

VET STUDENT LOANS STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES FOR NON-ACADEMIC MATTERS

As a current or prospective student at TAFE NSW, you are entitled to raise any concerns or grievances that you may have in relation to non-academic matters. You are also entitled to have your concerns or grievances dealt with sensitively and promptly.

When you begin your studies at TAFE NSW, you will be given information about Student Grievance Procedures, including the contact details of the TAFE NSW Counsellor and other appropriate support staff at the college.

If you have concerns about academic matters relating to your results, you will need to refer to your teacher in the first instance. Under the Assessment Policy – TAFE NSW, you may appeal the result of any assessment. Your teacher can provide advice on this process.

Concerns or grievances that you may have in relation to non-academic matters may arise from any aspect of the service provided by TAFE NSW and may include breaches of conduct and/or legislation, such as harassment, vilification, discrimination, the misuse of personal information and exclusions from events and facilities.

Concerns or grievances may also arise as a result of specific events and/or from decisions made around issues related to internal administrative processes and procedures, to do with your study including financial matters, fines and payments and course applications procedures.

Summary of procedures for dealing with non-academic grievances

In managing your grievance or complaint, TAFE NSW staff will follow the **TAFE NSW Complaints Handling Guidelines**.

There are a number of stages involved in resolving grievances and complaints.

Discussing your grievance

You can discuss your grievance with an appropriate TAFE NSW staff member, who will:

- explain the complaint handling process to you
- if the matter is to be referred, explain why and to whom
- confirm that your grievance has been fully understood and ask you what outcome you are seeking
- outline the possible outcomes, including whether or not the outcome you are seeking is reasonable
- provide a realistic timeframe for dealing with the matter
- ensure that any promises made are followed through.

Reporting your grievance

- You can report your grievance to an appropriate staff member, such as your teacher, TAFE NSW Counsellor or other support officer.
- You can make a complaint verbally or in writing – a Complaints Form is available for your convenience. You can obtain a copy of this form from teaching, administration or counselling and support staff.

- You will need to complete this form and hand it into your teacher or an appropriate TAFE NSW staff member.
- In general, the complaint should be made where the grievance occurred.

Assessing your grievance

Your grievance will be assessed as to its nature and seriousness and the action to be taken, according to the approved Departmental guidelines.

In assessing the seriousness of a complaint:

- a matter is considered less serious if it involves a minor breach or complaint and was not seen to be part of a pattern of conduct that would lead to disciplinary/remedial action.
- a serious breach is one which, if proven, could amount to serious misconduct under the Code of Conduct and could include:
 - a breach of legislation, policy, procedure or contract likely to lead to disciplinary/remedial action, or
 - conduct of a criminal nature.

Serious grievances such as discrimination should be referred to the Anti-Harassment Contact Officer in TAFE who can take them to the principal or manager.

Managing grievances

- If your grievance is considered less serious, you will be encouraged to attempt to resolve the issue informally.
- Less serious grievance are dealt with promptly and without delay and you will receive written advice of the outcome within five days.
- If your grievance cannot be resolved informally, it will be referred to a manager or in more serious cases to the Campus Manager.
- You may need to put your concerns in writing and, if needed, help will be provided by the person receiving the complaint.
- It is preferable but not essential that your name and signature are included in the complaint. You should be aware that, in some instances, a complaint cannot proceed if it is anonymous or if you request that your identity be withheld.
- Your concerns will be recorded so they can be dealt with confidentially and promptly.
- Wherever practicable, a response will be provided by the Campus Manager or nominee within ten working days after the receipt of the written complaint.
- Depending on the nature of the grievance, formal procedures may be followed which may include a process of negotiation or investigation of the complaint made.
- In these cases, the timelines are specified at each stage of the process which is outlined in the Responding to Suggestions, Allegations and Complaints procedures.
- You can have a support person present when making the complaint and at any related meeting.
- You will be notified in writing of the outcome of your complaint
- Procedural fairness applies in managing complaints, in the interests of all parties, that where a concern or grievance is investigated to its full extent and cannot be substantiated, no further action can be taken.

Right of appeal

- If you feel that you have not been treated fairly or that the result of your complaint is unreasonable, there are provisions for seeking a review, both internal and external. These are explained in the Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines.
- Where all avenues for the successful resolution of your concern or grievance have been exhausted, you have the right to pursue external avenues of appeal.
- External bodies that may be able to assist include: [NSW Ombudsman](#)
- Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW (ADB)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

Records management

- All written requests for review will be retained and filed as required for a period of at least five years and that parties to a complaint must have appropriate access to these records.
- All such records will be treated as confidential.
- A register will be maintained of complaints, queries and responses.
- Parties to a grievance will be permitted supervised access to all relevant records on request.

Before proceeding with making a complaint, you should:

- read and understand the relevant policies and procedures
- ensure that all matters are discussed as quickly as possible and as close as possible to the source of the problem
- ensure that there are grounds for the complaint/appeal, as defined in the relevant policy/regulations.

There are no associated fees when making a complaint.

Further information

TAFE NSW offers free career and education counselling to current and intending students. Our counsellors have an extensive knowledge of TAFE NSW programs and services, as well as other educational and vocational pathways, so they can help you see 'the big picture'.