
STUDENT HANDBOOK**Section 7 – Complaints and Appeals Policy**

Complaints and Appeals Framework Principles

ALG is committed to creating an equitable and fair teaching and learning environment where the views of all stakeholders are valued, listened to and acted upon as appropriate, for continuous development and improvement.

We acknowledge that from time to time students may be dissatisfied with conditions experienced in the teaching and learning environment and may need to access ALG's complaints and appeals process. ALG recognises the complaints and appeals process as an important framework through which ALG can identify valuable feedback from stakeholders and resolve such matters as practicably and equitably as possible.

All students have access to a fair, inexpensive complaints and appeals process that includes access to an independent external body if necessary.

ALG is committed to having an effective system of complaint management that responds to complaints in a constructive way and in accordance with the National Code 2018 and RTO Standards 2015. Before making a complaint about ALG to an external body, students must follow ALG's complaints and appeals process.

Complaints and Appeals Handling Process

ALG acknowledges that students may need assistance with their study programs or have other concerns. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Experiencing bullying, discrimination and inappropriate behaviour such as harassment, abusive language and sexual misconduct.
- Appealing against a decision to report student to the Australian immigration department via Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS) for not meeting course progress (i.e. attendance and/or assessment tasks) requirements, non-payment of outstanding fees, behaviour misconduct and academic misconduct.

The complaints and appeals process steps are as follows:

1. **Informal complaint** - The initial step in any complaint is to discuss and attempt to resolve the issue with the relevant staff/person(s) involved and via the appropriate channels (i.e. student to reach out to trainers and/or respective Student Services Team).
2. **Formal complaint** - If informal complaint has been lodged and the matter is still not resolved or if it is inappropriate to discuss the issues with the staff/person involved, then the next step of the complaints and appeals process will apply.
3. **Internal appeal** - If a student deems the outcome of the formal complaint to be inappropriate or not satisfactory, the student can appeal against the decision.
4. **External appeal** - If a student feels that the internal appeal is not adequately resolved, student can lodge an external appeal.

More details of each step will be provided in the following sections.

Any formal complaint or appeal needs to be lodged in writing by completing [Complaint/Appeal online form](#), available on ALG website. All formal correspondence between ALG and the student will continue to be made in writing for record keeping purposes and clarity.

We maintain full records of all formal complaints and appeals and their outcomes in our student database and other relevant systems.

All stakeholders involved in the investigation during the course of complaint/appeal handling process, must conduct themselves honestly and courteously and seek to achieve an amicable resolution of the complaint. No complainant will be intentionally victimised or discriminated against during the course of the complaint/appeal handling process or as a result of the outcome of the complaint/appeal.

ALG may recommend the immediate escalation of certain complaint and appeal to the relevant regulating bodies, under certain extenuating circumstances. It is important for students to reach out to ALG for further discussion before engaging the relevant regulating bodies.

Informal Complaint

The initial step in any complaint is to discuss and attempt to resolve the issue with the relevant staff/person(s) involved. We recommend all students to raise the complaint as soon as the situation arises. This way it won't escalate unnecessarily into a bigger problem. Most concerns can be resolved by talking to the relevant staff/person involved.

ALG makes every attempt to resolve complaints through an informal process to maintain positive relations between all stakeholders.

Formal Complaint

All students are encouraged to resolve matters informally with the relevant staff/person as the first step of resolution. However, should the student deem that informal resolution is not possible, appropriate nor satisfactory, student may choose to submit a formal complaint by completing the [Complaint/Appeal online form](#), available on ALG website.

ALG will ensure that privacy and confidentiality is respected throughout the complaint handling process for all stakeholders concerned. However, ALG may not be in a position to guarantee confidentiality if a student's complaint is about another staff/person as they have the right to know about any allegations made against them and to be given a chance to respond.

The guidelines of utilising the formal complaint process are as follows:

- The student may seek assistance of the respective Student Services Team on how to complete the Complaint/Appeal online form. The formal complaint must be submitted via the online form and it cannot be anonymous.
- ALG will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within **10 working days**. An outcome will be issued in writing as soon as reasonably and practicably possible, after the finalisation of the investigation findings.
- In the event a student deems the outcome of the formal complaint to be inappropriate or not satisfactory, the student may choose to submit an internal appeal to ALG within **20 working days** upon

receipt of the outcome. If the internal complaints process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the student, ALG will immediately implement the decision or recommendation and/or take the preventive or corrective action required by the decision and advise the student of that action.

- If a student complains about a staff member in the Student Services Team, ALG will ensure another staff member will investigate the complaint to ensure independence.
- If required, relevant staff will be informed and given the opportunity to address the complaint through face to face meeting and negotiation. All stakeholders required in the face to face meeting and negotiation may be accompanied and assisted by a support person.
- In the event of serious breaches to policy, practice or professional conduct, either party, being ALG or the affected student/client, may wish to seek legal advice at either party's own expense.
- Student can choose to withdraw their complaint by emailing the respective Student Services Team and citing the reasons for withdrawal. Any processes arising out of the complaint handling process may, at the discretion of ALG, continue or discontinue.

