



Complaints and Appeal Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

Australian School of Commerce has implemented a documented complaint handling and appeals process and policy to provide the overseas student with comprehensive, free and easily accessible information about that process and policy.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that learners at Australian School of Commerce (ASOC) have a fair, inexpensive complaints and appeals process that includes access to an independent external body, if necessary, ASOC will make sure Complaints and Appeals processes are independent, easily accessible and inexpensive for the parties involved.

This Complaints and Appeals Policy, and Procedure is designed to ensure that ASOC responds effectively and efficiently to individual cases of dissatisfaction in accordance with the requirements of:

- Standards for RTO 2015
 - Clause 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6
- The National Code 2018
 - Standard 10

This policy has been documented for the overseas student to lodge a formal complaint or appeal if a matter cannot be resolved informally.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all enrolled and prospective overseas students of ASOC, staff members of ASOC, education agents of ASOC and any other related party who wish to make or lodge complaints about matters which falls within the responsibility of the Australian School of Commerce.

3. Responsibility

The Chief/Principal Executive officer (CEO) is responsible for the implementation of this policy and procedures and ensuring that staff and students are made aware of its application.

ASOC will manage and respond to any complaint or appeal that the overseas student makes regarding his or her dealings with the ASOC, ASOC's trainers/assessors or other staff, ASOC's education agents.

ASOC has made arrangements in place for a person or body independent of internal and external to ASOC to hear complaints or appeals arising from the ASOC's internal complaints and appeals process or refer students to an existing body where that body is appropriate for the complaint or appeal.

ASOC will commence the assessment of the complaint or appeal within 10 working days of it being made in accordance with the ASOC's complaint handling and appeals process and policy, and finalise the outcome as soon as practicable.

ASOC will take all the complaints and appeals seriously and will resolve Complaints and Appeals quickly and equitably, using the principles of natural justice. The procedures for complaints and appeals will be fair, objective and accessible. Complaints and appeals will be recorded, acknowledged and dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.

ASOC will identify potential causes of complaints, appeals, and takes appropriate corrective action to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.

ASOC will manage and respond to allegations involving the conduct of

- ASOC, its trainers, assessors or other staff
- a third-party providing services on the RTO's behalf, its trainers, assessors or other staff (not applicable)
- a learner of ASOC.

ASOC's complaints and Appeals policy:

- ensures that the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaint and appeals process
- are publicly available like website, student's handbook and prospectus.

4. Definitions



Complainant refers to a person who has lodged a complaint with ASOC.

Complaint means a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any service provided by ASOC, ASOC's education agents or any related party that ASOC has an arrangement with to deliver the overseas student's course or related services.

Appeal refers to the process where a student requests for the case to be reviewed if dissatisfied with a decision made by ASOC.

5. Procedures

Information about the complaints and appeals process

Applicants for enrolments are provided with necessary information about the complaints and appeals process in the pre-enrolment information like ASOC's Student Handbook, written agreements, etc. Information on complaints and appeals policy and procedures is available online at ASOC's website www.asoc.edu.au

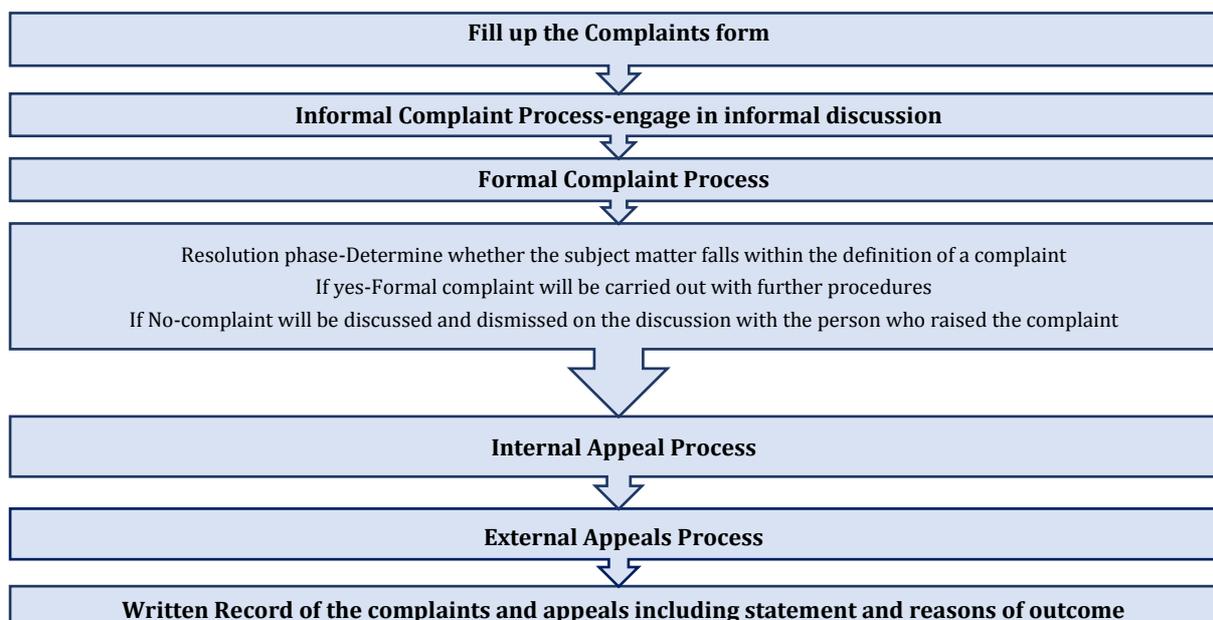
Students will be provided with information about the complaints and appeals process during orientation.

