

STUDENT GRIEVANCE HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

(ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC GRIEVANCES)

1. Overview

Astra Institute of Higher Education (“ASTRA” or “the Institute”) is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system, which is easily accessible to all complainants.

The Institute aims to:

- i. develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works;
- ii. set in place a grievance handling system that is student focussed and helps the Institute to prevent grievances from recurring;
- iii. ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality;
- iv. conduct the assessment of grievances and appeals in a professional, fair and transparent manner;
- v. ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against nor victimised; and
- vi. ensure that there is a consistent response to grievances.

A grievance can be defined as a person’s expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the Institute’s services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters, such as:

- i. the enrolment, induction/orientation process;
- ii. the quality of education provided;
- iii. academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study;
- iv. an issue about one of the Institute’s education agents or anyone that the Institute has an arrangement with to deliver our courses or any related services;
- v. handling of personal information and access to personal records;
- vi. the way someone has been treated, including harassment or discrimination; or
- vii. an issue about the campus or facilities.

These grievance procedures are designed to ensure that the Institute responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

The Institute's 'Student Grievance Flowchart' is attached to this policy.

2. Policy coverage

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term "complainant" applies to both current students of the Institute and persons seeking to enrol with the Institute.

Complainants are entitled to access the grievance procedures set out in this policy regardless of the location of the campus of the Institute at which the grievance has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence.

The Institute will respond to any grievance or appeal that a student may have regarding their dealings with the Institute or with the Institute's education agents or anyone that the Institute has an arrangement with to deliver its courses or any related services.

3. Before an issue becomes a formal grievance

Complainants are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. The Student Support Officer is available to assist the resolution of issues at this level.

If your complaint is academic in nature, please speak to your lecturer, tutor, or Course Coordinator. Complainants may raise an informal grievance concerning non-academic matters by contacting Administration in person or by phoning 1800 027 872, and asking to speak to the Student Support Officer or via email directly to the Student Support Officer: support@astra.edu.au. Even though it is not mandatory for complainants to raise a grievance informally, it is highly recommended.

If a complainant is unable to resolve an informal grievance informally, or remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they should submit a formal grievance in writing to the Registrar: registrar@astra.edu.au as per the procedure described below at 4. Procedure.

3.1 Review of Decision

If your complaint relates to a decision regarding credit for prior learning; an assessment outcome; academic misconduct; course progression; deferment, suspension, cancellation or withdrawal from a course; student misconduct; or the calculation of a refund you may request a Review of Decision under the relevant policy before it becomes a formal grievance.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their request for Review of a Decision, they may submit a formal grievance in writing to the Registrar: registrar@astra.edu.au as per the procedure described below at 4. Procedure.

4. Procedure

This procedure can be utilised by complainants to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum, and awards in a course of study. Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all other matters including grievances in relation to personal information that the Institute holds in relation to an individual.

During all stages of this procedure the Institute will take steps to ensure that:

- i. the complainant and any respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against;
- ii. the complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case and each party to a grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings (either physically or virtually);
- iii. a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided if so requested by the complainant or a respondent;
- iv. where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, the Institute will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome.

A complainant shall have access to all stages of this grievance procedure at no cost.

4.1 Stage one - formal grievance

All formal grievances must be submitted in writing marked to the attention of the Registrar: registrar@astra.edu.au.

If there is a matter of urgency or time-sensitive issue, the Registrar must be informed at the time of submitting the grievance. The Registrar will then take steps necessary to expedite the matter accordingly.

Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged in writing within five working days. The grievance handling process will commence upon receipt of the formal grievance and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.

The Registrar, or their nominee, will, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve.

Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request with the complainant. When such clarification occurs verbally the complainant or any respondent may ask another person to accompany them.

The Registrar, or their nominee, will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and will provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within 20 working days. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance.

In the case where circumstances prevent a decision being made within 20 working days, the complainant shall be notified in writing by the Registrar'.

4.2 Stage two - internal appeal

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with the CEO: ceo@astra.edu.au (who is senior to the original decision maker) within 20 working days of receiving notification of the outcome of their formal grievance.

