

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Introduction

The Kings Own International College (KOIC) is dedicated to ensuring that all students, staff and stakeholders have access to a fair, transparent, and accessible process for addressing complaints and appeals. This policy ensures compliance with the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR Act), the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000, and associated standards, including the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2025, the ESOS National Code 2018, and the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) Standards 2018.

Purpose

The purpose of the Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure is to:

- Ensure that all students, staff, and stakeholders have access to a fair, transparent, and accessible process for resolving complaints and appeals.
- Comply with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Provide a structured framework for addressing grievances promptly, equitably, and consistently.
- Safeguard the rights and well-being of individuals engaging with KOIC services, fostering a supportive and respectful environment.
- Promote continuous improvement through the review of complaints and appeals outcomes, ensuring policies and procedures remain effective and aligned with best practices.

KOIC encourages informal resolution where possible.

- Complaints and appeals will be acknowledged within five (5) business days.
- Timelines for resolution will be clearly communicated.
- Complainants will not face any disadvantage or reprisal as a result of lodging a complaint or appeal.

Scope

This policy applies to all complaints and appeals submitted by students, staff, or other stakeholders, whether related to academic or non-academic matters, within KOIC's control.

Policy Statement

Under the 2025 Outcome Standards, RTOs must implement self-assuring systems that:

- welcome feedback and resolve complaints promptly and without reprisals, and
- provide effective appeal avenues, internally and externally, while maintaining student enrolment.

KOIC is committed to maintaining a respectful and inclusive learning environment. Complaints may relate to any aspect of the RTO's operations, including concerns regarding discrimination, harassment, bullying or vilification on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, cultural identity or other protected attributes, including antisemitism.

KOIC will respond promptly and fairly to any complaint alleging discriminatory or vilifying behaviour and will take appropriate steps to protect the safety and wellbeing of students and staff involved.

KOIC commits to:

1. Open communication: Feedback and complaints are considered opportunities for learning. Students are protected from disadvantage for raising issues in good faith.

2. Natural justice & procedural fairness: All parties are heard, impartial officers manage investigations, and adverse findings are pre-notified for response.
3. Accessibility: Information is published in plain English; alternative formats, interpreters and
4. Cultural safety support are offered on request.
5. Timeliness: Clear, reasonable timeframes apply to each stage; progress updates are provided at least fortnightly when matters exceed target timeframes.
6. Confidentiality & privacy: Records are stored securely for five (5) years and accessed only by authorised personnel.
7. Continuous improvement: Root cause analysis informs policy, procedure and service enhancements.
8. CRICOS assurance: Overseas student enrolment is maintained throughout all internal and external stages unless extenuating circumstances apply.

Definitions

Appeal	A request to review a decision made by KOIC (e.g., assessment outcomes, disciplinary actions).
Complaint	A formal expression of dissatisfaction about an issue under KOIC's control.
Confidentiality	Ensuring information is shared only with those directly involved in resolving the grievance.
Continuous Improvement	Ongoing efforts to enhance policies, processes and practices to achieve better outcomes.
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
Feedback	Positive, negative or neutral comments provided outside the formal complaint process.
Natural Justice / Procedural Fairness	Right to an unbiased hearing, opportunity to respond, and decision based on evidence.
Quality Management Team (QMT)	KOIC's Quality Management Team play a critical role in maintaining regulatory compliance, upholding academic standards, and driving continuous improvement. Members include: • Compliance Officer • Director of Studies (VET) Director of Studied (ELICOS)
Support	Individual chosen by the complainant/appellant to assist (friend, advocate, interpreter, lawyer).
VET	Vocational Education and Training, a sector of education providing practical and skills-based training.

Regulatory and Legislative Requirements

- Australian Consumer Law (Schedule 2 of the Competition and Consumer Act)

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- ESOS Act 2000
- ELICOS Standards 2018 (Standard P6)
- ESOS National Code 2018: Specifically, Standard 10
- Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Legislation (State/Territory based)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986 (Cth)
- NVR Act 2011
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Standards for RTOs 2025: Quality Area 2 – VET Student Support, Outcome Standards 2.7 & 2.8

Complaints and Appeal Procedure

1. Accessibility

The Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure is available on the KOIC website, in the student handbook, and during onboarding. It is provided in plain English and alternative formats are available upon request (e.g., large print, translated versions).

2. Complaints Process

1. 2.1 Academic Complaints

• Step 1- Initial Resolution

- Students should first discuss the issue with their trainer/assessor (VET) or teacher (ELICOS)

• Step 2 - Formal Complaint

- If unresolved, the student submits a written complaint to the Director of Studies VET or Director of Studies ELICOS, as applicable, within five (5) business days via **KOIC's Improvement Action Complaint Form** available on the KOIC website.
- KOIC staff will acknowledge receipt of complaint to complainant within two (2) business days.