The CEO will responsible for ensuring that all the management staff, student services staff, marketing staff, trainers and assessors and students at ASOC are aware of the policies and procedures for complaints and appeals. Provision of information about the ASOC's complaints and appeals process is an important aspect of the induction process for new members of staff.

Complaint Procedure

The school will maintain a Complaints/Grievance Register, and a Complaint Form, which will allow the identification and details of the following:

- Submission date of complaint
- Nature of complaint
- Date/s when cause of complaint occurred
- Attachments (if applicable)
- Determined Resolution
- Date of Resolution.
- Independent Dispute Resolution (Commonwealth Ombudsman)





5.1. Informal Complaint Process

Students who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to initially engage in informal discussion about the matter with the staff member/s involved. Any student with a complaint may first raise the issue informally with Administration Manager or Trainer or Student Support Officer and attempt an informal resolution of the complaint.

Complaints dealt in this way will not become part of the formal complaints process and will not be documented, recorded or reported on unless ASOC staff involved determines that the issue in question or complaint is relevant to the wider operation of ASOC.

ASOC staff involved in the discussion of an informal complaint or appeal will do their best to resolve the matter effectively and quickly.

Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they will be advised to register a formal complaint.

What can a complaint be about?

A complaint can be about:

- any aspect of the service provided, or not provided by ASOC
- any aspect of the training and assessment
- the behaviour or decisions of staff, or
- policies and/or procedures of ASOC
- any action by any relevant 3rd party

5.2. Formal Complaint Process

Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal process can register a formal complaint in writing to Administration Manager/Complaints Officer. Students can also send an email alternatively to apply@asoc.edu.au

Lodging a complaint

To register a formal complaint, a student must complete and lodge a Student Complaints Form to Administration Manager/Complaints Officer providing:

- a clear and detailed statement of the complaint, including the parties involved
- a suggested solution that the student believes would settle the complaint (E.g. an appropriate solution will focus on achieving a productive study environment or relationship, rather than apportioning blame).
- Complaint will be lodged in a complaint register.

The resolution phase: The Administration Manager/Complaints Officer will determine whether the subject matter falls within the definition of a complaint. This period is called the resolution phase.

The resolution phase will commence within **10 working days** of the complaint being lodged in writing, i.e. assessment of complaints or appeal will commence within 10 working days of it being made and the outcome will be finalised as soon as possible.

Where it is determined that the subject matter falls within the definition, the following procedures will take place:

- **Acknowledging the Lodging of a complaint**

Each formal complaint lodged by a student will be acknowledged in writing. The acknowledgement will be provided to the student in person and/or sent through the email in writing by student support/admin staff.

The Student support/admin staff will forward the complaint for action to the relevant department as soon as practicable and should not take more than 10 days. Parties to complaint will not be part of the investigation team.

- **Recording the complaint**

Details of the complaints and their outcomes will be recorded in ASOC's complaints and appeals register and a copy will be filed in student's file. The original complaint will be forwarded to the Administration Manager/Complaints Officer.



The Administration Manager/Complaints Officer will be responsible for ensuring that all of these actions are completed within five working days of the lodgement of the complaint.