Internal Appeal

If a student deems the outcome of the formal complaint to be inappropriate or not satisfactory, the student may choose to submit an internal appeal by completing the [Complaint/Appeal online form](#) and providing new supporting evidence. ALG reserves the right to reject the internal appeal if no additional supporting evidence is provided.

The guidelines of utilising an internal appeal process are as follows:

- Appeal must be submitted in writing within **20 working days** of the occurrence or incident taking place or upon the receipt of the outcome of the formal complaint. ALG will only review complaints raised after this **20 working day period** for exceptional and compelling circumstances.
- It must not be anonymous and any internal appeal must be submitted by completing the Complaint/Appeal online form.
- ALG will acknowledge receipt of student's internal appeal within **10 working days** and provide an outcome as soon as practicable to the student, upon the completion of the investigation.
- If required, relevant staff will be informed and given the opportunity to address the appeal through face to face meeting and negotiation. All stakeholders required in the face to face meeting and negotiation may be accompanied and assisted by a support person.
- If necessary, consultation with independent external agencies regarding issues raised will occur and necessary action(s) to resolving the issues will be taken.
- In the event of serious breaches to policy, practice or professional conduct, either party, being ALG or the affected student/client, may wish to seek legal advice at either party's own expense.
- All information gathered during the internal appeal handling processes will be used to review the complaints and appeals policy and procedure where necessary.

- Student can choose to withdraw their internal appeal by emailing the respective Student Services Team and citing the reasons for withdrawal. Any processes arising out of the internal appeal handling process may, at the discretion of ALG, continue or discontinue.
- If the internal appeal handling process results in an outcome in favour of the student, ALG will immediately implement the decision and/or take the preventive or corrective action(s) required by the decision, and advise the student of the action(s).
- In the event a student deems the outcome of the internal appeal to be inappropriate or not satisfactory, the student may choose to engage external appeal within **10 working days** upon receipt of the internal appeal outcome. If the internal appeals process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the student, ALG will immediately implement the decision or recommendation and/or take the preventive or corrective action required by the decision and advise the student of that action.

External Appeal

If the student feels that the internal appeal is not adequately resolved, they will be provided with an opportunity to formally present their case to a third party mediator. International students also have the option to engage the Overseas Student Ombudsman in this external appeal process.

Whereby a situation requires external counselling, mediation or judgement, then the student and ALG must both agree in writing on who this third party mediator will be, which will ensure fairness and independence. This third party will make the final judgement that will be binding to both ALG and student.

In the case where there may be direct costs associated to the third party mediator e.g. an external counsellor may charge an hourly fee to mediate, then the costs of this mediation process will be shared equally by both ALG and the student. Any expected costs of third party mediation and the agreement to share these costs will also be outlined and agreed upon in writing.

The external appeals process needs to be initiated by the student and the student is required to advise ALG in writing within **10 working days** of receiving the outcome of the internal appeals process. In some cases, depending on the subject of appeal, ALG will be required to maintain the enrolment throughout an external appeals process.

Decision to Take Appeal to Overseas Students Ombudsman

If an international student wishes to lodge an external appeal to address an appeal against ALG's outcome, the student can contact the Overseas Students Ombudsman. The Overseas Students Ombudsman offers a free and independent service for overseas students who 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 or phone 1300 362 072 for more information.

Other Services

Whilst the Overseas Student Ombudsmen is the first preference, there may be a situation where more suitable mediators are required. Some examples of other suitable counsellors or mediators ALG can recommend to students include:

- Department Fair Trade – for issues involving monies, service or product agreements.
- Industry Associations e.g. ATMS – for judgement on course content and learning outcomes.

Maintaining Enrolment of Students

Internal Appeals

ALG must maintain the student's enrolment throughout the internal appeals process for all subject of appeals.

To 'maintain the student's enrolment' means the provider does not notify the Australian immigration department of any change to the student's enrolment status through PRISMS.

External Appeals

Whether ALG must maintain the enrolment throughout an external appeals process will depend on the subject of the appeals.

If the external appeal is against the provider's decision to report the student for unsatisfactory course progress (i.e. attendance and/or assessment tasks), ALG must maintain the student's enrolment (i.e. not report the student for unsatisfactory course progress) until the external appeals process is completed and has supported the provider's decision to report.

If the external appeal is against the provider's decision to:

- defer or suspend a student's enrolment due to behaviour misconduct or academic misconduct
- cancel the student's enrolment due to non-payment of outstanding fees

ALG only needs to await the outcome of the internal appeals process in favour of ALG before notifying the Australian immigration department through PRISMS of the change to the student's enrolment.