Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

This policy and procedure explain how Australian Learning Group (ALG) manages feedback, complaints and appeals.

ALG aims to ensure that concerns are handled in a fair, transparent and timely way. Feedback, complaints and appeals are also used to identify issues and improve services, training and student support.

This policy addresses the requirements of:

- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* – Standard 10
- Outcome Standards 2025 – Standards 2.7 and 2.8
- Australian Consumer Law

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- students
- employees and contractors
- education agents and other third parties working with ALG
- members of the public who interact with ALG.

3. Definitions

Feedback: Feedback is information provided by students or others about their experience with ALG. It may include suggestions, compliments, concerns or complaints.

Feedback is used by ALG to identify improvements and support continuous improvement activities.

Complaint: A complaint is when a person says they are unhappy with a service, decision or action of ALG, its staff or its partners. Examples include complaints about:

- student services
- training delivery
- assessment results
- staff conduct
- education agent services.

Appeal: An appeal is when a person asks ALG to review a decision that affects them. Examples include appeals about:

- assessment decisions
- course progress or attendance decisions
- enrolment cancellation
- outcomes of complaints.

Complainant: A complainant is the person who submits a complaint about a service, decision, action or behaviour of ALG, its staff, contractors or third-party partners.

Appellant: An appellant is the person who submits an appeal requesting that ALG review a decision that has been made about them.

Respondent: A respondent is any person against whom a complaint or allegation is made, including staff members, students, education agents or third-party representatives.

Domestic student: A student who is an Australian citizen, New Zealand citizen, Australian permanent resident, or other person who is not studying in Australia on a student visa.

Overseas Student A person who holds a student visa and is studying in Australia on that visa, as defined under the ESOS Act.

4. Responsibilities

Students and stakeholders: May provide feedback, submit complaints or lodge appeals in accordance with this policy.

Student Experience Team: Receives complaints, coordinates reviews and communicates outcomes.

Student Administration Team: Receives appeals, coordinates reviews and communicates outcomes.

Management: Ensures complaints and appeals are addressed fairly and that outcomes are implemented where required.

Appeal Review Panel: Monitors complaints and appeals outcomes, reports trends to the Continuous Improvement Committee and records improvement actions in the Continuous Improvement Register where required.

5. Policy

ALG's complaints and appeals processes form part of ALG's overall feedback mechanisms used to collect information from students and stakeholders about their experience with ALG's services, training and operations.

Feedback, complaints and appeals that identify issues or opportunities for improvement are recorded in ALG's Continuous Improvement Register and addressed through ALG's continuous improvement processes.

ALG uses the customer services software platform, Zendesk to receive and respond student complaints and appeals.

Outcomes of complaints and appeals are also reviewed at ALG's monthly Continuous Improvement Committee meeting to determine whether systemic issues require corrective or preventative action.

ALG's governing persons and senior management monitor complaints and appeals trends to ensure that issues affecting students or the quality of services are identified and addressed. This oversight supports informed decision-making and ensures accountability for the continuous improvement of ALG's operations and student services.

ALG operates a feedback, complaints and appeals system that allows students and other stakeholders to raise concerns about ALG, its staff, contractors or third-party partners.

ALG ensures that:

- information about feedback, complaints and appeals is publicly available and easy to access, including in the Student Handbook and on the ALG website
- students are supported to provide feedback and make complaints
- where appropriate, ALG will attempt to resolve complaints or concerns informally in the first instance before progressing to the formal complaints or appeals process.
- complaints and appeals are handled according to the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness
- all parties to a complaint or appeal, including staff, students and third-party representatives, are given a reasonable opportunity to respond to any allegations made against them before a decision is finalised
- this includes allegations made against staff, other students, education agents or any third party engaged by ALG
- responses from all relevant parties are considered as part of the decision-making process
- evidence of this process, including meeting records, written responses or interview notes, is documented and retained in ALG's complaints and appeals records
- complainants and appellants will not be disadvantaged, victimised or treated unfairly for raising a complaint or appeal.
- formal complaints and appeals are acknowledged within two working days of receipt
- assessment of a formal complaint or appeal commences within 10 working days of it being made in accordance with this policy and procedure
- ALG aims to finalise complaints and appeals and communicate the outcome in writing within 20 working days of receipt and, in all cases, as soon as practicable
- where a complaint or appeal cannot be finalised within 20 working days, ALG informs the complainant or appellant in writing of the reasons for the delay, provides an expected completion date and continues to provide regular progress updates until the matter is finalised.
- complaints and appeals are handled in a professional, fair and transparent way
- students have the opportunity to present their case in person and bring a support person to meetings
- the outcome of complaints and appeals is provided in writing with reasons for the decision
- a clear internal review pathway is available, whereby complaints may be followed by an internal appeal before accessing any external review process
- where a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, they have the right to lodge an internal appeal in accordance with this policy and procedure
- complainants are advised to lodge an appeal within 20 days of notification of a complaint outcome
- the written outcome outlines any actions to be taken by ALG and clearly informs the complainant or appellant of their right to access an internal appeal and, where applicable, an external complaints or appeals process