- **Acting on Complaint**

All concerned parties will be contacted for investigation. Students will be given an opportunity to respond and present their case with supporting evidence.

Administration Manager/Complaints Officer will set an agenda for the meeting and discuss what steps should be taken.

The right to be accompanied by a support person during the complaints/appeals process: Parties making complaint will be invited for meeting and each involved party may be accompanied and assisted by a support person, according to the principles of natural justice. There will be an attempt to resolve the complaint by using the process outlined by the student for settlement (if appropriate) or through meeting, mediation and/or conciliation.

All the information will be gathered as required to assist with the settlement of the complaint, including, providing the respondent with the statement of the complaint and all the relevant documents.

Complaints will be investigated thoroughly in spirit of natural justice and principal fairness. Best possible resolution will be achieved keeping a student-centred approach based on the facts and documents.

- **Time frame**

Person making a complaint will be informed of the outcome in writing and all the complaints will be finalised as soon as practicable understanding the student's requirements and other matters but *maximum within 60 days of receipt of complaint*.

Where ASOC considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, the school will inform the complainant or appellant in writing, including reasons on why more than 60 calendar days are required, and will regularly update the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.

If complaint falls outside the definition of complaints: The Administration Manager/Complaints Officer will advise the student accordingly. Administration Manager/Complaints Officer may dismiss a complaint if, in their view the complaint is ill advised, misguided, frivolous, malicious or vexatious.

Note: it is to be noted that ASOC will respond to any complaint or appeal the overseas student makes regarding his or her dealings with ASOC, ASOC's education agents.

At the conclusion of the resolution phase, the Administration Manager/Complaints Officer will write to both the student and the respondent indicating the outcome of the process and specifying any action that has been agreed upon by the parties as part of that process. Students will be informed about their *Right to appeal* within 20 days of the complaints if dissatisfied with the outcome.

Record the decision: ASOC's decision and reasons for the decision will be recorded by the Administration Manager/Complaints Officer and placed in the student's file.

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint process, students may initiate an internal appeal process by completing a Complaints and Appeal Form from the website www.asoc.edu.au or from school's reception.

Appeals

ASOC's appeals procedures will help in managing requests for a review of decisions, including decisions made by ASOC.

5.3. Internal Appeals Process

Internal appeals may arise from a number of sources including appeals against refund decisions, assessment outcomes, appeals against disciplinary actions and appeals against decisions arising from complaints. The essential nature of an appeal is that it is a request by student who is dissatisfied with the outcome to reconsider a decision made by ASOC.

An Internal Appeal Process is initiated by a student lodging an Appeal by filling up complaints and appeals Form available from the Student Administration and/or ASOC website.

- **Acknowledging the Lodging of a complaint**

Appeals are acknowledged by sending written confirmation to complainant and that is done by the Training Manager.



- **Consideration of Appeal by Complaints and appeals officer**

Where an appeal relates to the following matters, the Student Appeals Form must be lodged within 20 working days (International Students):

- Notification of an intention to report the student to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) or due to unsatisfactory Course Progress.
- Notification of an intention to suspend or cancel a student's enrolment due to misbehaviour, or other extenuating circumstances (ref. Student Code of Behaviour and Discipline Procedures for details).

- **Time Frame and Acting on an Appeal**

Within 10 working days of receiving the Complaints and Appeal Form, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will appoint an Investigator or convene a Student Appeal Committee to hear the appeals and propose a final resolution. This Investigator or Committee will not include any person who has heard the original complaint. The Investigator or the Student Appeals Committee will:

- a. Meet with student (and support person, if present) and provide the student with an opportunity to present their case and with any supporting evidence they bring to the meeting at no cost. At any given meeting to discuss an appeal, students will be given the opportunity **to be accompanied and assisted by a support person**.
- b. At the conclusion of the meeting, students will be informed about the timeframe within which the school will provide a written outcome of the appeal. The timeframe will generally be 10 working days. After the meeting, the Investigator or Committee will, impartially, consider all the evidence and make a decision.

Student Appeal Committee

- Chief Executive Officer
- Training Manager
- Investigator or nominee appointed by the CEO

**ASOC will ensure that assessment of the complaint or appeal is conducted in a professional, fair and transparent manner.*

The outcome will be documented and will include the reasons for the decision. If the decision goes against the student, the outcome will include information for the student of **his or her right to an external appeal**. Details of the suitable external appeal bodies will be made available to the student with information at no cost associated with that.

