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Feedback, Complaints and Appeals policy and procedure – Standard 2.7 and 2.8

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all staff, students, and third parties engaged with Polytechnic Victoria, ensuring a consistent approach to managing feedback, complaints, and appeals across the organisation.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure an accessible, transparent, and effective process for managing feedback,
complaints, and appeals. By doing so, Polytechnic Victoria aims to enhance the overall quality of its operations, strengthen stakeholder confidence, and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Policy

The policy supports Standard 2.7 and 2.8 of NVR Revised Standards for RTOs 2025 which state that

- Feedback and complaints management addresses concerns and informs continuous improvement of the NVR registered training organisation
- Effective appeal processes are available to VET students where decisions of the NVR registered training organisation or a third party adversely affect the student

This policy also supports 'Standard 10 – Complaints and Appeals' of the 'National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities & Providers of Education & Training to Overseas Students 2018' which ensures all overseas students have access to fair, timely, and transparent complaints and appeals processes, including access to an independent external review at no or low cost

This policy and procedure also supports Standard 2.1 of SRTO's 2025 - VET students have access to clear and accurate information concerning the organisation

Polytechnic Victoria recognises that, despite its commitment to high-quality services, complaints or appeals may arise. All students and stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback and are supported to lodge formal complaints or appeals without incurring any cost. The procedures outlined ensure that all feedback, complaints, and appeals are handled fairly, transparently, confidentially, and within reasonable timeframes, with the aim of achieving a satisfactory resolution for all parties involved. Feedback, complaints, and appeals are systematically recorded and analysed to identify trends and inform ongoing improvements to training, assessment, and student support services, thereby contributing to a culture of continuous improvement and stakeholder trust

Definitions

Complaint:	Dissatisfaction with a service offered or treatment received at Polytechnic Victoria.
Appeal:	Dissatisfied with a decision made by Polytechnic Victoria. Could be an Internal Appeal or an External Appeal.
Complainant:	The Student making a Complaint.
External Appeal:	A process where a student seeks review of a decision by an independent external body, such as the Overseas Student Ombudsman Website: http://www.ombudsman.gov.au Call: 1300 362 072* (within Australia) Call +61 2 5117 3600. (Outside Australia) Online Form available on website Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au Post: GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601
Formal Complaint:	A complaint managed under the formal complaints and appeals procedure
Informal Complaint:	A complaint managed under the informal complaints and appeals procedure, typically resolved at the point of service or through direct communication
Internal Appeal:	An appeal to a Staff member at Polytechnic Victoria.
Overseas Student:	A person holding an Australian student visa, enrolled in a CRICOS registered course, as a Student of Polytechnic Victoria.
Party:	A person lodging an Appeal and/or the Respondent.
Privacy:	Information protected under the Information Privacy Act (Vic) in accordance with Polytechnic Victoria's Information Privacy Policy.
Procedures:	The Institute's Procedures published on the Polytechnic Victoria's website and in the student Handbook.
Respondent:	A person who must respond to the Appeal on behalf of Polytechnic Victoria.
Staff:	Any person employed by Polytechnic Victoria at the time of the Complaint including full-time, part-time, sessional or casual Staff.
Student:	Any person enrolled as a student of Polytechnic Victoria.
Support Person:	An observer (who is not legally trained) who accompanies a Party during the complaint or appeals process.
Polytechnic Victoria / Institute / RTO:	Refers to Polytechnic Victoria.

Working Day:	A day on which Polytechnic Victoria is open for business, excluding weekends and designated Institute holidays.

Procedure:

1. Feedback

Polytechnic Victoria values student input and both actively collects feedback and encourages all VET students to provide feedback on any aspect of its operations, services, staff, or third-party providers.

- Accessible Feedback Channels:
  Feedback can be provided through a variety of accessible channels, including:
  - In person to any staff member or at Student Services
  - Via email to the dedicated feedback address
  - Through online feedback forms available on the Polytechnic Victoria website
  - During scheduled student surveys
  - Directly to relevant staff during classes or meetings

- Clear Communication and Support:
  Information about how to provide feedback and the available channels is clearly communicated to students at orientation, in the Student Handbook, and on the Polytechnic Victoria website, ensuring all students are aware of their options and supported throughout the process.

