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Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to set out how Headway Education deals with complaints and appeals.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure apply to all potential and current students of Headway Education.

3. Definitions

- a) **Appeal** means the escalation and review of an outcome of a Formal Complaint where a Complainant is not satisfied with the result determined by Headway Education.
- b) **Complainant** means a student who raises a Complaint and seeks a resolution to that Complaint.
- c) **Complaint** means a problem, concern or feeling of dissatisfaction that a student has with an act, omission, oversight or decision made by another student or any Headway Education staff or contractor where the student seeks a resolution.
- d) **Formal Complaint** means a Complaint made in writing which cannot be resolved through the Informal Complaint mechanism.
- e) **Informal Complaint** mean a complaint that is dealt with directly between the complainant and any other person involved, with the intention of a resolution prior to a Formal Complaint being lodged.
- f) **Respondent** means the person or people that a Complaint is made against.

4. Policy

Headway Education takes complaints seriously and will investigate and take appropriate actions when necessary. Headway Education endeavours to ensure that students get the best outcomes possible. Students need to be comfortable in lodging complaints without fear of any negative consequences or reprisals for making a complaint.

Headway Education will ensure that:

- All complaints are managed fairly, equitably, efficiently and in a timely manner
- The complainant and the respondent will not be discriminated against or victimised.
- The complainant and respondent will have the opportunity to present their case at each stage.
- The complainant and/or the respondent will have the right to have a representative or support person present during any negotiations with the institute or its

appointed representatives.

- At all stages of the process, discussions relating to complaints and appeals will be recorded in writing. Reasons and a full explanation for decisions and actions taken as part of this procedure will be provided to the complainant and/or respondent in writing.
- Records of all complaints will be kept for a period of five years and treated in accordance with the institute's Privacy Policy and the Privacy Act 1988. These records will be kept strictly confidential and stored at Headway Education database.
- All students during their orientation and throughout their education journey at the institute will be educated about this policy and procedure and ensure that they understand their right to complaint and appeal.

Headway Education recognises that academic and non-academic complaints will need to be handled differently. For this reason, this Policy and procedure is developed accordingly.

This Policy sets out the framework for Headway Education's complaints handling system which includes:

- Providing an impartial and fair mechanism for students to make a complaint
- Providing students accurate information on how to make a complaint
- Setting timeframes for complaint resolution
- Providing or allowing support for the student
- Allowing the student to access independent professional advice at their own cost
- Informing students of their options if they are not satisfied with the outcome
- Providing an informal and formal process for making a complaint
- The student is informed if costs may be incurred for appeals and these costs are reasonable.

Headway Education will maintain a Complaints and Appeals Register. The Complaints and Appeals Register will include details of all Formal Complaints lodged, details of outcomes and any other relevant information. The Complaints and Appeals Register will be controlled with access limited to the Compliance Manager and the CEO.

All complaints lodged will be dealt with in a manner which ensures privacy and where necessary confidentiality, of the parties involved.

a) Academic Complaints

Examples of academic complaints include, but are not limited to matters relating to:

- Course or unit of competency
- Student progress
- Assessment outcomes
- RPL or CT process
- Decisions related to plagiarism, cheating and collusion

The process for academic complaints is as follows:

- Informal Complaint
- Formal Complaint
- Investigation of Formal Complaint
- Initial Outcome of Formal Complaint

- Internal Appeal and Review of Initial Outcome
- Outcome of Internal Appeal and Review
- External Appeal and Review

The above process will be explained in detail in the Procedure.

b) Non-Academic Complaints

Examples of non-academic complaints include, but are not limited to matters relating to:

- Admissions related
- Access to or condition of facilities or resources
- Allegations of bullying or harassment
- Allegations of discrimination
- Safety issues
- Privacy or confidentiality issues
- Withdrawal rejection
- Fee Refund

The process for non academic complaints is as follows:

- Informal Complaint
- Formal Complaint
- Investigation of Formal Complaint
- Initial Outcome of Formal Complaint
- Internal Appeal and Review of Initial Outcome
- Outcome of Internal Appeal and Review
- External Appeal and Review

The above process will be explained in detail in the Procedure.

