1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Purpose /Intent:

West Coast Institute (WCI) is committed to continuous improvement by providing students with a mechanism for lodging grievances, complaints or appeals with respect to successful resolution or positive outcomes for prospective and domestic students in VET FEE-HELP enabled courses. WCI will ensure prospective and domestic student grievances, complaints and appeals are dealt with in a timely manner.

Availability

All students and prospective students are provided with access to West Coast Institute's VET FEE-HELP Grievances, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure via West Coast Institute's website. www.wcit.wa.edu.au. Reference is also made in the West Coast Institute Student Diary.

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

1.2 Policy Objectives:

The objectives of this policy are to:

- ensure that procedural fairness is applied to all parties involved in a grievance;
- ensure that decisions are impartial, transparent and capable of review;
- minimise personal and organisational dysfunction arising from unresolved grievances;
- ensure prospective and domestic student complaints, grievances and appeals are dealt with in a timely manner and in accordance with the principles of fairness and equity;
- ensure complaints, grievances and appeals are managed consistent with the requirements of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education VET FEE-HELP Guidelines 2013 and the Higher Education Support Act 2003;
1.3 **Scope:**

This policy applies, without exclusion to all West Coast Institute staff dealing with VET FEE-HELP enabled courses, prospective students and those students who are or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA).

1.4 **Definitions: (for a full list of definitions please see section 5)**

2. **POLICY PRINCIPLES:**

Responses to formal grievances and complaints lodged are coordinated by the VET FEE-HELP Administrator within West Coast Institute.

All complainants associated with VET FEE-HELP enabled courses making a complaint, grievance or appeal are provided with the opportunity to present their case at each stage of the grievance process.

All grievances are managed fairly, equitably and as efficiently as possible, at no cost to the complainant.

That the complainant and any respondent is not victimised or discriminated against at any of the stages set out in this policy, nor as a result of a grievance being raised.

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;

Where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, the Organisation will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome;

If the grievance is resolved, the VET FEE-HELP Administrator or Portfolio Manager will provide a formal written response to the complainant outlining the agreed outcome to the grievance or complaint or appeal and forward a brief report or copy of the outcome with accompanying documents to the Policy & Improvement Co-Ordinator.

**Student Privacy**

Aggrieved student/s must be identified for formal proceedings to commence under the grievance policy and procedure. West Coast Institute acknowledges and respects the privacy of students. It is required under the Privacy Act 1988 to comply with the Information Privacy Principles in respect of the collection, use and disclosure of personal information from individuals. Records of all grievances, applications for review of decisions and outcomes of the grievance process are kept for a period of five years. These records are kept strictly confidential and stored securely at West Coast Institute with the Corporate Information Unit. All students are able to access their personal information held by West Coast Institute under the Freedom of Information Act 1982.
Grievance Procedures

The procedure for the submitting a grievance, complaint or appeal relating to a VET FEE-HELP enabled course is as follows:

a) The complainant may provide a written complaint with any relevant supporting documentation if applicable at any of the Organisation’s Customer service centres.

b) The Customer Service Centre must ensure the complaint is received by the VET FEE-HELP Administrator within one day of submission. If the initial complaint or grievance is initially conveyed verbally, the receiving Customer Service Centre officer must refer the initial complaint or grievance in writing to the VET FEE-HELP Administrator.

c) The VET FEE-HELP Administrator must acknowledge receipt of complaint or grievance to the complainant within two working days from date of submission. A VET FEE-HELP log of complaints, grievances and appeals must be maintained to keep track of the response and duration of the complaint, grievance or appeal submitted.

d) The VET FEE-HELP Administrator will consider and investigate the grievance, complaint or appeal within 14 days of the date of being submitted by the complainant and request any further clarification and documentation from the Portfolio delivery area and complainant to resolve the matter or to reconsider any original academic or non academic decision.

e) The complainant may be requested to meet with VET FEE-HELP Administrator and/or the Portfolio Manager of the delivery area to be interviewed or conduct a meeting to determine the facts of the matter and, if possible, resolve the complaint; discuss the nature or specifics of the grievance, complaint or appeal within the 14 days of the date of the grievance, complaint or appeal being submitted by the complainant.

f) The complainant may provide further relevant documentation to support their complaint, grievance or appeal to the matter or academic/non academic decision or issue upon request from the investigating person from the Organisation, to be provided as requested or submitted during 14 day investigation period of the complaint or grievance.

g) The complainant and/or respondent has the right to have a third party support such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person) present at any meetings with the Organisation.

