PURPOSE

This policy provides information relating to grievances and appeals for students and persons who are or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance (HESA – Schedule 1A and VET Guidelines – Chapter 5). The grievance and appeals process is at no cost to the complainant, and is applicable regardless of the location of the TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech training centre at which the grievance or appeal has arisen, the complainant’s place of residence or the mode in which they study.

SCOPE

This policy applies to both students and persons seeking to enrol that are, or would be, entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under Clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act. This policy relates to matters including, but not limited to:

- Academic misconduct
- Enrolment determinations
- Student progress
- Assessment
- Awards and grades
- Learning materials
- Poor teaching
- Course delivery
- Administrative errors
- Teaching facilities
- Complaints in relation to the student’s academic records.

CONDITIONS

The purpose of an internal appeals process is to have unfavourable decisions heard and/or reconsidered by relevant staff within TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech.

Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal appeals process, they have the right to take their case to an external independent body.

The purpose of an external appeal process is to review the decision made by TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech to determine the fairness of the decision in line with TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech’s policies and procedures. TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech will give due consideration to any recommendation made as a result of the external review.

DEFINITIONS

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, including supporting others in cheating, plagiarism, electronic plagiarism, unauthorised collusion and falsifying information.

Apel

Request by a complainant to have a matter heard and/or re-considered after receiving an unfavourable decision.

Appeals Panel

A panel formed to hear VET FEE-HELP academic appeals. The panel will comprise three members of the TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech Academic Board including the Chair (ex officio) and two other members: one internal and one external, both of whom have had no previous involvement in the matter under appeal.
Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances

Circumstances considered to be beyond the control of the complainant and may include:

- Serious injury (a medical certificate is provided)
- Bereavement of close family members (a death certificate may be provided)
- Major political upheaval or natural disaster in their home country
- A traumatic experience (i.e. car accident; witnessing a crime or being involved in a crime).

Complainant

A student or person seeking to enrol that is, or would be, entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act, who makes a complaint to TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech.

External Appeal

Appeal heard by a party external to TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech.

Grievance

A cause of dissatisfaction where the complainant has an honest belief, based on reasonable grounds, that an academic decision and/or action, an administrative decision and/or action, or the behaviour of another student or staff member is unfair and/or unreasonable.

Internal Appeal

Appeal heard by staff within TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech.

TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech

The Commonwealth Government loan scheme to assist eligible students to pay their VET tuition fees, and can cover all or part of the student's tuition fees for VET unit/s of study which form part of a VET course of study. These must be undertaken with a body which is approved as a VET Provider under Schedule 1A of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA).

1.0 General information

- As a VET provider, TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech must have grievance procedures to deal with academic complaints by students and persons seeking to enrol at TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech, who are or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance
- TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech will publish and make publicly available up-to-date details of the grievance and appeals procedures via its website
- The VET FEE-HELP Co-ordinator will provide full training to relevant staff in the application of this policy and its related procedures
- TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech will communicate related procedures to relevant staff through staff email broadcasts and via the TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech’s staff intranet
- VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievances and Appeals should be submitted using QF413A VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance and Appeal
- Complaints are processed in accordance with TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech procedure QP105 Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions
- Complainants may provide feedback on products and services offered by TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech in accordance with TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech procedures QP105 Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions and QP108 Stakeholder Feedback
- Appeals regarding Academic Misconduct matters are processed in accordance with the TAFE Queensland Student Rules and QP401 Student Conduct
- VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievances and Appeals requirements will be maintained in accordance with the VET Guidelines.
2.0 Appeals information