- if the complainant or appellant is not satisfied with the outcome, they are advised of their right to access an external complaints or appeals process, and that they are expected to first exhaust ALG's internal complaints and appeals process before seeking external review, unless exceptional circumstances apply
- records of all complaints, appeals and outcomes are kept securely
- records must clearly demonstrate that all relevant parties were given the opportunity to respond, including documented evidence of meetings, correspondence or statements recorded in Zendesk or associated systems.
- feedback, complaints and appeals are reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

Where a complaint or appeal is confirmed, ALG will take corrective action to prevent the issue from happening again.

Where an appeal relates to decisions affecting the enrolment of an overseas student visa holder, ALG will maintain the student's enrolment until the internal appeals process is completed, in accordance with ESOS requirements.

Using ALG's complaints and appeals process does not remove a student's right to take action under Australian Consumer Law.

5.1 Intended System outcomes

Through the implementation of ALG's complaints and appeals processes:

- concerns raised by students and stakeholders are addressed fairly and within reasonable timeframes
- students have confidence that decisions affecting them can be reviewed through a transparent and independent process
- ALG identifies systemic issues through feedback, complaints and appeals and takes appropriate action to address them.
- insights from feedback, complaints and appeals contribute to the continuous improvement of ALG's services, training and student support.

5.2 Complaint review

Complaints received by ALG are initially reviewed by the Student Experience Team via Zendesk and, where appropriate, referred to the relevant operational team for investigation and action.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, this may include the Academic Team, Student Services, Quality Assurance or Management Teams.

The responsible team reviews the matter, gathers relevant information and ensures that all parties to the complaint, including any staff member, student or third party subject to allegations, are given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made.

This may include written responses, interviews or meetings. All responses are documented and considered as part of the decision-making process.

5.3 Appeal Panel

ALG convenes an Appeals Panel to review appeal submissions and determine outcomes. The Appeals Panel normally meets weekly where appeals have been received. The panel reviews the evidence provided by the appellant and relevant staff, considers the original decision and determines an outcome in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

The Appeals Panel may confirm the original decision, vary the decision or recommend corrective actions where appropriate.

The Appeals Panel will include staff members who were not directly involved in the original decision wherever possible.

5.4 External referrals

An appellant who is not satisfied with the outcome of ALG's internal complaints and appeals process may request an independent external review. External referral may be used where the internal process has been completed, and the person believes the matter has not been resolved fairly.

The independent external review process will be available at no or low cost to the appellant. ALG will provide the appellant with information about any applicable costs before the external review is accessed.

For overseas students, the appropriate external body is the Commonwealth Ombudsman, which investigates complaints about private education providers under the Overseas Students Ombudsman scheme. Students can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman using the following details:

Commonwealth Ombudsman – Overseas Students Ombudsman

- Website: https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students
- Phone: 1300 362 072 (within Australia)
- Online complaint form: https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/complaints
- Mail: Commonwealth Ombudsman, GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601
- Location addresses:
    - Adelaide - Level 11, 25 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000
    - Brisbane - Level 22, 215 Adelaide Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000
    - Sydney - Level 20, 60 Castlereagh Street, Syndey NSW 2000
    - Melbourne - Level 2, 452 Flinders Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Domestic students who are not satisfied with the outcome of ALG's internal complaints or appeals process may access an appropriate external complaints handling or dispute resolution body. This may include the National Training Complaints Hotline or the relevant state or territory consumer protection agency in the state or territory where the student is studying.

National Training Complaints Hotline
Phone: 13 38 73
Website: National Training Complaints Hotline

Relevant state and territory consumer protection agencies include:

NSW Fair Trading – New South Wales
Phone: 13 32 20
Website: NSW Fair Trading

Office of Fair Trading Queensland – Queensland

Phone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
Website: Queensland Office of Fair Trading

Consumer Affairs Victoria – Victoria
Phone: 1300 55 81 81
Website: Consumer Affairs Victoria

Consumer and Business Services – South Australia
Phone: 131 882
Website: Consumer and Business Services SA
Students are generally expected to exhaust ALG's internal complaints and appeals process before lodging a complaint with an external complaint handling or dispute resolution body, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