If more than 60 days: Where it is apparent that appeals will take more than 60 calendar days, appellant will be informed in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required, and the students will be regularly updated on the progress of the matter.

Recording the appeal: ASOC will keep a written record of the complaint or appeal, including statement of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome with signature and date of student and Training Manager.

A written statement of the outcome of the internal appeal, including detailed reasons for the outcome will be sent to the student.

If matter remains unresolved or student is unsuccessful or dissatisfied with the outcome.

There might be cases where matter is still unresolved after the implementation of above procedures and the internal appeals process exhausted, or if the student is not successful in the ASOC's internal complaints and appeals process. In such cases, school will advise the overseas student within 10 working days of concluding the internal review of the overseas student's right to access an external complaint handling and appeals process without any cost charged by ASOC.

Note: Students' enrolment will be kept active until both internal and external appeal is concluded.

5.4. External Appeals Process

After the student has been advised of the external complaint handling process and procedure, ASOC will provide students with contact details of the appropriate complaints handling and external appeals body.

ASOC will refer the student to **Commonwealth Ombudsman** to lodge an external appeal or complain about the decision.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman offers free and independent service for overseas students who have a complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their private education or training provider.



In most cases, the purpose of the external appeals process is to consider whether the registered provider, i.e. ASOC in this case, has followed its policies and procedures, rather than make a decision in place of the school. External appeal authority will be provided with sufficient information within due to timelines requested.

For example, if an overseas student appeals against his or her subject results and goes through the internal appeals process of the school, the external appeals process would look at the way in which the internal appeal was conducted; it would not make a determination as to what the subject result should be.

Complaints outcome will be entered in complaints register after external appeals has given a decision and copy of all relevant documents will be attached in that register.

Outcome

If the internal or any external complaints handling or appeal process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the overseas student, ASOC will immediately implement the decision or recommendation and/or take the preventive or corrective action required by the decision and advise the overseas student of that action or outcome.

Written record of the complaints or Appeal and statement of the outcome will be kept and maintained by ASOC.

Examples of an external or independent body or person may include:

- private conciliators or dispute resolution counsellors
- a complaints and appeals body established by a peak industry body
- representatives of Commonwealth and state or territory government departments including the Office of the Training Advocate; or
- Commonwealth and state or territory offices of the Ombudsman may be the appropriate body for a public provider.

NOTE: The Commonwealth Ombudsman is a free and independent service

The Commonwealth Ombudsman (OSO) contact details are:

- **Website:** <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>
- **Email:** ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
- **Contact Number:** 1300 362 072

The Commonwealth Ombudsman investigates complaints about problems that overseas students have with private education and training in Australia.

The Ombudsman (OSO) also:

- a. Provides information about best practice complaints handling to help private education providers manage internal complaints effectively.
- b. Publishes reports on problems and broader issues in international education that OSO identify through investigations.

For further information, please visit www.oso.gov.au or contact Commonwealth Ombudsman by telephone, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST). In Australia, call: 1300 362 072 (calls from mobile phones at mobile phone rates). Outside Australia, call +61 2 6276 011.

Appeals related to Deferment, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment

Where a student has decided to access the appeals process in relation to deferment, suspension or cancellation of their enrolment, ASOC will not update the student's status or report to Department of Home Affairs (DHA) via PRISMS until the appeal process is completed.

ASOC is required to maintain all relevant responsibilities until:

- the internal and external complaints processes have been completed and the breach has been upheld;
- the overseas student has chosen not to access the internal complaints and appeals process within the 20-working day period;
- the overseas student has chosen not to access the external complaints and appeals process;
- The overseas student withdraws from the internal or external appeals process, by notifying the school in writing.



Note: *Please note that the following procedures do not remove your right to seek other dispute resolution services, or to seek other legal remedies, provided by external bodies, such as, the Dispute Settlement Commission of Victoria, Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria, or the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria.

Students Rights as Consumer

Complaints and Appeals Policy, and Procedure do not remove the right of students to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws.