- Recording and Continuous Review:
  All feedback is formally recorded and reviewed at the end of each month by management to ensure student input informs decision-making and drives continuous improvement in training, assessment, and support services.

- Culture of Openness:
  Polytechnic Victoria promotes a culture of openness and transparency assuring students that they can provide honest feedback without fear of penalty or disadvantage.

Anonymous Feedback Mechanisms: Polytechnic Victoria implements anonymous feedback systems, such as suggestion boxes at all campuses, where students can share their thoughts on courses, instructors, or institutional policies without revealing their identities.

Transparent Follow-Up on Feedback: Polytechnic Victoria has a structured process for handling student feedback and ensures clear communication of outcomes to students. For instance, if students express concerns about a course structure or a trainer's strict approach, the operations manager engages with the trainer to gain their perspective and understand the context of the feedback. Such issues often arise from misunderstandings or misaligned expectations among students. To address this, the operations manager may organize a session with the entire class to clarify course requirements and expectations. Simultaneously, the manager coaches the trainer on effectively communicating their expectations to students and fostering an environment where students feel comfortable sharing feedback. This open dialogue enables real-time adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

2. Informal Complaints Process

- Wherever possible, Polytechnic Victoria encourages the resolution of complaints through informal means before initiating the formal complaint process.
- Students are encouraged to address concerns directly with the relevant staff member or Student Support Officer, if appropriate.
- Informal resolution may include:
    - Seeking advice or clarification regarding the concern
    - Engaging in open and respectful discussion with the relevant parties
    - Mediation facilitated by the Operations team, where necessary
- Any staff member may assist in resolving issues informally, and students are supported throughout this process.
- Students may approach a Student Support Officer for assistance at any time.
- If the issue is resolved informally, no further action is required; however, the matter may be documented for continuous improvement purposes and reported to management for review.
- All staff should be aware that if an informal complaint may legal ramifications, students should be encouraged to lodge a formal complaint. E.g. a harassment concern, negligence in ensuring a safe learning environment or breach of privacy etc
- Once a formal complaint is lodged, the formal complaint procedures outlined in this policy must be followed

3. Formal Complaints Procedure

Where informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, Polytechnic Victoria provides a structured and transparent formal complaints process to ensure procedural fairness, timely resolution, and continuous improvement.

Step 1 – Submission

- Formal complaints must be submitted using the 10.1 Complaints & Appeals Form, available from Student Services, the Polytechnic Victoria website, or upon request.
- Completed forms can be submitted in person to Student Services or electronically via the designated email address (sso@pv.edu.au).
- The complaint must include:
    - Submission date
    - Complainant's name
    - Nature of the complaint
    - Date(s) of the event(s) giving rise to the complaint
    - Any supporting documentation or attachments
- All complaints are accepted regarding Polytechnic Victoria, its staff, contractors, or third parties delivering services on behalf of the organisation.

Step 2: Registering and Acknowledgement

- Upon receipt of the complaint form, the Operations Manager will:
    - Enter the complaint into the Complaints and Appeals Register
    - Notify the Operations Manager of the complaint
    - Forward all related documentation

Student Services will acknowledge the complaint in writing within two (2) working days, outlining the process, expected timeframes, and the complainant's rights, including procedural fairness and support throughout the process.