6. Procedure

Step	Key actions	Responsibility	Supporting documents
Complaints			
1. Informal resolution	• Encourage the complainant to first discuss the issue with the relevant staff member (trainer, Student Services, Academic Manager) to attempt informal resolution.	Relevant staff	Internal notes
2. Formal complaint	• If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the complainant submits a written complaint using the Complaints and Appeals Form	Complainant	Complaints and Appeals Form
3. Acknowledge complaint	• Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days.	Student Experience Team	Email acknowledgement
4. Start review	• Begin reviewing the complaint within 10 working days	Student Experience Team	Investigation notes
5. Review and referral	• Review the complaint and refer it to the relevant operational team for investigation and response where required	Student Experience Team	Complaint record
6. Investigate complaint	• Review all relevant documentation and evidence • Identify any person(s) subject to allegations (e.g. staff, students, education agents or third parties) • Provide those persons with a reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegations before a decision is made • Conduct interviews or meetings where required • Ensure all responses are documented (e.g. meeting notes, written statements, system records in Zendesk) • Maintain confidentiality and impartiality throughout the process	Student Experience Team	Investigation records Zendesk records Meeting notes / written responses
7. Decision	• Provide the complainant with a written outcome including reasons for the decision	Student Experience Team	Outcome notification
8. Appeal option	• If the complainant is not satisfied, advise them of their right to access ALG's Appeals processes	Student Experience Team	Written advice Appeals Form
9. Record keeping	• Record the complaint and outcome in the Complaints Register.	Student Experience Team	Complaints Register
Appeals			
10. Submit appeal	• The student submits an appeal using the Student Appeal Form within 20 working days of receiving the decision.	Appellant	Appeals Form

11. Acknowledge appeal	• Acknowledge receipt of the appeal within three working days.	Student Administration Team	Email acknowledgement
12. Start review	• Begin reviewing the appeal within 10 working days.	Student Administration Team	Review notes
13. Review appeal	• Review all evidence and documentation relating to the original decision • Where relevant, seek and document input from any person subject to allegations or involved in the original decision • Provide the appellant and any relevant party an opportunity to present additional information • Document all interactions and evidence considered	Student Administration Team Academic Manager Quality Assurance Team	Investigation notes
14. Appeals Panel review	• Appeal is referred to the Appeals Panel for review of the evidence and determination of an outcome. • The panel may confirm, vary or overturn the original decision.	Appeals Panel / Management	Appeal documentation
15. External appeal notification	• Notify appellant of option to refer appeal to an external appeals process if unhappy with appeal outcome • provide Ombudsman contact details • Advise the appellant that the independent external review is available at no or low cost • Provide 20-day deadline to notify ALG if they have chosen to access external services	Student Administration Team	Written advice
16. Implement decision	• If the appeal outcome supports the appellant, implement the decision and corrective action immediately • Advise appellant in writing of action taken	Management Team	Action records
17. Record keeping	• Record the appeal and outcome in the Appeals Register.	Student Administration Team	Appeals Register
External Referral			
18. External referral	If the appellant chooses to access an external review (e.g. Commonwealth Ombudsman): • cooperate with the external body, provide requested documentation • await the outcome of the review • Where the external review results in a decision or recommendation, implement the outcome and any required corrective actions	Management	Correspondence with Ombudsman Decision records

	• inform the appellant of the actions taken.		
Continuous Improvement			
19. Committee review	• The Continuous Improvement Committee reviews summaries of complaints and appeals to identify systemic issues and determine whether improvement actions are required.	Continuous Improvement Committee	Complaints Register, Appeals Register Continuous
20. Identify improvement opportunities	• Review complaints and appeals outcomes to identify issues or opportunities for improvement.	Continuous Improvement Committee	Feedback reports, Complaints Register Appeals Register
21. Record improvements	• Record identified issues and required actions in the Continuous Improvement Register.	Continuous Improvement Committee	Continuous Improvement Register
22. Implement actions	• Implement corrective or preventative actions to address the identified issues.	Management Team	Continuous Improvement Register
23. Monitor outcomes	• Monitor actions to ensure improvements are implemented and issues do not recur.	Management Team	Continuous Improvement Register

7. Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Student, staff and other stakeholder feedback surveys
- Complaint Form
- Appeal Form
- Complaint Register
- Appeal Register
- Continuous Improvement Register

8. Document Information and Review

Document Information		
Document ID	STU-12	
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Responsible officer	Joe Lynch	
Key Stakeholder(s)	ALG students and staff	
Approval by	CEO	
Endorsed by	Academic Director and Head of Quality Assurance	
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Version	**Date**	**Amendment(s)**
1.0	31 October 2022	N/A
2.0	18 August 2023	• Updated position titles • Updated to reflect ALG's practice of analysing the root cause of complaints and appeals • Minor editorial changes
3.0	10 March 2026	• Minor editorial changes • Referencing state external complaints handling or dispute resolution bodies
4.0	28 August 2026	• Minor edit to note notification of appellant of action take if appeal outcome supports the appellant
5.0	14 September 2026	• Include the complaint body city addresses, Syndey, Brisbane, Alienate and Melbourne
6.0	16 October 2026	• Insert a 20-day appeal submission deadline following notification of a complaint outcome