h) All discussions and meetings between complainant and Organisation must be documented appropriately.

i) If the application is successful, and the complaint, grievance or is resolved, the VET FE-HELP Administrator or Portfolio Manager will provide a formal written response to the complainant outlining the agreed outcome to the grievance or complaint or appeal and forward a brief report or copy of the outcome with accompanying documents to the Policy & Improvement Coordinator.
j) VET FEE-HELP Administration shall formally advise the complainant of the outcome of the application within 14 days from date of submission stating the reasons for the decision.

k) Relevant academic and non-academic staff will be trained so as to understand the key elements of the VET FEE-HELP Grievances, Complaints and Appeals (Academic and Non-Academic) policy.

Review of a Decision

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint or grievance then they may lodge an appeal with Managing Director of the Organisation. The VET FEE-HELP Administrator or Portfolio Manager will provide a report in writing within 3 working days to the Managing Director, including a copy of the complainant’s written grievance and the written response from the staff member or where the complaint or grievance is directed at the Organisation or the relevant senior staff member.

The Managing Director will request the Complaints Review Committee to convene, and advise the complainant and respondent of the final outcome.

The Complaints Review Committee may:

(a) uphold and confirm the decision;

(b) vary the decision; or

(c) set the decision aside and substitute a new decision.

The complainant must be notified of the outcomes of the Review in writing within 14 days of the original decision by the Complaints Review Committee. This notice shall also advise the applicant that they have the right to apply to the TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) within 28 days of a decision for a review of that decision and will provide the contact details as follows:

If you wish to further appeal this decision you may lodge an appeal with the within 28 days from this written notice. The review of a decision can be found through TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) or on the TDA website: www.tda.edu.au, or contact TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) at:

National Secretariat
TAFE Directors Australia
Sydney Institute of TAFE NSW
Turner Hall Ultimo College BG.01
731-695 Harris Street ULTIMO
P O BOX 707 Broadway NSW 2007
Telephone: (02) 9217 3180

The Organisation agrees to be bound by any recommendations arising from the review by TAFE Directors Australia (TDA). The Managing Director will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report from TAFE Directors Australia (TDA).
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.

3. RELATED DOCUMENTS

3.1 Governing Documents:

VET GUIDELINES 2013

3.2 Related Policies:

Confidentiality of Personal Information Policy

3.3 Related Procedures and Forms:

N/A

3.4 Supporting/Related Documents:

AS ISO 10002 – 2006 Guidelines for Complaint Handling in Organisations
Australian Quality Training Framework Standards 1.1, 2.1, 2.6, 3.1
Customer Service Charter (West Coast Institute)
Report on the second survey of complaint handling in the Western Australian public sector – Recommendations (Ombudsman of Western Australia)
Righting the Wrongs – Complaints management in the Western Australian Public Sector (Auditor General of Western Australia)
National Complaints Code
4. ACCOUNTABILITIES

4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation:

General Manager, Training and Workforce Development

Corporate Executive Committee

Manager, Student Services

5. DEFINITIONS

Academic Grievance – grievance/s which relates to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study.

Complaint - an expression of dissatisfaction regarding an established procedure, which affects the quality of services offered by the organisation. Complaints are managed through the Policy & Improvement section.

Complainant - In relation to non-academic grievances, the term “complainant” applies to both current students of the Organisation and persons as in prospective students seeking to enrol with the Organisation.

Grievance - a serious problem or concern of an academic or non-academic nature raised by an enrolled student or prospective student, which is believed by that student, to disadvantage them in the course of their study at West Coast Institute.

Non-Academic Grievance – grievance/s which do not relate to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study. Non-Academic Grievances includes complaints in relation to the following:

- discrimination
- unfairness and injustice
- vilification
- sexual harassment
- other forms of harassment
- student amenities
- complaints in relation to personal information that the provider holds in relation to the student
- general complaints including dissatisfaction with services
- complaints about financial matters
- fines and payments, application procedures, exclusions from events and facilities and the use or misuse of personal information
West Coast Institute (WCI), “the Organisation” – refers to West Coast Institute, including all its campuses, departments, centres, business units, corporate units and delivery centres.

VET FEE-HELP – VET FEE-HELP is an income contingent loan scheme to assist eligible students undertaking certain Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses of study (diploma, advanced diploma, graduate certificate and graduate diploma courses) with an approved VET provider, to pay for all or part of their tuition costs.

6. REVISION HISTORY

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7. KEYWORDS


8. POLICY APPROVAL

Endorsed: Managing Director Date: