



## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **1. Purpose**

Purpose of this policy is to ensure that all current and prospective students at Highgate International College are given access to free, effective and fair complaints resolution and appeals processes.

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all current and prospective students at Highgate International College. Complaints may be related to the RTO, RTO staff, education agents, and any other external stakeholders that engage with international students (e.g., guest speakers, counsellors etc.) during their enrolment with Highgate International College.

### **3. Definitions**

**Appeal:** A request to review an adverse decision or an unfavourable outcome that may have arisen from any administrative, academic or disciplinary processes. An Appeal may be an Internal Appeal or an External Appeal

**Internal Appeal:** An appeal against a decision where the appeal is brought under Highgate International College policies and code of conducts or where there is a process for appeal within Highgate International College policies and procedures

**External Appeal:** An appeal to an external agency against a final decision of Highgate International College. Agencies may include the Ombudsman, the Privacy Commissioner, the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissions or Department of Education (In relation to ESOS Act)

**Final Decision:** A decision made by the member of staff authorised by the CEO to make that decision and communicated to the Complainant in writing when all Internal Appeal avenues within college's policy, procedures and codes have been exhausted

**Complainant:** A person lodging a complaint or an appeal

**Respondent:** A person responding to a complaint or an appeal

### **4. Legislative Context**

The legislative base for this policy is as follows:

- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)
- Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015
- The ESOS Act 2000
- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Regulations 2001
- The National Code 2018
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995

## 5. Policy: Complaints

This policy and procedure ensure that in the event that a student has a complaint concerning any matter in relation to Highgate International College, there is a process in place to ensure that the complaint can be resolved amicably. Students have access to a complaints procedure if they feel they have been unjustly treated, undermined, vilified or harassed in any circumstances. All the complaints will be treated in full confidence and neutrality, without any discrimination.

**5.1** A complaint can be lodged in writing by letter or by email or in person. A student can lodge their complaint with any member of staff but should preferably lodge their initial complaint with the Student Support Officer. The student must lodge their complaint with only one member of staff at Highgate International College. If the complaint needs to be escalated, the staff member will follow the complaint policy. A written record of the complaint will be kept on the student file. All formal complaints or appeals **must be lodged in writing** using Highgate International College's *Complaints and Appeals Form*.

**5.2** Highgate International College will investigate and respond to all complaints lodged by a student in a fair, transparent and professional manner. The process will commence **within 10 working days** of the formal lodgement of the complaint and supporting information and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process in the shortest possible time. If the nature of the complaint requires immediate action, that staff member receiving the complaint will forward the matter directly to the Campus Manager.

If the complaint is in regard to something of a more academic or study related nature, he or she may refer the matter to the Academic Manager without delay. In the event of this happening, the Academic Manager assumes the Campus Manager's duties of this policy for the incident.

**5.3** The students will have the opportunity to formally present their case at no cost, disadvantage or repercussions. The student may be accompanied and assisted by a support person to present their case at any relevant meeting if the student/complainant chooses to do so.

**5.4** Highgate International College treats all complaints in confidence and will seek the permission of the student before discussing the complaint with any party mentioned or named in the complaint. The student will be given a written statement of the outcome, including details of the reasons for the outcome.

**5.5** Only Highgate International College staff authorised by the CEO can respond to a complaint.

**5.6** Highgate International College shall respond to all complaints including student's dealings with the college, college's education agents or any related party the college has an arrangement with to deliver the overseas student's course or related services (e.g., work placement organisations) in a professional, fair and transparent manner.

**5.7** If the process results in a decision that supports the student, Highgate International College will immediately implement the decision or preventive actions required and advise the Student of the outcome.

**5.8** Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint may appeal the decision according to Highgate International College's Internal Appeal Process or choose to lodge an External Appeal with an appropriate agency if they wish to do so. If the student chooses to access Highgate International College's internal complaints and appeals processes, their enrolment will be maintained while the process is ongoing.

