

202-PP-MEGA Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

Relevant Standards

SRTOs 2015: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6
The National Code 2018: 3.3.7, 6.1.6, 7.5.2, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4

Linked Documents

Students Complaints and Grievance Form
Student Handbook
Student Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

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

2. Scope

This policy applies to all current and prospective students of MEGA. Complaints may be related to MEGA, MEGA's staff, education agents, and any other external stakeholders that engage with international students (e.g. guest speakers, counsellors etc.) during their enrolment with MEGA.

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 MEGA policies and code of conducts or where there is a process for appeal within MEGA policies and procedures.

External Appeal: An appeal to an external agency against a final decision of MEGA. Agencies may include the Ombudsman, the Privacy Commissioner, the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissions or Department of Education and Training (in relation to ESOS Act 2000).

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

Complaint: A complaint is a specific concern about the provision of a course including teaching and facilities.

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 (SRTOs) 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 MEGA, 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 Services and Support Officer. The student must lodge their complaint with only one member of staff at MEGA. 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.

5.2 The student will have the opportunity to formally present their case at no cost. The student may be accompanied and assisted by a support person to present their case at any relevant meeting, if required.

5.3 MEGA 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 Admissions 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 Admissions Manager's duties of this policy for the incident.

5.4 MEGA 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 MEGA staff authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) can respond to a complaint.

5.6 If the process results in a decision that supports the student, MEGA will immediately implement the decision or preventive actions required and advise the student of the outcome.

5.7 Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint may appeal the decision according to MEGA'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 MEGA's internal complaints and appeals processes, their enrolment will be maintained while the process is ongoing.

5.8 MEGA will maintain the student's enrolment until the external complaints/appeals process is completed and has supported MEGA's decision to report. The external appeal must be undertaken within 20 plus 3 working days from the date of notification of the outcome. After which, MEGA will proceed with the decision to cancel the student's enrolment and report the student in PRISMS. MEGA will assist the student in the external appeal process if requested.

MEGA 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.

5.9 If any internal or external complaint or appeal process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the student, MEGA shall immediately implement such decision or recommendation and update all relevant staff of the outcome. A plan for regular monitoring on a weekly basis or fortnightly will be implemented and will be reported to the Academic Manager to review. Counselling for student will also be provided where needed to ensure the student is supported.

5.10 As part of continuous improvement, MEGA will undertake a quality review process to identify the root cause of the issues/events and to take corrective actions and improvement of processes to prevent future occurrence. The relevant policy(s) will be updated accordingly to reflect the improved processes.

All parties involved will be informed and a meeting will be convened to devise plans to implement in order to avoid future recurrence. Where needed, counselling and support will be provided to affected parties.

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

5.12 MEGA 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.

5.12 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 and 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) plus three (3) 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) plus three (3) 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 Academic Manager, the student will be advised in writing of the option to access the appeals procedure.

6. Procedure: Complaints

1. Complainant gathers information and arranges to meet the Academic Manager for advice and information discussion.
2. Online complainant or a complainant not able to physically attend MEGA may choose to communicate electronically or telephonically with the Admissions Manager.
3. If not resolved in Step 1, the complainant fills and submits the complaint in writing using the Complaints and Appeals Form to the Admissions Manager.
4. Admissions Manager confirms the receipt of the complaint in writing to the complainant with three (3) working days of the date of receipt of the complaint and enters the complaint in the Complaints Register.
5. Admissions Manager 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 evidences concerning the complaint are collected and reviewed.
7. Assistance of Student Services and Support Officer is sought if student welfare is a concern.
8. Admissions Manager discusses the outcomes with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and reaches a decision.
9. The complainant is advised of the decision in writing by the Admissions Manager or the Academic Manager.
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.
12. All the documents and notes are forwarded to Student Services and Support Officer for filing.
13. Admissions Manager updates the Complaints and Appeals Register with the outcome.

7. Policy: Appeals

MEGA 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 MEGA's policies and quality principles.

7.1 The CEO of MEGA or the authorised senior management will appoint an Appeals Committee comprising of at least three of the following senior staff members:

- CEO
- Academic Manager - MEGA VET
- Academic Manager – MEGA ELICOS
- Admissions Manager
- Student Services and Support Officer

7.2 All 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 MEGA'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 student, MEGA 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 MEGA 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

1. The complainant arranges a meeting with the Admissions Manager and discusses appeals options.
2. Online complainant or a complainant not able to physically attend MEGA may choose to communicate electronically or telephonically with the Admissions Manager.
3. The complainant fills and submits the appeal in writing using the Complaints and Grievance Form to the Student Services and Support Officer (Note: The form can also be lodged with the Admissions Manager directly if the Student Services and Support Officer is not available).
4. Student Services and Support Officer enters the appeal in the Complaints and Appeals Register and forwards it to the Admissions Manager for action.
5. Admissions Manager 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. Admissions Manager 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 and Appeal process available to students if they have exhausted MEGA's 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:

1. <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/complaints/international-student-complaints> to complete the online form 24 hours a day or

2. Phone 1300 362 072 as per operating hours below:

- Monday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Tuesday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Wednesday 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
- Thursday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm.

The times outlined above are Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST), or Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT) during daylight saving.

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.

MEGA 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
Overseas Students Ombudsman,
GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601
Tel: 1300 362 072 or Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
- The Privacy Commissioner
GPO Box 7011,
Sydney NSW 2001
Tel: 1800 472 679 or email: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au
<https://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/>
- Australian Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Tel: 1300 369 711
- Department of Fair Trading
NSW Fair Trading
PO Box 972
Parramatta 2124
Tel: 13 32 20.

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

Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601.

<http://education.gov.au/contact-department>

If the problem resolution fits within equal opportunity guidelines, it will be managed under MEGA'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, MEGA shall not be held responsible for the consequences.

11. Timeframes for Complaints and Appeals

All complaints and appeals must be lodged in writing, email or in person (staff will assist in completing the form) within 20 (twenty) plus 3 working days of the issues occurring or upon notification of the initial decision. The complaints and appeals form is available on our website or from our reception front desk.

The CEO or the delegated Management staff may allow a complaint or appeal to be lodged after the above timeframe. The elapsed timeframe as well as the situation will be considered and taken into account before deciding if the complaint or appeal will be allowed to be heard.

Where MEGA considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, MEGA will:

- inform the student (complainant or appellant) in writing stating the reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required; and
- will provide regular updates keep the student informed regularly i.e. on a fortnightly basis.

12. Responsibility

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

The Admissions Manager 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 Chief Executive Officer (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@mega.edu.au.

Revision History:

Version No:	Date	Description of modifications	Staff responsible
1	Dec 2017	First Review and alignment of PP to new National Code 2018 and SRTOs 2015.	CEO
2	Jan 2018	New PP approved	CEO
3	Oct 2018	Review of Policy and Procedures and change Academic Coordinator to Academic Manager	CEO
4	Jul 2023	Review of PP	CEO
5	November 2023	Review of PP for internal audit by RTO Advance	CEO
6	March 2024	Update PP per audit feedback on clause 5.8, 5.9, 5.10 and 11	CEO
7	July 2024	Review of PP after Internal Audit by RTO Advanced	CEO
8	January 2025	Review of PP	CEO
9	August 2026	Review of PP and replace Campus Director with Admissions Manager and removal of Admissions Officer Clause 7.1	CEO