• Step 3 – Meeting

- The Director of Studies meets with the student within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint to seek resolution.
- Resolution may include assessment review, additional feedback, scheduling or reassessment or clarification of academic requirements.

• Step 4 - Escalation:

- If unresolved, the complaint is referred to the Quality Management Team (QMT), including the CEO, within five (5) business days.

• Step 5 - External Mediation:

- If internal processes fail, the student has ten (10) business days to appeal the decision and request external mediation. Upon receiving the request KOIC will refer the matter to an external mediator to ensure the appeal is handled within a timely manner.

2.2 Non-Academic Complaints

- **Step 1- Initial Resolution**
 - Students should first discuss the issue with the Student Services Officer (SSO).
- **Step 2 – Formal Complaint**
 - Non-academic complaints must be submitted in writing to the Student Services Officer (SSO) by completing **KOIC's Improvement Action Complaint Form** available on the KOIC website.
 - KOIC staff will acknowledge receipt of complaint to complainant within two (2) business days.
- **Step 3 - Assessment**
 - The complaint is then forwarded to the QMT, for initial review, risk assessment and resolution.
 - QMT clarifies risk:
 - *High-Priority* (safety, child protection, discrimination, sexual harassment) – escalate to CEO within 24 0 48 hours.
 - *Standard* – proceed with routine investigation within ten (10) business days.
 - Resolution may include refund, apology, staff training or policy change.
- **Step 4 - Resolution**
 - If unresolved, the complaint is escalated to the CEO within ten (10) business days.
 - Written notificati
- **Step 5 - External Mediation**
 - The complainant may access external mediation via ASQA or another approved mediator if internal processes are unsatisfactory.

2.3 External Resolution Options

In the event of the complainant reporting, they are dissatisfied with the proposed solution; the following avenues are available:

1. ASQA: Australian Skills Quality Authority

Phone: 1300 701 801

Email: feedback@asqa.gov.au

2. National Training Complaints Hotline

Phone: 1800 000 674

3. NSW Ombudsman (Domestic Students)

Website: ombo.nsw.gov.au

4. Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (International Students)

Website: ombudsman.gov.au

Please Note: The ombudsman cannot change the decision. They consider the way the decision was made and whether the provider's policies were followed and make recommendations on how the decision or process could be improved.

3. Appeals Process

3.1 Grounds for Appeal

- Perceived bias or procedural errors in assessment.
- Unreasonable application of assessment criteria.
- Clerical errors in recording results.

3.2 Steps

- **Step 1** - Appeals must be lodged in writing within twenty (20) business days of the original decision via **KOIC's Appeal Form** available on the KOIC website.
- **Step 2** - An independent assessor will review the appeal and arrange reassessment if necessary.
- **Step 3** – If unresolved, the appeal may proceed to external mediation.

4. Timelines

Step	Timeframe
Acknowledge complaint/appeal	Within 5 business days
Initial resolution (informal)	Within 5 business days of submission
Escalation to senior management	Within 10 business days
External mediation (if unresolved)	Within 10 business days of escalation
Acknowledge complaint/appeal	Within 5 business days

5. Confidentiality and Recordkeeping

KOIC ensures strict confidentiality throughout the process. All complaints and appeals are documented in the Complaints and Appeals Register. Outcomes are communicated in writing and reviewed for systematic improvements.

Students requiring additional support (e.g. interpreters, disability accommodations) will be provided with necessary assistance.

6. Staff Training

Staff involved in handling complaints and appeals receive biannual training in areas such as conflict resolution, compliance, and effective communication.

7. Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances

Compassionate or compelling circumstance by definitions are generally those circumstances beyond the control of

the student and they have an impact on the student's capacity and/or ability to progress through a course and could include:

- Serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the students was unable to attend class.
- Serious illness or death of a close family member (independent evidence of the exceptional circumstances is required).
- Major upheaval, unrest or natural disaster in the home country requiring the student's emergency travel and this has impacted on his/her course progress.
- A traumatic experience which could include, but is not limited to, involvement in or witnessing of an accident or a crime committed against the student, or the student has been a witness to a crime (police or psychologist's reports are required).

Procedure Summary Table

1. Complaints Handling

Step	Action	Responsible	Timeframe
0	Raise concern informally with Student Services Officer (SSO) or Director of Studies (VET/ELICOS)	Student	Within 5 working day of issue
1	Submit feedback or complaint via any channel (verbal, written, email, form)	Student	Anytime (or within 5 working days o unresolved issue)
2	Acknowledge receipt of complaint and advise of next steps	Student Services Officer	Within 2 working days
3	Triage complaint to identify urgency and escalate if high risk (e.g. safety, wellbeing, discrimination)	Quality Management Team	Within 24-28 hours for urgent matters
4	Offer support to student if required (e.g. advocate, interpreter)	Student Support Officer	As needed
5	Investigate complaint fairly and objectively	QMT (not involved in the original matter)	Within 10 working days (or longer with written explanation)
6	Communicate outcome to student, including reasons and options for appeal	Compliance Officer	Within 2 working days of decision
7	Refer to external mediation if internal resolution fails	Compliance Officer	Within 10 working days of inter
8	Record and file all complaint documentation securely	Compliance Officer	Immediately upon finalisation
9	Review complaint trends and refer to Continuous Improvement Register if systemic issues are identified	Compliance Officer	Quarterly or as issues arise