- A complainant has the opportunity to formally present their case at no cost.
- A complainant will be treated fairly and not be victimised or discriminated against at any stage of the process outlined in this policy.
- The Grievance or Appeal must be lodged within 20 working days of the date the decision was communicated to the complainant in writing by the Director, Educational Delivery / Business Manager. If the appeal is not lodged within the specified timeframe, the decision will stand.
- The Appeals process will be finalised and communicated to the complainant within 20 working days of the formal lodgement of the QF413A VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance and Appeal and relevant supporting documentation.
- The complainant and/or respondent has the right to be accompanied and assisted by a support person in every relevant meeting they attend.
- If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal appeals process, they have the right to consult an external independent person or body. (refer 4.0 External Appeals).
- Application fees related to consultation with an external independent person or body may apply and are the responsibility of the applicant.
- Complainants, who wish to exercise their right to have their case heard by an independent external body/person, must notify the Director, Educational Delivery within 5 working days of receiving written notification of the outcome of the internal appeals process.
- The external independent person or body will liaise between the complainant and the TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech.
- Complainants are required to immediately advise TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech of the outcome of the external appeals process.
- Records of all grievances and appeals must be kept and be accessible to all interested parties for a period of 7 years. Such records will remain confidential. Parties to the complaint will be allowed supervised access to these records.

3.0 Internal appeals

Complainants have the right to appeal decisions which they consider to be unfavourable and/or unreasonable in relation to:

- Academic misconduct
- Academic progress
- Eligibility to receive an award
- Learning materials and facilities
- Assessment and grades

In the first instance, complaints should be discussed informally with the person/s involved. However, if this is impracticable, complainants should lodge a formal complaint with the Manager, Business Process and System Improvement or with any other staff member as per the TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech’s procedure QP105 Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions. If necessary, a mediator can be arranged via Student Support Services.

This arrangement is free of charge. A decision will be made within 14 working days and communicated to the complainant in writing.

If this does not resolve the complaint, complainants may submit their Appeal in writing by completing a QF413A VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance and Appeal form for consideration by the Academic Appeals Panel. All documentation lodged must be original documents or certified copies, no photocopies or facsimiles will be accepted.

Complainants 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. Appeals must be received within 20 days of receiving notification of the original decision.
Lodging Academic Grievance and Appeal Forms:

By mail:
Director, Educational Delivery
Locked Mail Bag 2020
ARCHERFIELD QLD 4108

In person:
Any TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech Client Contact Centre, located at: Acacia Ridge, Eagle Farm, Bracken Ridge and Alexandra Hills, for the attention of the Manager, Client Services.

3.1 Outcome of internal appeals
The Academic Appeals Panel will review the application and provide the complainant with a written statement including details of the reasons for the outcome, and any actions to be undertaken. A complainant who is not satisfied with the result of the internal appeals process, has the right to pursue the external appeal processes as outlined below.

4.0 External Appeals
Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal appeals process, they have the right to take their case to an external independent body.

Complainants may refer their appeal to the Queensland Ombudsman's office. There is no cost for lodging appeals. The Ombudsman will investigate the case, make an assessment and advise the complainant of the outcome. The Ombudsman’s Office will also notify TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech of the outcome of the external appeal.

Further information is available at [www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au) or by contacting the Queensland Ombudsman’s office on:
Tel: 07 3005 7000
Toll Free (outside Brisbane): 1800 068 908
Fax: 07 3005 7067 TTY: 133 677

Lodging Appeals with the Queensland Ombudsman’s Office:
Mail: GPO Box 3314, Brisbane QLD 4001
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au
In Person: Level 25, 288 Edward Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

4.1 Outcome of External Appeals
If the Queensland Ombudsman makes recommendations in relation to a Grievance or Appeal they have reviewed, the Ombudsman will forward those recommendations to the TAFE Queensland - SkillsTech Institute Director who will ensure that recommendations are implemented within 30 days.

REFERENCES
Higher Education Support Act Section 2003 (HESA)
VET Guidelines
VET Provider Handbook
TAFE Queensland Student Rules
Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations
POL076 VET FEE-HELP Non-Academic Grievance and Appeals
QP401 Student Conduct
QP407 VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance and Appeals
QP408 VET FEE-HELP Non-Academic Grievance and Appeals
QP105 Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions
QP108 Stakeholder Feedback

FORMS
QF413A VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance and Appeal
# VET FEE-HELP Academic Grievance and Appeal

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<th>Revision/s</th>
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<td>03/05/2013</td>
<td>Initial creation following approval of VET FEE-HELP from DIISRTE</td>
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<td>06/02/2014</td>
<td>Annual Review of content against current HESA and AIP requirements. Hyperlinks reviewed and updated.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Amendments in line with TAFE Queensland rebranding</td>
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