5. Procedure

Headway Education recognises that academic and non-academic Complaints will need to be handled differently. For this reason, this Procedure will deal with them separately.

If the student is enrolled at Headway Education, their current status will remain in effect during the time of the complaint lodging, resolution and/or appeal process.

All Complaints lodged will be dealt with in a manner which ensures privacy and where necessary confidentiality, of the parties involved.

a) Academic Complaints Procedure

- **Informal Complaints**

Students are encouraged to resolve any academic concerns or Complaints informally prior to making a Formal Complaint. A student may request that an Informal Complaint is mediated by a Headway Education staff member who is not involved in the matter.

If the Complaint relates to assessment outcome, the Complainant should talk directly with the assessor who had assessed their assessment. This is an opportunity for the Complainant and the assessor to review the outcome. Both parties should agree to a timeframe to resolve the matter which no more than 2 weeks. If the matter is not resolved within 2 weeks, the student should lodge a Formal Complaint.

If the Complaint relates to issues with student progress or academic integrity, the Complainant should discuss the matter directly with the Respondent. Both parties should agree to a timeframe to resolve the matter which no more than 2 weeks. If the matter is not resolved within 2 weeks, the student should lodge a Formal Complaint.

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Informal Complaint process, they should lodge a Formal Complaint using the Student Complaint Form.

- **Formal Complaint**

The Formal Complaint process starts when a student lodges a Student Complaint Form with Student Administration officer. The Student Complaint Form can either emailed to admin@headwayeducation.com.au or given to reception. If the student has any concerns around confidentiality, they may lodge the Student Complaint Form directly with the Compliance Manager.

Once a Student Complaint Form is received by Student Administration, the complaint is logged in the Complaints and Appeals Register. The Complaint will then be referred to the most appropriate Headway Education staff member for investigation. Generally, Formal Complaint investigation will be managed by the Compliance Manager.

- **Investigation of Formal Complaint**

The investigating officer generally Compliance Manager will gather all evidence and conduct interviews as required. The investigation must commence within 10 business days of the complaint being lodged. The investigating officer need to finalise an outcome within 20 business days of the Formal Complaint being lodged with Student Administration. If there are compelling reasons, the investigating officer may be required to provide an outcome of the investigation in a shorter time, in which case all parties will be notified in writing.

Where the investigating officer believes more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, the investigating officer must:

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

The investigating officer will need to provide a written report which includes the outcome, the evidence and other factors taken into account and their reasoning behind the outcome. This report will be uploaded against the student file and the outcome recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register.

- **Initial Outcome of Formal Complaint**

The Complainant will be informed of the outcome of the Formal Complaint investigation in writing within 5 business days of the report being finalised. The full details of the investigating officers report may not be disclosed to the Complainant depending on the circumstances and taking into account Privacy and confidentiality.

- **Internal Appeal and Review of Initial Outcome**

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the initial outcome, they can lodge an Appeal. The Appeal must be lodged in writing within 10 business days of the Complainant receiving the outcome in writing. The Appeal will be escalated to the level above the investigating officer for review.

For example, complaints investigated by the Compliance Manager will be reviewed by the CEO.

- **Outcome of Appeal and Internal Review**

The Appeal reviewer will need to provide a written report which includes the outcome, the evidence and other factors taken into account and their reasoning behind the outcome. This report will be uploaded against the student file and the Appeal outcome recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register.

The internal appeal process should be completed within 15 business days of being lodged by the student. The student must be notified in writing of the internal appeal outcome

within 5 business days from the date of appeal outcome is finalised.

- **External Appeal and Review**

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal Appeal, they can ask for an external review of the decision. The outcome from the external Appeal and review will be recorded in the student's file as well as the Complaints and Appeals Register.

External Review options:

Students can have the matter reviewed by Victoria Ombudsman and/or Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), national regulator for Australia's vocational education and training sector who will provide a final resolution.

Make a Complaint to ASQA using the link below.

[Complaints about training providers | Australian Skills Quality Authority \(ASQA\)](#)

Make a Complaint to Victoria Ombudsman using the link below.

