

Student Grievance Policy and Procedure

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Purpose

This Policy and Procedure sets out the principles and processes for managing student grievances at Australia Institute of Future Education (**AIFE**) and has been prepared to ensure compliance with Section 2.4 of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*.

Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to grievances raised by prospective or currently enrolled students about any non-academic aspects of their experience with AIFE or its related parties.

Complaints that are of an academic nature are dealt with in the relevant policies and procedures. For example, a student complaint about AIFE's handling of the student's academic progress will be addressed in the Academic Progression Policy and Procedure.

Policy

Statement

This Policy and Procedure establishes transparent, equitable and timely principles and processes for the resolution of student grievances.

Principles

In managing grievances, AIFE will:

- Encourage resolution at the local level where possible
- Respect the views of all parties to the grievance
- Not discriminate against, or victimise, any party (respondent or complainant) to a grievance
- Endeavour to resolve the grievance promptly
- Respect the sensitivity of the grievance and the confidentiality of parties involved
- Be procedurally fair and transparent
- Be timely in implementing any decisions arising from a grievance resolution process
- Ensure students are informed of their rights and receive support, including support from student services where needed.

During all stages of the grievance resolution process, AIFE will take all steps to ensure:

- Each party to a grievance has an opportunity to formally present their case and to be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings
- A full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided to the complainant and any respondent where applicable
- Where the resolution of a grievance results in a decision that supports the complainant, AIFE will promptly implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome;

- There is no cost to the complainant for using grievance processes.

Procedure

Students are encouraged to seek assistance and support from the Student Administration & Support Officer before they take action in relation to a grievance.

Grievances may be resolved by:

- Informal local discussion and resolution, and/or
- Submission of a formal grievance.

These grievance avenues will be discussed in the following sections.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, complainants are encouraged to attempt to resolve matters at the local level.

Grievances resulting from any of the following behaviours should not be resolved informally:

- Violence
- Fraud, corruption or malpractice
- Discrimination, vilification or victimisation.

Informal Resolution

AIFE advises students to resolve concerns or difficulties, wherever possible, directly with the person(s) concerned.

In doing so, students should identify the cause(s) of the grievance and their desired outcomes before they contact the person concerned.

If a student grievance comes to the attention of a staff member, that staff member:

- Should endeavour to resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of all parties wherever possible
- May consult senior staff members for advice, and
- May direct the student to appropriate support services where required.

Formal Grievances

Students may lodge a formal grievance if informal resolution:

- Is not appropriate to the nature of the grievance (e.g. The grievance relates to violence, fraud, discrimination) or
- Did not result in a satisfactory outcome.

Formal grievances must be submitted in writing to the Student Administration & Support Officer.

Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged within five (5) working days and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.

The Student Administration & Support Officer will determine the nature of the grievance. Where a grievance is particularly complex, serious or sensitive, this may be referred to the CEO for action.

Minor Grievances

Where a grievance is determined to be minor, Student Administration & Support Officer will:

- Seek to clarify from the complainant the desired outcome. This clarification can be sought through written communication or through an in person interview (via video conferencing). If clarification is sought through an in person interview, the complainant may ask for another person to be present
- Provide the respondent with an opportunity to respond, in writing or through an in person interview, to the complaint. If an in person interview was held via video conferencing), the respondent may ask for another person to be present
- Identify appropriate actions or recommendations having regard to the views of both the complainant and the respondent
- Notify the complainant, within ten (10) working days, in writing of:
 - The steps taken to address the grievance
 - The decision and reasons for the decision, and
 - Their right to appeal.

Serious or Complex Complaints

In regards to grievances of a serious, complex or sensitive nature, the CEO will appoint either a senior manager who has no relationship to the complaint, or another independent person, to:

- Investigate the circumstances of the grievance and
- Prepare a report detailing their findings and recommendations for resolution.

Upon receipt of the report from the senior manager or independent person, and within ten (10) working days of receipt of the report, the CEO will:

- Examine the report to ensure the findings and recommendations from the investigation are relevant to the grievance, and supported by evidence
- Determine the appropriate recommendations for implementation, and
- Inform the complainant in writing of:
 - The outcome of the investigation
 - The steps taken to address the grievance
 - The decision and reasons for the decision, and
 - Their right to appeal.

Outcomes of Grievance Processes

AIFE will implement any decisions or corrective action promptly and advise students accordingly.

Further Action

The processes set out in this Policy and Procedure do not:

- Replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other AIFE policies or any other law.
- Limit an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies, at their own cost.

Appeals

Where students are not satisfied with the outcome of a grievance, they may access the internal and external appeals processes outlined in AIFE's *Student Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

Approval Publication and Training

This Policy and Procedure:

- Will be available to students (current and prospective) through publication in the Student Handbook and on the AIFE website
- Will form part of the staff induction process.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this Policy and Procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least 5 years in the *Grievance and Appeals Register*.

All parties may seek appropriate access to these records upon written request to the Student Administration and Support Officer.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential in accordance with AIFE's *Records Management Policy and Procedure*.

Reporting

The Student Administration and Support Officer will prepare a report each year analysing data from student grievances for submission to the Board of Directors. The report will include any recommendations for improvements to AIFE services and operations on the basis of any identified trends.

The Board of Directors will approve recommendations as appropriate and allocate any necessary budget and responsibility for implementation.

Responsibilities

The Student Administration and Support Officer is responsible for:

- Acknowledging receipt of formal grievances lodged by students
- Establishing the complexity of student grievances and referring matters to relevant personnel for further consideration

- Resolving minor grievances
- Maintaining a record of all grievances in the *Student Grievance and Appeals Register*
- Reporting to the CEO annually on any systemic or pattern in student grievances.

The CEO is responsible for resolving serious or complex complaints, and ensuring any recommendations arising are implemented.

The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that any systemic issues arising from observed trends in grievances and appeals are addressed and monitored.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy and Procedure, the following terms are defined as follows:

Appeal	An action taken when students wish to challenge the outcome of a grievance, or a decision made by AIFE
Complainant	The student who is taking action in relation to a grievance under this Policy and Procedure
Grievance	A student's expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of AIFE's services and activities, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enrolment, induction/orientation process; • The quality of education provided; • Handling of personal information and access to personal records; • Attitude and behaviour of academic or administrative staff; or • The way someone has been treated including victimisation or bullying, discrimination, (non-sexual) harassment, vilification and any matter that arises from a perception of unfair or inappropriate treatment.
Respondent	A person (student or staff) against whom a grievance has been lodged, formal or informal
Student	Any reference to a student refers to both students who are currently enrolled as well as prospective (e.g. applicants for admission into an AIFE course)

Version History

Version #	Changes	Approval Body	Approval Date
1.0	New Policy	Board of Directors	05 September 2022

Additional Information

Policy Status	Approved
Policy Owner	CEO
Next Review Date	3 years from Approval Date
Related Internal Documents	Student Appeals Policy and Procedure Records Management Policy and Procedure
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2022	Standards 2.4.1 to 2.4.5
Other legislative or regulatory instruments	Nil

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