The Complaints and Appeals Register will record:

- Date of submission
- Complainant's name
- Description of the complaint or appeal
- Determined resolution
- Date of resolution

Step 3 – Investigation and Resolution

- The complaint will be assigned to an impartial staff member who has not been involved in the subject matter of the complaint.
- All parties related to the complaint will be given the opportunity to provide relevant information and respond to the issues raised.
- Meetings may be convened with the complainant, respondent, and any relevant witnesses as required. The complainant has the option to be accompanied by a support person (not legally trained) at any stage. For eg: A friend, family member or guardian

- Investigations will be conducted promptly, objectively, and confidentially, upholding the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.
- The Operations Manager ensures a resolution is reached and communicated in writing within ten (10) working days of the complaint being lodged, wherever practicable.
- If additional time is required, the complainant is informed of the delay and provided with regular progress updates until the matter is resolved

Step 4 - Notification of Outcome

- The Operations Manager ensures a resolution is reached and communicated in writing within ten (10) working days of the complaint being lodged, wherever practicable.
- If additional time is required, the complainant is informed of the delay and provided with regular progress updates until the matter is resolved

Step 5 - Right to Appeal and Escalation

- Upon notification of the formal complaint outcome, students are informed of their right to further action through an appeal of the formal complaint outcome
- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, the complaint may be escalated in the following order:
    - First to the Operations Manager, who will review the matter and provide a written response within ten (10) working days.
    - If still unresolved, the matter may be further escalated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who will conduct a final internal review and provide a written decision within ten (10) working days.

Step 6 - External Review
For domestic students:

- Where internal processes do not resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, an external review may be sought through the external mediation and the complaint may be referred to:

melbournemediationcentre.com.au - https://www.melbournemediationcentre.com.au
Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria - https://www.disputes.vic.gov.au › about-us › mediation

For International students

- Where internal processes do not resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, an external review may be sought through the Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO) at no or low cost.
- Details for the OSO are provided in all written outcome correspondence and are available on the Polytechnic Victoria website and in the Student Handbook:
    - Phone: 1300 362 072
    - Online Form: www.ombudsman.gov.au/contact-us
- Polytechnic Victoria will cooperate fully with any external investigation and implement recommendations as appropriate.

Step 7: Support and Accessibility

- All students are supported throughout the process, including the option to be accompanied by a support person (not legally trained) at any stage.

- Information about the complaints process, including timeframes and avenues for further action, is publicly available and easily accessible via the Student Handbook, website, wall posters and orientation materials

Documentation and Recordkeeping

- All complaints, investigations, and outcomes are documented in the Complaints and Appeals Register and maintained securely and confidentially, accessible only to authorised personnel, in accordance with privacy legislation and Polytechnic Victoria's Information Privacy Policy.
- Documentation includes:
    - The original complaint and supporting evidence
    - Acknowledgement correspondence
    - Records of investigation, meetings, and communications
    - Written outcome notifications
    - Records of any escalation or external review

Continuous Improvement

- Trends and outcomes from complaints are reviewed regularly by management to identify areas for improvement in training, assessment, and support services.
- Where systemic issues are identified, actions are recorded in the Continuous Improvement Register and implemented as part of Polytechnic Victoria's quality assurance framework.

4. Appeals Procedure

Polytechnic Victoria provides a clear, accessible, and fair appeals process for students who wish to request a review of decisions affecting their progress, enrolment, assessment outcomes, or other matters. The appeals process is designed to uphold the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, and is available at no cost to students.

Grounds for Appeal

- Students may appeal decisions relating to:
  - Assessment outcomes
  - Deferral, suspension, or cancellation of enrolment
  - Any other decision or outcome following a formal complaint
- Appeals must be based on reasonable grounds, such as:
  - Perceived procedural irregularity
  - New evidence not previously considered
  - Unreasonable or unjust decision

Step 1: Informal Resolution

- Students are encouraged to discuss the matter with the relevant staff member or Student Support Officer to seek informal resolution, where appropriate.
- Early intervention and open communication are promoted to address concerns promptly and prevent escalation.
- If the matter is resolved informally, the outcome may be documented for continuous improvement purposes

Step 2: Submission of Formal Appeal

- If the issue remains unresolved, the student may lodge a formal appeal by completing the Complaints & Appeals Form, available from Student Services or the Polytechnic Victoria website.
- The appeal must include:
  - A clear explanation of the grounds for appeal and why the decision is considered unfair
  - Any supporting documentation or evidence
  - The Student Support Officer is available to assist in completing and submitting the form.
  - Appeals must be lodged within 20 working days of notification of the decision.
- Suspension or cancellation of enrolment will not take effect until the internal appeals process is completed.