**5.9** If the student/complainant is not satisfied with Highgate International College's internal complaints handling and appeals process, Highgate International College shall, within 10 working days of concluding the internal review, advise the student/complainant their right to access an external complaint handling and appeals process. Highgate International College shall not charge any fee for such referral and provide the student/complainant the contact details of appropriate complaints handling and external appeals body (See Clause 9 below).

**5.10** Highgate International College will maintain the student's enrolment until the external complaints/appeals process is completed and has supported Highgate International College's decision to report. Highgate International College will wait for the outcome of the external process with consideration for student welfare as reporting a student for breaches may have serious consequences for the student's visa; it may result in cancellation.

**5.11** If any internal or external complaint or appeal process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the students, Highgate International College shall immediately implement such decision or recommendation, and undertake a quality review process to correct/improve the processes and prevent future occurrences.

**5.12** All the outcomes of a complaint or an appeal process, internal or external, will be notified to students in writing within seven (7) working days, and copies of correspondences kept on student file for record.

**5.13** Highgate International College shall maintain a Complaints and Appeals Register to record all instances of complaints and appeals and use this data for quality and continuous improvement purpose.

#### **5.14 Academic Review**

All students have the right to request an academic review. Where a student is dissatisfied with the outcome/result of assessment of an assignment and/or an examination, the student should discuss this informally in the first instance with their Trainer/Assessor.

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, a student may submit a request for a formal academic review in writing to the Academic Manager within twenty (20) working days of receiving the reviewed academic result. The request must outline why the student has requested a formal review of the result. The Academic Manager will seek to resolve a formal academic review through the appointment of an independent and impartial educator to investigate and make a recommendation. The Academic Manager will make the final decision on all formal academic reviews.

All parties involved in any formal academic reviews will be advised in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the decision within twenty (20) working days from the date the review was lodged. If a student's formal academic review is successful, the academic result will be amended.

Where a formal academic review is not upheld by the relevant Campus Manager, the student will be advised in writing of the option to access the appeals procedure.

## 6. Procedure: Complaints (See the Flow Chart Below)

1. Complainant gathers information and arranges to meet the Campus Manager for advice and information discussion;
2. The complainant fills and submits the complaint in writing using the **Complaints and Appeals Form** to Student Support Team
3. If a complainant not able to physically attend Highgate International College may choose to communicate electronically or telephonically with student support team
4. Student support team confirms the receipt of the complaint in writing to the complainant with five (5) working days of the date of receipt of the complaint and enters the complaint in the Complaints Register;
5. Student support team starts the process no later than ten (10) working days from the date of receipt of the complaint and calls upon respective parties for discussions/meetings;
6. All the evidence concerning the complaint are collected and reviewed;
7. Assistance of Student Support officer is sought if student welfare is a concern;
8. Student Support Team discusses the outcomes with the CEO and reaches a decision;
9. The complainant is advised of the decision in writing by the student support team;
10. If the decision is not accepted, an internal or external mediator is appointed with mutual consent;
11. If the mediation fails, external complaint options are advised and exercised within ten (10) working days;
12. Students are advised of the outcomes in writing;
13. All the documents are noted and filed in SMS; and
14. Student Support Team updates the Complaints and Appeals Register with the outcome.

## 7. Policy: Appeals

Highgate International College is committed to providing fair, safe and productive study environment to all its students. Consideration of appeals will be dealt with fairly, consistently, promptly, with sensitivity to all parties and in accordance with Highgate International College's policies and quality principles.

**7.1** Highgate International College will appoint an Appeals Committee comprising of at least three of the following senior staff members;

CEO  
Academic Manager  
Student Support Team

**7.2** All the appeals will be heard by the committee on a designated date. Minutes of the meeting will be taken and filed.

**7.3** Student enrolment will be maintained while the appeals process is ongoing

**7.4** Students will be advised of their right to access an External Appeal process with appropriate agencies if they are not satisfied with Highgate International College's internal Complaints and Appeals processes of conduct of such processes.

