POL-PRO-014 Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedure

Group **Procedure**	Title: **POL-PRO-014 Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedure**		
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Direct Linkage to Policies, Procedures, Standards, Documents. Etc.

- 2025 Standards for RTOs
  - Outcome Standard 2.7 Feedback and complaints management addresses concerns and informs continuous improvement of the WA registered provider.
  - Outcome Standard 2.8 Effective appeal processes are available to VET students where decisions of the WA registered provider or a third party adversely affect the student.

- 2025 Standards for RTOs
- Work Health and Safety Act 2020
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022
- The STES Way Code of Conduct

Document Purpose:

The purpose of this Policy & Procedure (P&P) is to ensure that all complaints and appeals are dealt with in a constructive and timely manner. It outlines the procedure for dealing with a participants appeal against an assessment outcome awarded in any module or unit of competence.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this Policy & Procedure (P&P) is to ensure that all complaints and appeals are dealt with in a constructive and timely manner. It outlines the procedure for dealing with a participants appeal against an assessment outcome awarded in any module or unit of competence.

STES will ensure that all complainants and appellants are treated respectfully and supported throughout the process. Learners will be provided access to appropriate wellbeing and support services where a complaint or appeal process may cause distress or disadvantage.

2. DEFINITIONS

Appeal - an application by a student of an unfavourable decision of finding during the training and/or assessment process.

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Complainant - Person or organisation who makes a complaint to the Council.

Complaint - A submission to the RTO that outlines matters of dissatisfaction with the products and/or services provided.

Complaint audit - A complaint audit is scheduled when a complaint has been verified and not resolved during the complaint investigation process.

Compliance - The requirements of the Standards for RTOs have been met, based on the evidence reviewed.

Resolution - A complaint or appeal is resolved when it is settled or concluded, and the parties are notified of the outcome.

Respondent - An organization/person who has been requested to provide a response to a complaint.

3. INSTRUCTIONS

The RTO must have a policy for dealing with complaints about the organisation, third parties, staff or other learners. They must also have an appeals policy; in case there is a request to review or reconsider a decision that has been made.

These policies must be publicly available, for example, by including them on the RTO website or displaying them in common areas for staff and learners.

The RTO's process must follow the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, and the decision maker is to be independent of the decision being reviewed.

The policy should disclose any costs associated with a third-party review so all parties are aware of any costs they may need to pay. Where an independent review or adjudicator is required, the complainant will bear all reasonable costs.

The RTO must deal with complaints and appeals promptly. The timeframes that will apply to resolution of complaints and appeals should be identified, so that complainants know how long it should take to get a response from the RTO at all stages of the process. If a complaint or appeal (including any review process) will take more than 60 days to finalise, the RTO is to write to the people involved explaining the delay.

The RTO is to record all complaints and appeals received, and document outcomes. This information is to be used to review the RTO's processes and practices to ensure the issue doesn't happen again.

4. TOOLS & TEMPLATES

This P&P is supported by the Tools & Templates identified at each stage in the process.

5. PROCEDURE

The Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedure will be made publicly available on the STES website.

STES encourages feedback at any time, including anonymous feedback. Informal feedback and early-resolution discussions are recorded and reviewed as part of the continuous improvement system.

5.1 Complaints

STES will deal with any complaints, whether from students, clients or staff in an effective and timely manner, typically resolving all complaints within 60 days. Complaints and appeals may be submitted electronically via the STES website or email. STES ensures the same procedural fairness and response times apply to online submissions.

5.2 Assessment Appeals

A student may appeal against an assessment outcome within 14 days of receiving notification of their results.

The grounds for an assessment appeal are:

- The judgement as to whether competence has been achieved and demonstrated was made incorrectly.
- The assessment plan is not flexible or fair.
- Judgement was not made in line with the assessment plan.
- The assessment plan does not address the collection of evidence sufficiently.

5.3 Resolution

STES will deal with any complaints or student appeals in an effective and timely manner, typically resolving all complaints within 60 days.

1. Acknowledge complaint within 5 working days.
2. Admin/Compliance Initial investigation within 20 working days.
3. CEO/Training Manager Formal resolution within 60 calendar days.
4. CEO/Training Manager Independent review (if required) within 30 days of request.
    - Each complaint or appeal and its outcomes will be recorded in writing.
    - The RTO will act upon any substantiated complaints or appeals.

The CEO / Training Manager is responsible for managing the resolution of the complaints and appeals.

Where more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, CEO / Training Manager:

- Will inform the complainant or appellant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required, and
- Regularly update the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.

All complaints and appeals are to be recorded on the STES Complaints & Appeals Register and are to be reviewed at the monthly management meetings and, if appropriate, will result in a continuous improvement activity. Also, possible causes of complaints or appeals are to be identified, and corrective action is to be taken to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.

