Policy -
Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures

Policy Number: VFH 04

References

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Victoria)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Victoria)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009
- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011
- Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Commonwealth), VET Provider Guidelines
- Victorian Guidelines for VET Providers (Victoria)

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ACUcom – VET Policies

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1. Background

ACUcom recognises its responsibility to provide a safe, harmonious, fair environment for all students and clients, and does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying or other inappropriate behaviour on its premises, or other places where students are on work placement or other ACUcom approved activities. In addition ACUcom is also responsible for providing a productive learning environment.

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the processes to grievance resolution.

This procedure relates to:

1) *academic* matters which may include, but are not limited to, issues such as progress with study within ACUcom, the curriculum and courses delivered, the process of assessment and assessment tasks, and/or the results and awards given for work: and

2) *non-academic* matters which may include but are not limited to issues such as harassment, vilification, discrimination, financial matters, fines and payments, application procedures, exclusions from events and facilities. It also includes grievances in relation to personal information that is held in relation to the student.

Both non-academic and academic grievances can only arise from decisions made by ACUcom.

The VET FEE HELP Academic and Non-Academic Grievance Policies along with this procedure provide students with the opportunity to access a fair, confidential and equitable internal grievance and appeal process. ACUcom welcomes student feedback as part of the continuous improvement focus of its Quality Management System.

Those involved in resolution of a student grievance will be guided by the following principles:

- **Confidentiality**: all parties to the grievance and those involved in the resolution process are bound by confidentiality with people only being informed on a need-to-know basis.

- **Natural Justice/Procedural Fairness**: in dealing with grievances, the rules of natural justice will be observed to ensure all parties receive fair, consistent and prompt treatment in order to avoid long standing negative consequences.

- **Timeliness**: grievances should be actioned as quickly as possible with an initial communication back to the Complainant within 5 working days of receiving the grievance. Every endeavour should be made to resolve grievances within a general framework of co-operation that emphasises prevention;

- **Support and advice**: complainants and respondents will have access to Student Counsellors or other support as appropriate.

- **Clear lines of responsibility**: grievances will be handled, as far as possible, within the confines of the relevant program structure with the support of Student Services staff.
Written explanations and decisions: all parties are entitled to these at each stage of the process as they relate to them

Focus: for the resolution is on issues rather than individuals

The steps outlined below provide details of informal and formal processes available to lodge a grievance. Student Services staff are available at any time to advise and assist in the process. You are entitled to have a support person or friend attend any meetings with you during the grievance process. However, the role of the support person is primarily to provide moral support, observe, take notes and assist in clarifying any specific points. It is important that in managing the grievance process ACUcom staff are confident that you are presenting and confirming your own opinions and facts relating to the grievance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to any person who is or has been enrolled or is seeking to enrol in an eligible VET unit or qualification of study with ACUcom, and who is or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP.

The policy applies to any such person regardless of the location of the campus at which the complaint/grievance arose, the person’s place of residence or mode of study.

This procedure deals with grievances that are related to both academic and non-academic matters and is to be used by staff in handling the grievances raised.

3. Policy

Informal Grievance Procedure

Prior to lodging a formal grievance, students are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the relevant staff member or Compliance Manager.

Formal Grievance Procedure

Please refer to complaints and appeals policy.
### 4. Procedures for VET FEE Help Grievance Resolution and Appeals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Supporting Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>VET FEE-HELP Grievance Resolution and Appeals owner</td>
<td>Director of ACUcom, Compliance Manager</td>
<td>VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance Policy, VET FEE-HELP Non-Academic Grievance Policy, VET FEE-HELP Grievance Form, VET FEE-HELP Grievance Appeal Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Informal grievance raised about an unfavourable and/or unreasonable decision. This may be verbal or in writing to the ACUcom staff member(s) involved. If a Complainant is uncomfortable with submitting a complaint direct to the involved staff member, proceed to step 5.</td>
<td>Complainant</td>
<td>VET FEE HELP Grievance Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Discuss the matter with the person(s) involved. If this is not possible, proceed to step 5.</td>
<td>Staff member who received the complaint</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Complaint resolved? If yes, end process</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Responsible Party</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lodgement of formal complaint to VET FEE-HELP Manager and/or Coordinator.</td>
<td>Complainant</td>
<td>VET FEE HELP Grievance Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Record and forward the complaint to relevant staff who will review and make a decision on outcome. Decision is to be made within 30 business days and communicated to the Complainant in writing and will include reasons and a full explanation for the decisions and actions taken.</td>
<td>VET FEE-HELP Coordinator and/or Manager Relevant Senior Manager</td>
<td>VET FEE HELP Grievance Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Resolution achieved? If yes, end process Nil</td>
<td>If no, continue to step 8.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8 | **Complainant**
|   | - VET FEE-HELP Grievance Appeal Form |

If this does not resolve the complaint, submit an appeal in writing by completing a VET FEE-HELP Grievance Appeal Form.

All documentation must be original documents (no photocopies or facsimiles will be accepted), and lodged within 30 days of notification of the decision.

Complainant must outline the decision and reasons for the appeal including any compassionate or compelling circumstances and may provide documentary evidence in support of their appeal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Within 15 business days of receiving the application form, consider the Grievance Appeal and provide the Director of ACUcom with a letter for the complainant detailing the reasons for the outcome and any actions to be taken.</td>
<td>VET FEE-HELP Review Panel</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Within a further 15 days countersign the decision and provide a copy to the Complainant.</td>
<td>Director of ACUcom</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Resolution achieved?</td>
<td>If yes, end process</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If no, continue to step 12.</td>
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12 | If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the ACUcom VET FEE-HELP Review Panel, they are then able to take their case to an external independent body.

Complainants may refer their appeal to the Ombudsman’s Office.

The Complainant must notify the VET FEE-HELP Coordinator within 5 business days of receiving their outcome notice if they intend to refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

| Complainant | Nil |
5. Definitions

For the purposes of this document the following applies:

The Act refers to the Higher Education Support Act 2003
**Student/s** refers to all persons enrolled in a unit of study who are, or would be entitled to VET- FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act; and

**Potential Students** refers to all persons seeking to enroll in a VET unit of study that meets the course requirements under sub-clause 45(1) of Schedule 1A of the Act and who are, or would be, entitled to VET- FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act.

**ACUcom** is vocational education and training department of Australian Catholic University.

### 7. Policy Review Cycle

7.1. Annually, if otherwise not mentioned in the “Review Date” section.

### 8. Supporting Documentation

1. Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA)
2. VET FEE HELP Guidelines
3. VET Provider Guidelines

### 9. Version History

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<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>October, 2014</td>
<td>New policy for Vet fee help</td>
<td>Sukh Sandhu</td>
<td>Debbie Wilson</td>
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