The CEO will appoint an appropriate person or committee to consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within ten working days. In the event that the formal grievance lodged in Stage one has been made against the CEO the appeal will be handled by the Chair of the Board of Directors or their delegate (who will not be the CEO).

Where possible such consultations should take the form of verbal interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to support them during these interviews.

Following the consultation, the CEO, or their nominee, will provide a written report to the complainant advising further steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within 10 working days of concluding the appeal. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

4.3 Stage three - external appeal (all students)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal, then the student may request an external review of the grievance through the Resolution Institute Student Mediation Scheme. Complainants can contact the Resolution Institute directly as follows:

Address: Suite 602, Level 6, Tower B, Zenith Centre, 821-843 Pacific Highway
Chatswood NSW 2067

Phone: 02 9251 3366

Freecall: 1800 651 650

Fax: 02 9251 3733

Email: infoaus@resolution.institute

Costs of the external review will be borne by the Institute.

ASTRA will maintain an annual subscription to the Resolution Institute in order to enable access for students to the Student Mediation Scheme, free of cost to the student.

4.4 Stage three - external appeal (international students)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal and they are an international student then they may lodge an external appeal by contacting the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman offers a free and independent service for international students who have a complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their education provider. International students may refer to the Commonwealth Ombudsman website <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students> or phone 1300 362 072 for more information.

International students should note that the Commonwealth Ombudsman cannot look into complaints about:

- the academic merit of a student's grade or mark for an assessment task;
- bullying, harassment or behaviour of other students;
- discrimination;
- privacy;
- quality of teaching;
- qualifications and experience of teachers;
- resources or equipment available at SHEA; or
- buildings and facilities provided by SHEA.

In these circumstances international students should avail themselves of another avenue of external appeal as detailed in this policy.

4.5 Outcomes from an external appeal

The Institute agrees to be bound by any recommendations arising from an external appeal and the CEO will ensure that any decision or recommendation in favour of a student is implemented immediately and/or take the preventive or corrective action required by the decision and advise the student of that action.

5. Further action

If a grievance still remains unresolved, after the external dispute resolution process, the complainant may decide to refer the matter to an external agency such as:

Anti-Discrimination Board NSW

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/lodge-complaint-anti-discrimination-nsw>

NSW Fair Trading

<https://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/help-centre/online-tools/make-a-complaint>

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

<https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints>

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 take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

6. Enrolment status

Where a current student chooses to access this policy and procedure, the Institute will maintain that person's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

7. Record keeping and confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the Registrar. These records will be maintained at Level 3, 16-18 Wentworth Street Parramatta, NSW 2150.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by the Institute's *Privacy and Personal Information Procedures*.

8. Approval, publication and training

This Policy and Procedure will be made available to students and persons seeking to enrol with the Institute through publication in the [Student Hub](#) and on the Institute's website (astra.edu.au).

For the purposes of communicating to training staff, this Policy and Procedure will be included in the [Staff Hub](#) and form part of the staff induction process (which will be facilitated by the Human Resources Manager or CEO).

9. Related documents

- Credit for Prior Learning Policy and Procedure
- Privacy and Personal Information Procedures
- Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure
- Student Assessment Policy and Procedure
- Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures
- Student Deferment, Suspension and Cancellation of Study Policy and Procedure
- Student Progression and Exclusion Policy and Procedure
- Student Withdrawal and Refund Policy
- Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure

10. Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Board of Directors	18 August 2021	Document creation
1.1	Board of Directors	13 October 2021	Added subscription to Resolution Institute, updated definition of grievance, administrative updates
1.2	CEO	21 April 2021	Administrative update at '3. Before an issue becomes a formal grievance'.
1.3	CEO	26 May 2022	Addition of 'Appendix 1: Grievance handling procedures'.
1.4	CEO	28 June 2022	Addition of 'Appendix 2: Student Grievance Flowchart'
1.5	Board of Directors	05 July 2023	Amendment to '3. Before an issue becomes a formal grievance. Revised 'Student Grievance Flowchart' added.
1.6	CEO	22 December 2023	Adjustment to Stage 2 when grievance is about the CEO Updates to external appeal and further action sections Adjustments to flowchart

Document owner: CEO

Listed: Public document

STUDENT GRIEVANCE HANDLING FLOWCHART