[Complaints | Victorian Ombudsman](#)

If this proceeds, the student and Headway Education will follow the process set out by the Victorian Ombudsman and ASQA. Headway Education will fully cooperate and provide all required evidence and documents.

Headway Education will implement the appeal process as soon as practicable after the decision is made. Headway Education will ensure that there is no charge for either the internal stage or external stage.

b) Non-Academic Complaints Procedure

- **Informal Complaints**

Students are encouraged resolve any non-academic concerns or Complaints informally prior to making a Formal Complaint. A student may request that an Informal Complaint is mediated by a Headway Education staff member who is not involved in the matter.

If the Complaint relates to the behaviour of another student or any Headway Education staff, the Complainant should attempt to resolve the matter directly with the Respondent. The Complainant should let the Respondent know what behaviour they are not happy with, and attempt to resolve the matter directly between the two parties.

If the Complainant is concerned about the Respondent's potential reaction to discussing the Complaint, the Complainant should lodge a Formal Complaint rather than approach the Respondent directly.

- **Formal Complaint**

The Formal Complaint process starts when a student lodges a Student Complaint Form with Student Administration. The Student Complaint Form can either be emailed to admin@headwayeducation.com.au or given at Reception. If the student has any concerns around confidentiality, they may lodge the Student Complaint Form directly with the Compliance Manager.

Once a Student Complaint Form is received by Student Administration, the complaint is logged in the Complaints and Appeals Register. The Complaint will then be referred to the most appropriate Headway Education to Compliance Manager for investigation. Generally, Formal Complaint investigation will be managed by the Compliance Manager. If the Complaint is in relation to the Compliance Manager, it will be managed by the CEO.

- **Investigation of Formal Complaint**

The Compliance Manager will gather all evidence and conduct interviews as required. The investigation must commence within 10 business days of the complaint being lodged. The Compliance Manager needs to finalise an outcome within 20 business days of the Formal Complaint being lodged with Student Administration. If there are compelling reasons, the investigating officer may be required to provide an outcome of the investigation in a shorter time, in which case all parties will be notified in writing.

Where the investigating officer believes more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, the investigating officer must:

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

The Compliance Manager will need to provide a written report which includes the outcome, the evidence and other factors taken into account and their reasoning behind the outcome. This report will be uploaded against the student file and the outcome recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register.

- **Initial Outcome of Formal Complaint**

The Complainant will be informed of the outcome of the Formal Complaint investigation in writing within 5 business days of the report being finalised. The full details of the Compliance Manager report may not be disclosed to the Complainant depending on the circumstances and taking into account Privacy and confidentiality.

- **Internal Appeal and Review of Initial Outcome**

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the initial outcome, they can lodge an Appeal. The Appeal must be lodged in writing within 10 business days of the Complainant receiving the outcome in writing. The Appeal will be escalated to the level above the investigating officer for review.

For example, complaints investigated by the Compliance Manager will be reviewed by the CEO.

- **Outcome of Appeal and Internal Review**

The Appeal reviewer will need to provide a written report which includes the outcome, the evidence and other factors taken into account and their reasoning behind the outcome. This report will be uploaded against the student file and the Appeal outcome recorded in the Complaints and Appeals Register.

The internal appeal process should be completed within 15 business days of being lodged by the student. The student must be notified in writing of the internal appeal outcome within 5 business days from the date of appeal outcome is finalised

- **External Appeal and Review**

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Appeal and internal review, they can ask for an external review of the decision. The outcome from the external Appeal and review will be recorded in the student's file as well as the Complaints and Appeals Register.

6. External Appeal options:

Students can have the matter reviewed by Victoria Ombudsman and/or Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), national regulator for Australia's vocational education and training sector who will provide a final resolution.

Make a Complaint to ASQA using the link below.

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If this proceeds, the student and Headway Education will follow the process set out by the Victorian Ombudsman and ASQA. Headway Education will fully cooperate and provide all required evidence and documents.

Headway Education will implement the appeal process as soon as practicable after the decision is made. Headway Education will ensure that there is no charge for either the internal stage or external stage.

7. Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed once every two years or earlier, if required.