

VSL Academic and Non-Academic Grievance policy and procedure

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to provide information and outline the determination for proceeding with an academic and/or non-academic grievance with Meridian vocational college (MVC)

Policy Outline:

MVC is committed to providing an effective, efficient, timely, fair and confidential academic grievance and non-academic grievances handling procedures for all VSL students.

and

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for implementation of this policy procedure and ensuring that all staff is fully trained in its operation and students and complainants are made aware of its availability.

Definitions:

Academic Grievances	Grievances relating to those matters which relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a VET course of study.
Non-academic Grievances	Grievances relating to those matters which <u>do not</u> relate to student progress, assessment course content or awards in a course and include complaints in relation to personal information that MVC holds in relation to the student. Non-academic grievances come from decisions made by MVC. Non-academic grievances cover issues such as harassment, vilification, discrimination, financial matters, fines and payments, application procedures, exclusions from events and facilities.
Complainant	Students who have lodged an academic complaint with MVC.
Respondent	The person or committee whose decision on an academic or non-academic matter is the subject of the student complaint.

Procedure:

Informal Grievance Procedure

MVC recommends students speak to their Trainer/Assessor in the first instance to resolve any issues of concern. If a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached, the student can then approach the program manager responsible for the qualification.

If no resolution can be reached, the students have the option to lodge a formal grievance.

Formal Grievance Procedure

Stage One – Formal Grievance/Complaint

(A = Academic related and B = Non-Academic related)

1A: Formal academic grievances should be submitted in writing to the RTO Manager of the College including any supporting documentation (if applicable). If the matter is very serious and confidential, the student may wish to make an appointment with the RTO manager to give notice of the complaint.

1B: Formal non-academic grievances should be submitted in writing to the RTO Manager of the College including any supporting documentation (if applicable). If the matter is very serious and confidential, the student may wish to make an appointment with the RTO Manager to give notice of the complaint.

2A: The complainant will receive notification in writing of acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint within one to three business days from the RTO Manager.

2B: The complainant will receive notification in writing of acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint within one to three business days from the RTO Manager.

3A: Upon receiving written notification with supporting evidence, the RTO Manager will send to the Compliance manager who will immediately log the complaint in the grievance/complaint register and forwards it to CEO within 1 working day.

3B: Upon receiving written notification with supporting evidence, the Compliance manager immediately logs the complaint in the grievance/complaint register and forwards it to Chief Executive Officer within 1 working day.

4A: Within 10 working days of the receipt of a formal complaint the RTO Manager will consider the information provided and may contact the student and/or Trainer/Assessor/staff members if further information is required. The RTO Manager in consultation with the CEO shall, if the individual sees fit, make a decision on the matter and advise the student and Trainer/Assessor/staff members (as applicable) in writing the actions/plans and details of the reasons for the outcome within 20 working days of the complaint being lodged. A copy of written outcome is forwarded to the CEO.

4B: Within 10 working days of the receipt of a formal complaint the RTO Manager in consultation with the CEO will consider the information provided and may contact the student and/or Trainer/Assessor/staff members if further information is required. The Student Support Officer shall, if the individual sees fit, make a decision on the matter and advise the student and Trainer/Assessor/staff members (as applicable) in writing the actions/plans and details of the reasons for the outcome within 10 working days of the decision being made. A copy of written outcome is forwarded to the CEO.

If the outcome is in favour of the student, the College immediately implements any decision or corrective/preventative actions required and commences continuous improvement process.

If the outcome is not in favour of the student, the student will choose either to withdraw the complaint or proceed further. If the student proceeds, he/she must, within 5 working days of the written outcome, request the complaint be referred to the CEO.

The RTO Manager refers the complaint to the Chief Executive Officer by the next working day. If the student does not proceed and withdraws the complaint, the RTO Manager proceeds with MVC's decision.

Stage Two – Internal Review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage One they may lodge an appeal in writing with the CEO.

The complainant's appeal will be determined by the CEO of MVC.

The CEO will conduct all necessary consultations with the complainant and other relevant persons and make a determination of the appeal. The complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome of their appeal, including the reasons for the decision, within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.

Should a decision not be reached within 10 working days, the complainant will be advised in writing of all matters relating to the progression of the appeal.

If the outcome is in favour of the student, the College will immediately implement any decision or corrective/preventative actions required and commences the continuous improvement process.

For international students: - If the outcome is not in favour of the student, the student will choose either to withdraw the appeal or access an independent external appeal process conducted by the Overseas Student Ombudsman (OSO). If the student proceeds, he/she must contact the OSO within 5 working days of the written outcome and inform the CEO.

For students with VET Student Loans: If the outcome is not in favour of the student, the student will choose either to withdraw the appeal or access an independent external appeal process conducted by the VET Student Loans Ombudsman.

