of the complainant, SERO Institute will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required, and advise the Student of the outcome.
- k) SERO Institute undertakes to finalise all grievance procedures within 20 business days.
- l) However, should detailed investigation be required, the process may take more than 60 days. The complainant or appellant will be notified of the expected duration of the investigation process should the process take 21-60 days.
- m) If more than 60 days are required, SERO Institute will advise the complainant in writing, the reasons for why more than 60 days are required. SERO Institute will regularly update the complainant or appellant of the progress of the matter.
- n) If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal, SERO Institute will refer the complainant to the Resolution Institute (at a shared cost with SERO Institute) or the Overseas Student Ombudsman (no cost), the student can choose. This is the commencement of the external appeals process.
- o) SERO Institute will maintain the Student's enrolment throughout the internal appeals process, and the Student must maintain their course progression.

#### 4) External Appeals Processes

Overseas Students: If the student wishes to lodge an external appeal or complain about the decision, they can contact the Overseas Students Ombudsman. The Overseas Students Ombudsman offers a free and independent service for overseas Students who have a complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their private education or training provider. See the Overseas Students Ombudsman website [www.oso.gov.au](http://www.oso.gov.au) or phone 1300 362 072 for more information.

They can complain to the Overseas Students Ombudsman if they believe the provider has not followed their policy or treated them fairly.

The Ombudsman can consider complaints about:

- refusing admission to a course
- fees and refunds
- course or provider transfers
- course progress or attendance
- cancellation of enrolment
- accommodation or work arranged by the provider
- Incorrect advice given by an education agent.

The Overseas Students Ombudsman can also investigate complaints about education agents who have an agreement with a provider to represent them in Australia or overseas. Students can also complain if a provider has failed to take action or is taking too long to take some action, like not providing course results in the normal timeframe, or not providing services included in the student's written agreement with the provider.

If Students have a complaint about the quality of training and assessment being delivered by SERO Institute, they may be eligible to submit a complaint to ASQA.

Click here: <http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/complaints.html>

They can also contact the local state & territory consumer protection agency (sometimes called 'consumer affairs' or 'fair trading') who can provide information about their rights and options.

- 5) SERO Institute will identify the potential causes of complaints and appeals and take appropriate corrective action to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of recurrence, for continuous improvement purposes
- 6) Written records of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes will be maintained in the relevant person's file and a copy in the SERO Institute Complaints Register for a period of five years.