

# Grievances, Complaints and Appeals (Academic and Non-Academic) Policy and Procedure

## Purpose

This Grievances, Complaints and Appeals (Academic and Non-Academic) Policy and related procedure are designed to ensure that all Stride Learning RTOs respond effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction. This policy outlines all Stride Learning's RTO's approach to managing complaints and appeals and ensures that all Clients, Learners, Referral Agents and other stakeholders are aware of the steps to take to have their dissatisfaction addressed appropriately.

This policy provides an avenue for all complaints to be addressed in a fair, efficient and confidential manner.

## Definitions

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

*Complaint* – a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any service provided by, or on behalf of, a Stride Learning RTO.

*Appeal* – a request to review a decision that has been made on an assessment, or on a previously submitted grievance or complaint.

*The Act* – refers to the Higher Education Support Act 2003

*Learners* – refers to all persons enrolled in or seeking to enrol in a qualification or accredited course delivered by a Stride Learning RTO, or any person enrolled in or seeking to enrol in a unit of study that meets the course requirements under subclause 45(1) of Schedule 1A of the Act who are, or would be, entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act. *Complainant* – Refers to any individual who has lodged a grievance, complaint or appeal with a Stride Learning RTO

*Academic matters* – include those matters which relate to Learner progress, assessment, course content or awards in a VET course of study.

*Non-academic matters* – include those matters which do not relate to Learner progress, assessment, course content or awards in a course and include complaints in relation to personal information that the provider holds in relation to the Learner. Non-academic grievances tend to arise from events occurring at a provider or from decisions made by a provider. Non-academic grievances include complaints in relation to the following:

- *Discrimination*
- *Vilification*
- *Sexual harassment*
- *Other forms of harassment*
- *Learner amenities*
- *General complaints including dissatisfaction with services*

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- *Complaints about financial matters*
- *Payments, application procedures, exclusions from events and facilities and the use or misuse of personal information*

## Scope

This policy applies to all Learners, prospective learners, clients, referral agents, staff and other stakeholders of any Stride Learning RTO, including the right of one of these parties to make an informal grievance and/or a formal complaint about another one of these parties. This policy and related procedure are made available to Learners regardless of the location of the campus at which the complaint has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence. This policy is relevant to both academic and non-academic complaints and grievances.

## Policy

### 1. Complaints and appeals systems

- 1.1 Despite all efforts of Stride Learning RTOs to provide satisfactory services to its Learners, Clients, Referral Agents and other persons, complaints may occasionally arise requiring formal resolution.
- 1.2 Stride Learning RTOs are committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable complaints and appeals system which is easily accessible and offered to complainants at no charge. Stride Learning aims to:
  - develop a culture that views complaints and appeals as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works
  - set in place a complaints and appeals handling system that is client focused and helps Stride Learning RTOs to prevent these events from recurring
  - ensure that any complaints and appeals are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality
  - ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a complaint or appeal is not discriminated against nor victimised
  - ensure that there is a consistent response to complaints and appeals
- 1.3 Stride Learning attempts to resolve any complaints, concerns and appeals fairly and equitably within 10 working days from receipt of a notice of complaint/appeal.
- 1.4 Where more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint/appeal, the complainant or appellant is notified in writing including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required. Regular updates are provided to the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.
- 1.5 All formal complaints and appeals and their outcomes will be recorded on the Complaints and Appeals Register. In addition, the register will be regularly reviewed by management and used as an opportunity for improvement and reflection, as also captured in summary in Stride Learning's Continuous Improvement Register.

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## 2. Nature of complaints and appeals

- 2.1 Complaints and appeals may be made be in relation to any Stride Learning RTO's services, activities and decisions such as:
- the enrolment, induction/orientation process
  - the quality of training and resources provided
  - training and assessment matters, including Learner progress, timeframes for completion, assessment results, curriculum and awards in a course of study
  - access to personal records
  - sexual harassment
  - decisions made by a Stride Learning RTO, and/or
  - the way someone has been treated

## 3. Resolving issues before they become a complaint

- 3.1 Learners and Clients are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned to deal with the issue at the early stage of a grievance and before it becomes a formal complaint. Stride Learning's Learner Support Officers and other staff members are available to assist learners to resolve their issues at this level. Grievances should be mutually resolved within 10 working days of the matter being raised.