For all other students if the outcome is not in favour of the student, the student can either choose to withdraw the appeal or make contact with MVC's training regulator, Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

If the student does not proceed and withdraws the complaint, CEO proceeds with the College's decision

Stage Three – External Appeal

Students with VET Student Loans

The VET Student Loans Ombudsman can investigate complaints from students regarding the VET Student Loans program.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage Two in regard to an issue with VET Student Loans he/she may request that the matter be referred to the VET Student Loans Ombudsman on 1300 362 072.

MVC will give due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review within 10 working days of receipt of the external body's report. The recommendations will be presented to Compliance manager for consideration. An action plan will be put in place by Compliance manager for the rectification of the matter in conjunction with the VET Student Loans Ombudsman recommendations and applicable timeframes.

Finalisation of the matter will be reported as required.

Note: if more than 60 days is required to finalise the issue, MVC will keep the complainant informed in writing and provide further regular updates in writing.

For All Other Students

If the student is unable to resolve the matter with MVC, students may contact Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). The complaint can be submitted via ASQA's online complaints portal (<https://asqaconnect.asqa.gov.au/>).

ASQA is not a consumer protection agency and cannot act as an advocate for individual students.

Appeal Against an Official Decision made by the College

1. Student lodges an appeal against an official decision made by MVC by submitting an Appeal Form to the Student Services Officer | RTO Manager within 20 working days of receiving the notification.

Note: Students with VET Student Loans are provided 28 days to access the appeals process before the cancellation of their enrolment.

- Staff responsible as per the type of appeal (CEO/RTO Manager) commences and finalises investigation within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged. Staff will consider the information provided (if applicable) and information about the student in the Student Management System and may contact the student if further information is required. Once the outcome has been finalised the student is informed in writing.

Types of Appeal	Person responsible
Assessment Marks	RTO Manager
Course Progress	RTO Manager
Non-payment	CEO
Misbehaviour	CEO
Course Credit (RPL/RCC/CT)	RTO Manager
Refusal of Leave of Absence	CEO
Refusal of Refund	CEO
Late Enrolment	RTO Manager

- If the outcome is in favour of the student**, MVC immediately implements any decision or corrective/preventative actions required and commences continuous improvement process. RTO Manager keeps a record of the appeal as evidence of the communication to the student.

If the outcome is not in favour of the student, the student will choose either to withdraw the appeal or access external appeal process. If student proceeds, he/she must contact the external reviewer within 5 working days of the written outcome and inform the CEO.

If student does not proceed and withdraws the appeal, RTO Manager proceeds with the MVC's decision and keeps a record.

- If the outcome of the external appeal is in favour of the student, the MVC immediately implements any decision or corrective/preventative actions required and commences continuous improvement process. The RTO Manager keeps a record of the appeal as evidence of the communication to the student.

If the outcome is not in favour of the student, RTO Manager proceeds with the MVC's decision and keeps a record in the student management system.

General Guidelines

- General principles applying to all stages of this grievance procedure which will be adhered to by MVC are:
 - The complainant and respondent will have the opportunity to present their case at each stage of the procedure.
 - The complainant and the respondent have the option of being accompanied/assisted by a third person (such as a family member, friend or counsellor) if they so desire.

- The complainant and the respondent will not be discriminated against or victimised.
 - At all stages of the process, discussions relating to complaints, grievances and appeals will be recorded in writing. Reasons and a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of this procedure will be provided to the complainant and/or the respondent.
 - Records of all grievances will be kept for a period of five years. These records will be kept strictly confidential and stored within the office of the CEO.
 - The complainant shall have appropriate access to these records.
 - The RTO Manager is responsible for maintaining/updating the complaints register.
 - A complainant shall have access to this internal grievance procedure and external grievance procedure without charge.
 - A complainant may contact MVC and speak with the RTO Manager for progress updates at any time. Should the RTO Manager be unavailable, the RTO Manager will be available to discuss any matter relating to the progress complaint.
- If MVC considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise student complaint or appeal, the College will inform student in writing the reasons as why more than 60 calendar days are required and will regularly update student on the progress of the matter.
 - **Nothing in this policy and procedure inhibits student’s rights to pursue other legal remedies under Federal or State law. Students are entitled to resolve any dispute by exercising their rights to other legal remedies.**
 - MVC will maintain the student’s enrolment while the complaints and appeals process are ongoing.
 - Complainant must also enrol his/her course during the complaint and/or appeal process. If the complainant is under the age of 18, the parent or guardian must also be present.
- The student will have access and receive the outcome of only one external appeal process before the College may report the student to the relevant authorities. Hence the College does not have to await the outcome of multiple external appeals processes which the student may wish to access.

Withdrawal of Grievance/Complaint or Appeal

The student may withdraw a grievance/complaint or appeal at any time during the resolution process. The student must make the withdrawal in writing and submit it to the relevant staff member.

Alternatively, the student may send an email to the relevant staff member using his/her email address that is registered with the College:

The RTO Manager will send a written acknowledgement of the withdrawal to the student. The matter will be concluded and deemed to be resolved.

Approval Authority:

This document is approved by the Compliance manager as indicated with the electronic control copy maintained within the Quality Management System and as such all hard copies need to be verified.

Documents Referenced:

- VET Student Loans Manual for Providers