



COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES, AND APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. OVERVIEW

Sydney Met is committed to providing a fair, equitable, and transparent learning environment for students and prospective students. This includes providing effective mechanisms for receiving and responding to complaints, grievance and appeals that ensure accountability, support continuous improvement, and, most importantly, the timely resolution of complaints, grievances and appeals.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to (a) describe the principles that underpin Sydney Met’s approach to receiving and responding to complaints, grievances and appeals from students and prospective students; and (b) outline the processes by which these principles are operationalized to deal with complaints, grievances, and appeals in a timely manner.

3. SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to Sydney Met, its staff, students, prospective students who have applied for enrolment, and to Education Agents concerned with student recruitment for the College. This document is concerned with academic and administrative complaints, grievances, and appeals only. The policy does not apply to complaints of discrimination or sexual harassment which are dealt with through the *Anti-Discrimination Policy*.

It is noted that use of the processes set out in this document does not remove the student’s or prospective student’s right to take further action under Australia’s Consumer Protection Laws, or limit in any way their right to pursue other legal remedies.

4. DEFINITIONS

Grievance: This is a broad term that includes all matters where there is an expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of a student’s (or prospective student’s) experience with the College, its staff, or agents. Grievances include, but not limited to, actions, determinations, processes or facilities considered unfair, disadvantageous, wrong or inadequate. Grievances may be minor matters that can be resolved informally, or formal complaints that are more serious and require the processes outlined in this document (see [TEQSA Guidance note: Grievance and complaint handling, Version 1.1, February 2019](#)).

Appeal: The term appeal refers specifically to requests that the College reconsider a formal decision or determination. This may include decisions about admission, reasonable adjustments, special consideration, grade outcomes, and any other decisions or determinations concerning students or prospective students.

Informal Grievance or Appeal: An informal grievance or appeal is made directly to the responsible person, such as the Unit Coordinator. Informal grievances or appeals may be resolved at this point.

Formal Complaint or Appeal: A matter is defined as a formal grievance or appeal if it cannot be resolved directly by the responsible person as an informal grievance. A formal grievance or appeal is made using documented application processes (see below) and applications are supported by evidence.

Education Agent (Agent): A person or organisation (in or outside Australia) who recruits overseas students and refers them to the College. Education agents provide a range of services, including providing advice, marketing, and promotional materials.

5. PRINCIPLES

The key principles that underpin Sydney Met's approach to resolution of complaints, grievances and appeals are:

- *Timeliness:* Sydney Met undertakes to deal with complaints, grievances and appeals as quickly as possible and within the timeframes outlined below.
- *Confidentiality:* matters raised under this policy will be treated as confidential to safeguard the privacy of complainants.
- *Cost:* Sydney Met will bear the costs of making internal or external complaints so that there is no cost to complainants.
- *Advocacy and Support:* The Sydney Met complaints process provides for complainants to receive independent advice, advocacy and personal support during the process of raising a complaint or appeal.
- *Without Prejudice or Disadvantage:* matters raised under this policy will be considered fairly, without prejudice, and solely on merit and on evidence provided. The complainant will not be disadvantaged while the grievance or appeal is in progress, for example, an enrolled student will be allowed to continue their enrolment or attend classes where enrolment in a course or unit is the subject of an appeal.

6. INFORMAL GRIEVANCE OR APPEAL

6.1 Students/prospective students are encouraged, wherever possible, to raise grievances informally with the responsible person concerned (for example, the Lecturer or Unit Coordinator) in the first instance, and this process should be initiated as soon as possible and usually within ten (10) working days of the matter arising.

6.2 The student/prospective student is responsible for making clear the nature of their concern and, where applicable, providing evidence to support the claims.

6.3 The responsible person should act to resolve the informal grievance or appeal as soon as possible, and no later than ten (10) working days of receiving the grievance or appeal.