Important Contacts

Staff	Contact details	What assistance they can provide
ASOC Student support	apply@asoc.edu.au	Your contact to manage your complaints and appeals.
Administration Manager	apply@asoc.edu.au	Your contact to manage your complaints.
Appeal committee - CEO - Training Manager - <i>Investigator or nominee appointed by the CEO</i>	info@asoc.edu.au	If you are not satisfied with outcome of complaint. You can lodge an appeal with appeals committee
Commonwealth Ombudsman	In Australia 1300 362 072 Outside Australia: +61 262760111	External appeals
Australian Skills Quality Authority	https://www.asqa.gov.au/contact	Complaints about providers and their practices



ASOC Complaints and Appeal Quality Checklist

ASOC staff, team must follow this checklist when handling complaints and appeals and must pay close attention to timelines as long as it takes to resolve the issue more it costs goodwill to organisation.

Process Stage	Action	Time line	Completed (Please tick)
Complaints lodgment	Formal complaints is received and correct complaint form is provided	As soon as complaint is raised with staff and informal process is completed	
	Fully completed form is received from complainant and all fields are completed	As soon as practicable	
Acknowledgement and records	Complaint is acknowledged and written acknowledgement is sent to students.	As soon as practicable or preferably in 5 days of receipt	
	Further contact is made if complaint information is insufficient	As soon as practicable or preferably in 5 days of receipt	
	Complaint is lodged in complaint register	As soon as practicable or preferably in 5 days of receipt	
Investigation	Resolution phase- Complaint is checked if the matter falls within definition of complaint for further investigation	As soon as practicable but should not take more than 10 days.	
	Complaint is forwarded for action to relevant department. Parties to complaint cannot be part of investigation team.	As soon as practicable but should not take more than 10 days	
	All concerned parties are contacted for investigation. Student is given opportunity to present his/her case and respond at minimal or no cost.	As soon as practicable or within 3 days of receipt or	
	Parties making complaints are invited for meeting and option of bringing a support person is provided.	As soon as practicable or within 3 days of receipt or	
	Complaint is investigated thoroughly in spirit of natural justice and principle fairness. Best possible resolution is achieved keeping student centered approach and fact based.	As soon as practicable as and no later than 60 days of complaints.	
Outcome	Complaint outcome is received and communicated to all the parties with the right to appeal within 20 days of the complaint if dissatisfied with the outcome	As soon as practicable no later than 60 days	
	Where it is apparent that complaint will take more than 60 days, complainant or appellant are informed in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required and are regularly updated on the progress of the matter.	As soon as practicable and must inform well before 60 days of complaints resolution deadline.	
	Outcome is recorded in complaints register	As soon as practicable	
Internal appeals	If dissatisfied with the outcome, Students are advised to lodge complaint within 20 working days of complaint outcome.	Within 20 working days	



	Appeals are acknowledged by sending written confirmation to complainant	As soon as practicable or within 3 days of receipt or	
	Appeals are sent to appeal committee.	As soon as practicable but should not take more than 10 days.	
	Investigator is appointed to hear the appeal. Students are given opportunity to present their case with supporting evidence accompanied or assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings.		
	Appeals are investigated thoroughly in spirit of natural justice and principle fairness	As soon as practicable as and no later than 60 days of appeal.	
	Where it is apparent that appeals will take more than 60 days, appellant are informed in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required and are regularly updated on the progress of the matter.	As soon as practicable and must inform well before 60 days of complaints resolution deadline.	
	Internal appeal is complete. Outcome is recorded in complaints and appeals register with reasons and is placed in students file. Students are provided with a written statement and detailed reason of the outcome of internal appeal	Within 60 days	
	Student enrolment is kept active until internal appeal and external appeal is concluded.	Until external appeal is finalised	
	If student is dissatisfied with the outcome, student is referred to the Commonwealth Ombudsman to lodge an external appeal or complain about the decision and informing them that it is free of cost.	Within 10 working days of completion of internal complaints handling and appeals process.	
External appeals	Student is advised on their rights to access an external complaint handling and appeals process without any cost charged by ASOC.	Within 10 days of concluding the internal review	
	External appeal authority is provided with sufficient information within due time lines requested.	As soon as practicable or timelines specified by external agency	
	Student enrolment is kept active until the external appeal is concluded.	Until external appeal is finalised	
	Complaints outcome is entered in the complaints register after external appeals and copy of all the relevant documents are attached.	Preferably in 3 days of receipt or as soon as practicable	
	ASOC implements the decision/ recommendation and takes preventive/corrective action required by the decision.	As soon as practicable	
	Students are advised about the decision and action	As soon as practicable	
	Written record of the complaint or appeal and statement of the outcome is kept and maintained by ASOC.	As soon as practicable	