**7.5** If any internal or external appeal results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the students, Highgate International College shall immediately implement such decision or recommendation and undertake a quality review process to correct/improve the processes and prevent future occurrences.

**7.6** All the outcomes of an appeal process will be notified to students within seven (7) working days, and copies of correspondences kept on student file for record.

**7.7** Highgate International College shall maintain a Complaints and Appeals Register to record all instances of complaints and appeals and use this data for quality and continuous improvement purpose.

## **8. Procedure: Appeals (See the Flow Chart Below)**

1. The complainant arranges a meeting with the student support team and discusses appeals options
2. Online complainant or a complainant not able to physically attend Highgate International College may choose to communicate electronically or telephonically with student support team
3. The complainant fills and submits the appeal in writing using the Complaints and Grievance form to the Student Support Team (Note: The form can also be lodged with the CEO directly if the Student Support Team is not available)
4. Student Support Team enters the appeal in the Complaints and Appeals Register and forwards it to the CEO for action
5. Student Support Team confirms the receipt of the complaint in writing to the complainant with three (3) working days of the date of receipt of the complaint
6. Student support team notifies the Complaints and Appeals Committee and provides copies of the documents
7. Complaints and Appeals Committee convenes no later than ten (10) days from the date of receipt of the appeal
8. Case background and grounds for appeal are reviewed and discussed by the Complaints and Appeals Committee
9. Complaints and Appeals Committee reaches a Final Decision
10. The Final Decision is conveyed to the complainant in writing
11. If the decision is not accepted by the student, external complaint options are advised and exercised

## **9. External Complaints and Appeals**

There is an external complaint/appeal process available to students if they have exhausted the above college/internal complaint and appeal procedures and still feel unsatisfied.

International students who wish to lodge an external appeal can do so through the Overseas Students Ombudsman. See the Overseas Students Ombudsman website [www.oso.gov.au](http://www.oso.gov.au) or phone 1300 362 072. 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 training provider. Highgate International College agrees to be bound by the independent mediator's recommendations and the CEO, or their nominee, will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the mediator's report. Each complaint, grievance, appeal and its outcome will be recorded in writing and each party to the complaint is given a written statement of the appeal outcomes, including reasons for the decision.

Students may also seek legal redress through the usual court processes if they feel unsatisfied. They may also approach other agencies relevant to their specific situation;

- The Ombudsman
- The Privacy Commissioner
- The Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissions
- Department of Education and Training

Students may choose to contact the Department of Education and Training;

Department of Education and Training  
GPO Box 9880  
Melbourne VIC 2601 <http://education.gov.au/contact-department>

If the problem resolution fits within equal opportunity guidelines, it will be managed under Highgate International College's relevant policies and procedures. The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of individuals to act under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

## **10. Natural justice**

The principle of Natural Justice underpins the duty to act fairly includes two rules: the fair dealing rule and the no bias rule. This means that all parties must be given the opportunity to present their case, be fully informed about allegations and decisions made and have the right to be represented by another person.

In addition, a decision maker must have no personal interest, beyond the scope of their role in this process and must be unbiased. If the decision maker cannot meet these requirements, they must immediately withdraw from the process. The procedure shall have regard to the duration of an overseas student's stay in Australia. In order to expedite the process, students shall also have regard for this and not unduly interfere with the mediation agent or the procedure. Should interference by the student affect the normal process of events, Highgate International College shall not be held responsible for the consequences.

## **11. Responsibility**

The Student Support Team is responsible for maintaining the Complaints and Appeals Register.