6.4 If the grievance is not resolved at this stage, the student can follow the formal process outlined below.

7. FORMAL GRIEVANCE OR APPEAL

7.1 Students/prospective students lodge a complaint using the *Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Form* available at reception, through the Learning Management System (LMS), or through the College web site.

7.2 The application, supported by evidence, should usually be submitted within ten (10) working days of (a) the matter arising; or (b) the matter being considered through the informal process without resolution. Applications are to be submitted by email to complaints@sydneymet.edu.au. The application must set out:

- the background to the grievance or appeal
- specify the grievance or nature of the appeal
- describe the steps already taken to address the grievance or appeal (if any; e.g., informal process) including dates
- provide a brief description of how the matter can be resolved from the student/prospective students perspective.

7.3 The grievance or appeal will be considered, and if necessary, investigated by the Registrar (or delegate) within ten (10) working days of receipt of the student application. This may include any or all of the following:

- designating a staff member with no prior involvement in the case to assist with the investigation;
- forming a working party to investigate and report on the matter;
- consulting with relevant staff and students regarding the case, and/or;
- arranging an interview with the complainant to discuss the case.

7.4 The Registrar (or delegate) will respond to the complainant in writing within ten (10) working days of receipt of the grievance or appeal provided all required documentation has been submitted stating the outcome of the complaint including the reasons for the outcome and information about the process and timeline for appealing the decision.

7.5 The complainant has the right to:

- be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any interviews with College staff concerning the matter.
- receive independent professional advice and advocacy throughout the formal internal processes.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the process at this stage they may request review of the case by the Executive Dean by responding in writing to the outcome letter. Such requests must be supported by a rationale explaining their concerns about the Registrar's decision.

7.7 The Executive Dean will review the documentation provided and may undertake further investigation that may involve further interviews with stakeholders as required. The Executive Dean will respond in writing to the complainant within five (5) working days. This response will include information about further appeal to the CEO .

8. EXTERNAL APPEAL

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may lodge an appeal with the CEO.

The CEO will consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within five (5) working days. Where possible such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to these interviews.

Following the consultation, the CEO will provide a written report to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the issue, including the reasons for the decision, within five (5) working days. The report will also advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

DOMESTIC STUDENTS

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome following the internal process they may seek independent resolution through the Resolution Institute. The student can contact the Resolution Institute directly as follows:

Address: Level 1, 13-15 Bridge Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: 02 9251 3366
Free call: 1800 651 650
Fax: 02 9251 3733
Email: leadr@leadr.info
Website: <https://www.resolution.institute>

The costs of such an external appeal will be fully covered by the College (Sydney Met).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

For academic matters, international students may access the Resolution Institute in the same way as domestic students (see above).

For non-academic matters, if an international student making complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome they may lodge an external appeal by contacting the Commonwealth Ombudsman

The Commonwealth Ombudsman offers a free and independent service for international students who have a complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their provider. For more information, please to the following contact details of the Commonwealth Ombudsman: <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students>

Phone - 1300 362 072

Sydney Met agrees to be bound by any recommendations from the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the CEO will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented immediately on receipt of such recommendations.

Complaints or grievances related to academic merit are not dealt by Commonwealth Ombudsman.

9. COLLEGE REMEDIAL ACTION

If the internal or any external complaints handling or appeal process results in a recommendation or decision in favour of the student, Sydney Met will implement the agreement or decision immediately and/or take the preventative or corrective action required by the decision and advise the student accordingly. If the outcome indicates a systemic issue at Sydney Met the College will undertake remedial action to address this.

10. FURTHER ACTION

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection or other laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies, but it would be expected that a complainant would first seek to have their grievance resolved under this policy

11. ENROLMENT STATUS

Where a current student chooses to access this policy and procedure, Sydney Met will maintain that person's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

12. RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the General Manager. These records will be maintained at 432 - 434 Kent St, Sydney, NSW 2000.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by Sydney Met's Student Information Privacy Policy and Procedures.