If the client or student is still not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint or appeal, they can seek further assistance from TAC.

Trends and root causes identified through complaints and appeals are logged in the Continuous Improvement Register. Outcomes are reviewed quarterly to identify systemic issues, inform policy updates, and enhance learner outcomes.

Indicative Timeframes

1. Acknowledge complaint within 5 working days
2. Admin/Compliance Initial investigation within 20 working days
3. CEO/Training Manager Formal resolution within 60 calendar days
4. CEO/Training Manager Independent review (if required) within 30 days of request

6. CEO RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the CEO to ensure the requirements of the Complaints and Appeals policy are met at all times. The CEO will make sure sufficient awareness training is provided to STES staff members to meet the wellbeing competence continuum below.

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All staff will receive training on the complaints and appeals process during induction and through annual refresher sessions. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff understand their role in early resolution and procedural fairness.

Any issues or questions regarding Wellbeing awareness training can be directed to CEO / Training Manager or during the next staff meeting.

Complaint and Appeals Process Overview	
Initial Complaint	When a staff member is approached by a student or client about a complaint, they should in the first instance attempt to resolve the issue themselves.
Receiving a Complaint	If the complaint cannot be resolved, then the complainant is to be referred to CEO / Training Manager who will provide them with a copy of the STES Complaints Lodgement Form and if required assist them to complete it.
Receiving an Appeal	A student may appeal against an assessment outcome within 14 days of receiving notification of their results. They will be provided an STES Appeals Lodgement Form and if required assist them to complete it.
Assessment of Appeal	The Appeal will be assessed by the CEO / Training Manager / Training Leader.
Resolution	STES will deal with any complaints or student appeals in an effective and timely manner, typically resolving all complaints within 60 days.
Record	All complaints and appeals are securely recorded on the Complaints and Appeals Register. All records relating to complaints and appeals, including evidence, correspondence, and outcomes, are stored securely in accordance with the Records Management Policy. Access is limited to authorised personnel. Records are retained for a minimum of seven (7) years.
Review	All complaints and appeals are reviewed at the monthly management meeting and if appropriate will result in a continuous improvement action.
Outcome:	Resolution is achieved and communicated in writing to Complainant/Appellant and Reviewed for Continuous Improvement.

7. RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

When a staff member is approached by a student or client about a complaint, they should in the first instance attempt to resolve the issue themselves.

If the complaint cannot be resolved, then the complainant is to be referred to CEO / Training Manager/ Training Leader who will provide them with a copy of the STES Complaints Lodgement Form and if required assist them to complete it.

Similarly, all staff should be aware that the same process is available to them as well, should they have a complaint.

All complaints should be brought to the attention of STES Management on the day the complaint is made.

The written complaint must be forwarded to STES Management as soon as possible.

STES Management should respond in writing, proposing a solution or stating their current position on the relevant matter.

The written management response should also contain information concerning the complainant's right to appeal the decision through an Independent Adjudicator.

All independent adjudicator outcomes will be communicated to the complainant in a timely manner.

Each complaint and its outcomes will be recorded in writing on the STES Complaints & Appeals Register.

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8. ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Appeals against STES decisions including, assessment decisions, are to be submitted in writing on the STES Appeals Lodgement Form

- STES will deal with any student appeals against decisions including, assessment decisions, in an effective and timely manner, typically resolving all appeals within 60 days.
- Each appeal and its outcomes will be recorded in writing on the STES Appeals Register.
- Each appeal is heard by an independent person or panel that is mutually agreed upon.
- Each appellant:
    - Can formally present his or her case
    - Is given a written statement of the appeals outcomes, including reasons for the decision.

8.1 The appeal for re-assessment is proven

If an appeal for re-assessment is proven, STES will make all necessary arrangements to conduct the re-assessment of the student at a time that is mutually convenient for all parties concerned.

8.2 The appeal is not proven

If the appeal is not proven and the appellant is not satisfied with the resolution of the appeal, they are informed of their right to purse the decision further externally.

9. INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS AND STUDENTS

STES hosts all its policies and specific information for students regarding complaints and appeals on its public website https://stes.com.au/student-resources.

STES also provides public access to the Student Handbook, a useful tool to help the student to understand RTO language, rules, processes as it relates to the student engagement with the RTO.

Information on how to lodge a complaint or appeal will be provided in accessible formats and language. Assistance will be available for learners with language, literacy, or digital access needs.

END OF PROCEDURE

VERSION HISTORY				
VERSION	**APPROVED BY**	**REVISION DATE**	**DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE**	**AUTHOR**
8.0	RTO Compliance	January 2025	Created P&P	Kamal Haddad
9.0	RTO Compliance	November 2025	Amended to RTO Standards 2025 and updated template	Kamal Haddad

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