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Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

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1. Scope

The purpose of this document is to outline Ardor College's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure for all academic and non-academic matters and applies to all Ardor College students. Ardor College is committed to ensuring its complaints and appeals processes are freely accessible and managed in a fair, just and transparent manner.

2. Policy

The College undertakes to ensure that:

1. All disputes, complaints and appeals will be handled professionally, equitably, confidentially and in a timely manner, with a view to achieving satisfactory resolution
2. All parties will have a clear understanding of the steps involved in the Complaints and Appeals procedure, prior to and during the carrying out of the procedure
3. Prospective students are provided with a copy of the Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure document before making a contract to enroll, and again at course commencement
4. There is no cost involved for a student to lodge an internal complaint or an appeal

Students are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. Ardor College teaching and administrative staff are available to assist students to resolve their issues at this level.

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/appellant. Decisions will be made based on but not limited to current Government Legislation, Standards for RTOs 2015, Ardor College Policies and Procedures and, where applicable, The Rules of Evidence and The Principles of Assessment, providing a written report to the complainant/appellant within 20 working days, on the steps that will be taken to address the issue, clearly stating the reasons for the decision.

Complaints and Appeals Records

The Operation Manager will maintain records of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes. The Operation Manager will table complaints and appeals in Ardor College Management meetings, identifying potential causes of complaints and appeals, the action/s taken to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.

All complaints and appeals paperwork are kept by the Operation Manager in the Complaints and Appeals file and entered on the Complaints and Appeals Register.

3. Definitions

Academic Matters: student progress, assessment, curriculum. and awards

Non-Academic Matters: including but not limited to those related to personal information; financial matters; conduct of Ardor College itself, its trainers, assessors, or other staff and/or agents; and enrolment matters.

Informal Complaint: informal discussion between a complainant and a member of the College.

Formal Complaint: A written statement from a complainant lodged with Ardor College

Appeal: A review of the outcome of a formal complaint by Ardor College

External Body Review: organisation external to and independent of Ardor College who can review and consider a decision Ardor College has made regarding a formal complaint or appeal

Complainant: Anyone making a complaint or raising a grievance with Ardor College and accessing the complaints and appeals process.

Appellant – person lodging an appeal.

4. Procedure

The following procedure outlines the four stages in the complaints and appeals process. If a student chooses to access the complaints and appeals processes, Ardor College will maintain the student's enrolment while the complaints/appeals process is being undertaken.

Ardor College will respond to any complaint or appeal the complainant/appellant makes regarding his or her dealings with Ardor College or any related party Ardor College has an arrangement with to deliver the students course or related services.

Stage One: Informal Complaint

Any person wishing to make a complaint may do so in an informal manner by requesting to speak with any member of the Ardor College staff including trainers, administrative staff, or a member of the management team. The complaint may bring a support person to accompany them to discuss their grievance.

Should the complainant feel that their grievance is not satisfactorily resolved, they may submit their complaint formally in writing. A Complaints and Appeals form is available in Downloads in the Ardor website.

4.1. Stage Two: Formal Complaint

If complainants are dissatisfied with the results of the informal discussions, they can make a formal complaint by submitting a Complaint and Appeals Form. This form is available on Ardor College's website under "Downloads" or complainants can request a copy from Ardor College's Student Services personnel. They can also submit a complaint via Ardor College's Feedback webform available at www.ardor.edu.au

The relevant Ardor College staff member will acknowledge in writing the formal complaint within 48 hours or as soon as practicable unless complaints were submitted during weekend or December holidays when college shuts down for few weeks.

The relevant Ardor College staff member will review, assess and investigate the complainant's submission and respond with a written statement of the outcome of the complaint within 10 working days of the date the Complaint and Appeals Form was submitted.

The written response will contain full details of the reasons for the outcome.

The student will be advised of their right to an appeal, if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome at this stage.

If Ardor College considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint, the student will be informed in writing of the reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required and will keep the complainant updated on the progress of the matter.

4.2. Stage Three: Internal appeal

If complainants are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint or a formal decision made by Ardor College, they have 20 working days from the date of the written response to the formal complaint or decision made by Ardor College to lodge a written appeal for a review of the outcome by Ardor College PEO or their designated personnel.

The relevant Ardor College staff member will acknowledge in writing the appeal within 48 hours or as soon as practicable.

Ardor College PEO or their designated personnel will assess the original complaint or decision made by Ardor College, plus any extra evidence submitted as part of the appeal and respond with a written statement of the outcome of the appeal within 10 working days of the date the written appeal was submitted.

The written response will contain full details for the reasons for the outcome.

If the appellant wishes to have their appeal heard in person or via teleconference, they may be accompanied or

assisted by another person, at the appellant's cost.

If the appellant wishes to have the appeals decision reviewed by an independent, external body, the stages for an External Review are set out in Stage 4, below.

If Ardor College considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the appeal, the student will be informed in writing of the reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required and will keep the appellant updated on the progress of the matter.

Stage Four: External review

1. If complainants are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal appeal, they have 20 working days from the date of the written response to the internal appeal to lodge an appeal for a review of the appeal by an independent, external body.
2. Depending on the independent, external body appealed to and the student's individual circumstances, there may be a cost involved in an external review. Please see below listings of independent, external review bodies. For other student cohorts, please contact Ardor College if you would like help to determine the costs of an external appeal.
3. If the independent, external body finds in favour of the appellant, Ardor College will comply with all recommendations made or instructions given by the body.
4. If the independent, external body finds in favour of Ardor College, Ardor College will ensure that a written copy of the decision is made available to the student, including full details of the reason for the decision.
5. The following is a non-exhaustive list of independent bodies with which appeals for external review may be lodged, depending on the individual complainant's circumstances:

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

- 1300 362 072
 - ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
6. Students who are the subject of Ardor College initiated suspensions or cancellations will have access to Ardor College's Complaints and Appeals process. They will have 20 days in which to initiate the Complaints and Appeals process.

4.3. Assessment Results Appeals

Students wishing to appeal an assessment decision must submit their appeal in a period no longer than 60 days following the competency decision.

Please follow the procedure outlined above.