2. Appeals Process

Step	Action	Responsible	Timeframe
1	Student submits appeal in writing using the Appeals Form	Student	Within 28 calendar days of the original decision
2	Acknowledge receipt of appeal	Compliance Officer	Within 2 working days
3	Assess completeness and validity of appeal	Compliance Officer	Within 2 working days of receipt
4	Request additional information (if required)	Compliance Officer	As needed
5	Assign independent investigator not involved in original decision	Compliance Officer	Immediately following validation
6	Conduct fair, impartial investigation including all parties	Assigned Staff	Within 10 working days or as extended with notice
7	Provide written progress updates	Compliance Officer	Every 2 weeks while unresolved
8	Communicate final outcome and reasons	Compliance Officer	Immediately after decision
9	Record decision and any remedies in CI Register	Compliance Officer	Within 2 working days of outcome
10	Refer unresolved cases to external bodies if requested	Student / Compliance Officer	Following internal appeal decision

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
CEO	Ensure compliance with relevant legislation. Approve updates to the policy. Review escalated complaints and appeals.
Quality Management Team (QMT)	- Oversees the implementation of continuous improvements strategies across all areas of operation. - Ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements and maintain quality assurance.
Compliance Officer	Oversee the resolution on non-compliance issues and maintains quality assurance records, including the Deferment, Suspension, Intervention and Cancellation Register.
Director of Studies VET / Director of Studies ELICOS	Ensures training and assessment compliance with Standards for RTOs and ELICOS Standards. Implement quality improvements in course delivery, student outcomes and compliance processes,
Student Services Officer (SSO)	Assist students in completing forms and provide information about the complaints and appeals process. Identifies student concerns and reports them to QMT for quality improvement considerations.

Policy Implementation

This policy is implemented through:

- Staff training and induction to ensure awareness and understanding of feedback, complaints and appeals procedures.
- Clear and accessible publication of the policy on KOIC's website and in the Student Handbook.
- Integration with KOIC's continuous improvement processes to ensure complaints and appeals trends inform strategic actions.
- Allocation of responsibilities to ensure all staff are aware of their role in managing and responding to complaints and appeals.
- All staff involved in decision-making processes are required to familiarise themselves with the appeals procedure and uphold its principles of fairness and transparency.
- Regular reviews of the complaints and appeals registers to identify systemic issues and drive policy refinement.
- Internal audits and reviews to monitor adherence to policy and procedure and to assess the effectiveness of the complaints and appeals handling system.
- The Compliance Officer is responsible for overseeing implementation, ensuring all complaints and appeals are recorded, monitored, and reviewed according to this policy.

Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of the complaints and appeals system is monitored through regular review of complaints data, student feedback, appeal requests and Continuous Improvement actions.

As part of this process, KOIC conducts root cause analysis to determine whether complaints and appeals arise from isolated incidents, systemic issues, or policy/procedure gaps. This involves reviewing patterns and trends, consulting with relevant stakeholders, and mapping complaints and appeals to possible underlying causes such as communication breakdowns, training design, staff conduct, or operational processes. Follow-up contact may be made with complainants or appellants to confirm satisfaction and document any remaining concerns.

Outcomes of this analysis are used to inform targeted improvements and are documented in the Continuous Improvement Register. Annual reporting to the governing body includes trends, risks and recommendations for improvement. Appeal records are stored securely, retained for a minimum of five years, and only accessed by authorised staff.

Complaints and appeals data and management practices are included in the RTO's internal audit schedule and reported annually to the governing body. Reporting includes resolution timeframes, satisfaction data (where available), and the effectiveness of implemented improvements.

The complaints and appeals policy is reviewed every two years, or sooner as required, to ensure alignment with legislative changes and best practices. Findings from the review are documented, and action plans are developed to address any gaps.

Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Approved by	Approval date	Author	Review date
V1.0	Jan 2024	Original policy	CEO	Jan 2024	Compliance Officer	Jan 2025
V2.0	9 Dec 2024	Revised policy formerly Grievance, Student Complaint & Appeal Policy	CEO	Feb 2025	Compliance Officer	Dec 2026
V3.0	Jun 2025	Updated in line with new standards for RTOs 2025	CEO	Jun 2025	Compliance Officer	Jun 2027
V3.1	Apr 2026	Re-brand of policy to KOIC	CEO	1 Apr 2026	Compliance Officer	Apr 2028

Policy and Document Information

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