Step 3: Acknowledgement

- Upon receipt of the formal appeal, Student Services will acknowledge the appeal in writing within two (2) working days.
- The acknowledgement will outline the next steps, expected timeframes, and the student's rights, including the right to procedural fairness and to be accompanied by a support person.

Step 4: Internal Investigation

- The appeal will be assigned to an impartial staff member or panel who was not involved in the original decision.
- All parties involved in the original decision will be given the opportunity to respond in writing and/or participate in a meeting if required.
- The investigation is conducted promptly, objectively, and confidentially, considering all relevant evidence and ensuring the student's right to be heard.
- Meetings may be convened with the student, relevant staff, or witnesses as necessary to gather additional information.
- The formal appeals process will begin within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.

Step 5: Written Outcome

- A written outcome, including the reasons for the decision and any actions to be taken, will be provided to the student within ten (10) working days of the appeal being lodged, wherever practicable.
- If additional time is required due to the complexity of the matter, the student will be informed of the delay and provided with regular progress updates until the matter is resolved.
- The outcome letter will include information about the next steps available to the student if they remain dissatisfied.

Step 6: Further Internal Appeal

- If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, the appeal may be escalated to the Operations Manager, and, if still unresolved, to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- Each escalation will be reviewed by a different, impartial decision-maker not previously involved in the matter.
- Written outcomes will be provided within ten (10) working days at each stage of escalation, and the student will be informed of their right to external review if still dissatisfied.

Step 7: External Appeal

For domestic students:

- If the internal appeals process does not resolve the matter to the student's satisfaction, an external review through may be sought through the external mediation and the appeal may be referred to:

melbournemediationcentre.com.au - https://www.melbournemediationcentre.com.au
Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria - https://www.disputes.vic.gov.au › about-us › mediation

For International students

- If the internal appeals process does not resolve the matter to the student's satisfaction, the student may seek an external review through the Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO) at no or low cost.
- Contact details for the OSO are provided in all written outcome correspondence and are available in the Student Handbook and on the Polytechnic Victoria website:
    - Phone: 1300 362 072
    - Online Form: www.ombudsman.gov.au/contact-us
    - Postal Address: GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601
- Polytechnic Victoria will cooperate fully with any external investigation and implement recommendations as appropriate.
- The decision of the OSO is final. Further action beyond this point lies outside Polytechnic Victoria's internal procedures. Students may be referred to external government agencies such as the Department of Education or the Department of Home Affairs

Support and Accessibility

- **At any stage, the student may appoint a support person (not legally trained) to attend meetings or discussions related to the appeal.**
- **Information about the appeals process, including timeframes and avenues for further action, is publicly available and easily accessible via the Student Handbook, website, and orientation materials.**

Documentation and Continuous Improvement

- All appeals, investigations, and outcomes are documented in the Complaints and Appeals Register, Student Management System, and retained in the student's admin file in accordance with privacy legislation.
- Management reviews the appeals data on a monthly basis to identify trends and inform continuous improvement of training, assessment, and support services.
- If an appeal is substantiated, Polytechnic Victoria will implement the required corrective or preventive actions within 30 days and notify the student. Such decisions are reviewed at internal Continuous Improvement Meetings to ensure procedures are appropriately updated.

Review

The policy is reviewed annually, or as required, to ensure ongoing compliance with relevant standards and to support continuous improvement in the quality of training and assessment provided by Polytechnic Victoria

Responsibilities

- Chief Executive Officer
- Operations Manager
- Student Support Officer

Policy Base

- Standards for Registered Training Organisations (SRTOs) 2025
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act)
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code)

Forms & documents

- 10.1 Complaints & Appeals Form
- Complaints and Appeals Register
- Feedback forms
- Continuous Improvement Register
- Record Keeping Forms