## 4. Lodging a complaint

- 4.1 Where matters cannot be resolved at the time they occur and informally, these are escalated by the complainee sending a completed Stride Learning Complaints and Appeals Form which can be provided by a Stride Learning office or through the Stride Learning website. The Form should be sent via email and addressed to the Complaints Officer through: [ceo@stridelearning.com.au](mailto:ceo@stridelearning.com.au)
- 4.2 Learners receive confirmation of receipt of a complaint within 48 hours.
- 4.3 Stride Learning's Compliance Manager will investigate and make the ruling and will formally notify the learner and appellant of their decision as part of this stage of the complaints handling.
- 4.4 The learner has 5 working days to respond to the formal decision should it be dissatisfied with this decision and must formally write to express their reasons for their ongoing issues to the CEO: [ceo@stridelearning.com.au](mailto:ceo@stridelearning.com.au)
- 4.5 The learner may request a face to face meeting with the CEO to formally present his or her case in appeal of the decision of the Complaints Manager. Once this meeting has occurred, the CEO will respond formally and within 2 business days and will consist of a written statement of the appeal outcome, including reasons for the decision and provided to learner.



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- 4.6 Stride Learning permits any party associated with the complaint to be accompanied and assisted by a third party at any relevant meetings however it is important that both parties receive ample notification of all attendees.

### 5. External Appeals

- 5.1 In the case of an assessment appeal, an internal review of the assessment will be undertaken by one of Stride Learning's qualified assessors, through completion and submission of Stride Learning's Complaints & Appeals Form.
- 5.2 Following this internal review of the assessment, and should the learner remain dissatisfied with the outcome, the Stride Learning RTO concerned will appoint an independent, qualified assessor to review and make a decision on the assessment. This will be at a cost recovery basis to the learner and payable up-front.
- 5.3 The RTO is bound by the independent assessor's recommendations and the RTO will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 10 days of receipt of the report from the External Assessor.

### 6. External Complaints

- 6.1 Stride Learning acknowledges the need for an appropriate independent party to mediate where an agreed outcome cannot be reached internally and will offer to arrange this for complainants who are not satisfied with the decisions made by the RTO, at no additional cost to the complainant.
- 6.2 Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the result or conduct of the Stride Learning RTO's internal procedures for handling of a complaint, they have the right to ask for the matter to be referred to an external appeals process. The complainant will have the right to have someone support them through this process.
- 6.3 Stride Learning uses the Resolution Institute as its external referring agency – as recommended by the Australian Council of Private Education & Training (ACPET).
- 6.4 If a grievance still remains unresolved after the external dispute resolution process, complainants may decide to refer the matter to an independent complaints agency such as:
- ASQA (<http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/making-a-complaint.html>) - national RTOs. ASQA's role is not to act as a Learner advocate for individual Learners. Rather, ASQA uses the information reported through complaints to inform how it regulates training providers. ASQA can accept complaints about:
    - the quality of training and assessment services being delivered by ASQA-registered providers, and
    - the marketing and advertising practices of registered training organisations (RTOs) and organisations claiming to be RTOs.
- 6.5 The RTO will be bound by the independent agency's recommendations and the RTO will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within thirty (30) days of receipt of the report from the External Reviewer.



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## 7. Enrolment status

7.1 Where a Learner chooses to access this policy and procedure, Stride Learning will maintain the Learner’s enrolment while the complaints handling process is ongoing.

## 8. Record keeping and confidentiality

8.1 A written record of all complaints and appeals handled under this policy and procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five (5) years to allow all parties appropriate access to these records.

8.2 All records relating to complaints and appeals will be treated as confidential and will be covered by the Stride Learning Privacy Policy.

## 9. Non-limitation of policy

9.1 This policy and related procedure do not replace or modify those or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and related procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under the Australia’s Consumer Protection laws. Also, this policy does not circumscribe an individual’s rights to pursue other legal remedies.

### Related policies, procedures, forms, legislations, regulatory requirements.

- Complaints and Appeals Form
- Complaints and Appeals Register
- Continuous Improvement and Quality Assurance Policy
- Continuous Improvement Register
- Privacy Policy
- Learner Handbook

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