The CEO

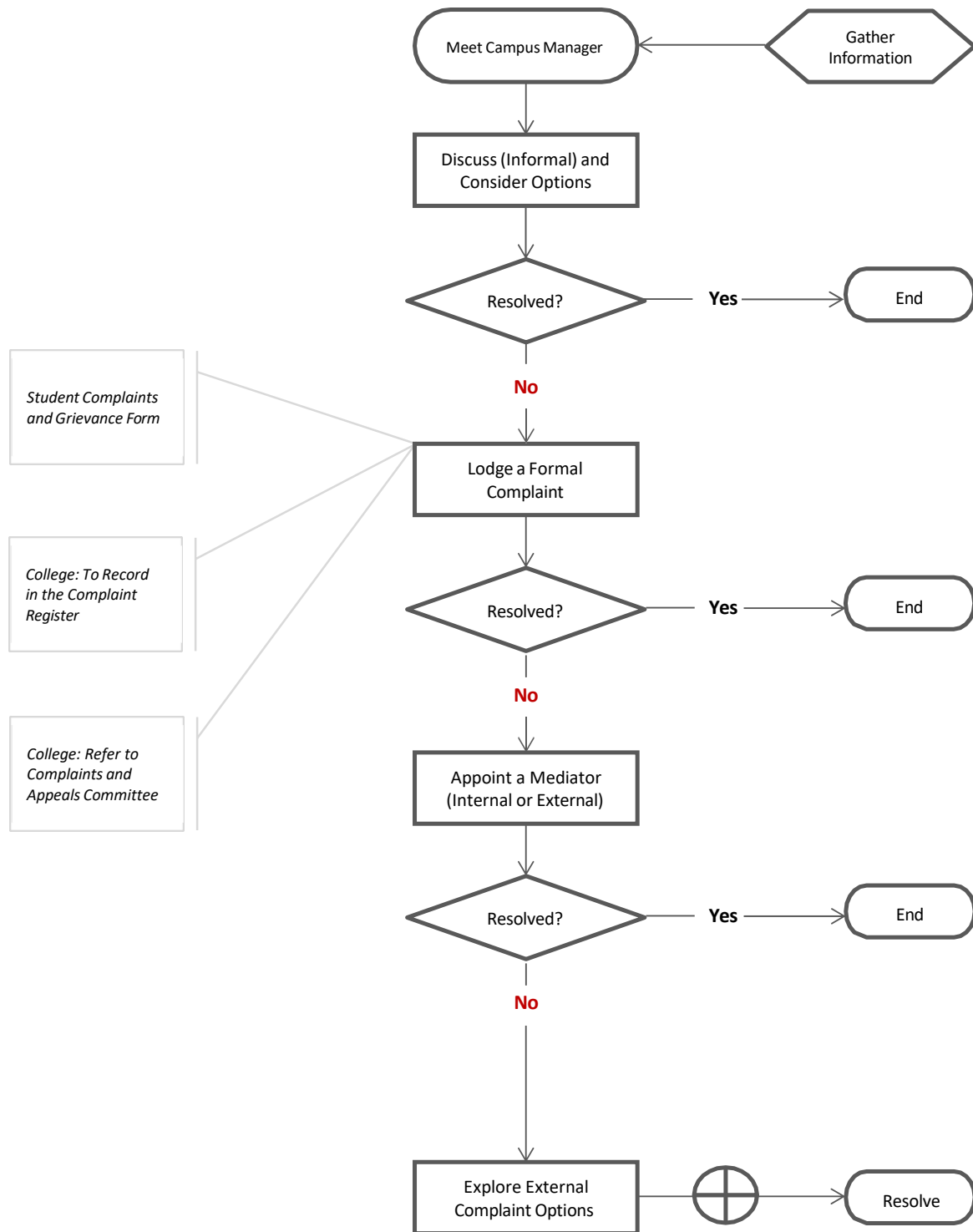
is responsible for effective implementation and management of this policy and procedure.

The Quality Compliance Manager is responsible for gathering and maintaining the data for QA purpose and making recommendations to the CEO for Corrective and Preventive actions.

The CEO has overall responsibility for the implementation and review of this policy.

Any complaints or breaches in relation to this policy should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer in person or by email to: [ceo@hic.edu.au](mailto:ceo@hic.edu.au)

## Student Complaint Procedure



## Student Appeal Procedure

