


Complaints and Appeals Procedure		
Version: 6	Approved: 11 December 2024	
Administered: General Manager	Next Review: December 2025	

Purpose

This procedure explains a fair, equitable, and transparent process used by Wingate Avenue Community Centre Inc (**Wingate Ave**) including 6419 Registered Training Organisation (RTO), when managing complaints and appeals related to the operations of the organisations. It provides a framework under which clients, community members, students and stakeholders can seek to resolve complaints and appeals in a conciliatory and timely manner.

Procedural Statement

Wingate Ave is committed to providing quality services and programs that support positive community outcomes. We are committed to continuously improving our services and programs, and welcome feedback from the community as an important part of providing quality services that meet community need.

Principles

The following principles underpin Wingate Ave's approach in managing complaints:

- **Fairness.** Both the person complaining (the complainant) and the person being complained about (the respondent) have an opportunity to present their version of events, provide supporting information, and respond to any potential negative decisions. The person investigating and/or making decisions about the complaint will behave impartially, not favouring the complainant or respondent, or prejudge the complaint in any way.
- **Confidentiality.** Information about the complaint is only provided to those people who need to know about it for the complaint to be actioned properly.
- **Transparency.** The complaint process and the possible outcomes of the complaint will be clearly explained to the parties, and those involved will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint, and the reasons for any decisions.
- **Accessibility.** The complaint process should be easy to access and understand, and those involved should be able to participate equally.
- **Efficiency.** The complaint process should be conducted without delay and resolved as swiftly as possible, without degrading due process. As time passes, relevant information may deteriorate or be lost, which will impact the fairness of the process, and unresolved complaints can have a negative and ongoing impact on the workplace.

Procedural Detail

1. Information and Prevention

- 1.1 Clear code of conduct for all entering the community centre will be displayed in Wingate Ave public spaces, as well as provided in handbooks, including Childcare Information Packs, Client Handbooks and Student Handbooks.
- 1.2 Prior to enrolment, Wingate Ave prospective students are provided with accurate and sufficient information about the training, assessment, support services available, and their rights and obligation. (AQTF, Element 2.3).
- 1.3 Staff will provide support community members to provide feedback to prevent issues escalating to complaint.

- 1.4 The complaints process will be easy to access. Information about the Complaints and Appeals Procedure will be readily available prior to enrolment, on the Wingate Ave website, in handbooks, (AQTF 2.2, Skills First, Schedule 1, 1.3) and available in the foyer.
- 1.5 Feedback and complaints will be easy to make; they can be lodged in a range of formats, to make providing feedback and complaints easy. They can be made in person (to any staff member that the complainant feels comfortable with), in writing (hardcopy feedback and complaint forms are available in the foyer), or via the website (www.wingateave.com.au).
- 1.6 The contact person should:
 - Be available to listen to a concern, feedback or a complaint.
 - Not form a view or offer an opinion of the merit of any allegations.
 - Provide information about the complaints process.
 - Inform the program lead of the complaint.
 - Maintain confidentiality at all times.

2. Making a Complaint

- 2.1 Complaints can be made to Wingate Avenue Community Centre by:
 - Complaints are accepted in any format that suits the complainant; it may be verbal or written.
 - Verbal complaints can be made in person or by phone by calling (03) 9212 0236.
 - Written complaints may be using the Complaints and Appeals Form, or any other format the complainant prefers:
 - submitted in person
 - by post to 13a Wingate Avenue, Ascot Vale 3032
 - emailed to manager@wingateave.com.au,
 - via the website at www.wingateave.com.au
 - Complaints are accepted through any member of staff, the Committee of Management, or an external body.
 - All complaints will be recorded (summarised) in the Complaints Register, which will be reported to the Committee of Management at each meeting, or earlier if required.
 - If a complaint is about an employee, the complaint will be dealt with by the General Manager or the Committee of Management.

Complaints can be made directly to **the National Complaints hotline on 13 38 73** or at <https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-training-complaints-hotline>

Complaints can be made directly to the VRQA as follows:

- Phone (03) 9637 2806
- Email vrqa@education.vic.gov.au

3. Lodging and Appeal

- 3.1 Complainants may lodge an appeal if they disagree with the decision made by the investigator. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the Committee of Management either:
 - by mail to 13a Wingate Avenue, Ascot Vale, 3032
 - in person by dropping off the complaint at reception
 - via email to manager@wingateave.com.au, Attention: Committee of Management

4. Complaint and Appeal Process

- 4.1 Staff receiving the complaint should:
 - Listen objectively to the complainant, acknowledging the concern without forming judgement or opinion on the merit of the complaint, and provide information about the complaint process.

- Depending on the type and severity of the complaint, refer the complaint to the program lead, General Manager or Committee of Management for further investigation and action.
- 4.2 The General Manager will **process the complaint**:
- Completing the Complaint Form and updating the Complaint Register
 - Communicate any final outcomes with the complainant.
- 4.3 **Investigating the complaint or appeal** by program lead, General Manager or Committee of Management:
- Complainants have the right to have a support person with them, during all phases of the process.
 - The investigator may opt to have a second person in the meeting, to provide expert advice, take notes, or provide other support.
 - Use a non-judgemental, objective approach to collect and examine the information relevant to the complaint.
 - Treat all parties with fairness and respect.
 - Analyse the information collected and determine a response.
 - Communicate with the complainant (and respondent if applicable) the determination and outcome of the complaint, and the next steps for resolution.
 - Resolve the complaint in a timely manner, and, if delays occur, advise the complainant (and respondent if applicable) of the new timeframe.
- 4.4 **Responding to, and resolving the complaint**:
- When a complaint is received, it should be referred to the appropriate person, such as the program lead, General Manager, or Committee of Management within three (3) days (if minor). Serious complaints should be reported to the General Manager immediately.
 - Making a decision should be within seven (7) days of the complaint being received.
 - Maintain open communication with the complainant (and respondent if applicable).
 - Inform the respondent that a complaint has been made against them and provide as much information as possible about the allegations and supporting information.
 - Provide the respondent an opportunity to respond to the allegations through an interview or written response.
 - Inform the respondent of the Complaint and Appeals Procedure, and explain that the process is confidential, and why this is important.
 - Inform the complainant (and respondent, if applicable) of the outcome and reasons for any decisions made and resolutions.
 - Inform the complainant (and respondent if applicable) of any options for further action, if required.
 - If an apology is in order, ensure that the appropriate person makes the apology.
 - If corrective actions are required by the organisation, inform the complainant what Wingate Ave intends to do to avoid further grievances.
 - If, after the General Manager or Committee of Management have reviewed the complaint, the complainant is still not satisfied, they may escalate the complaint to an external body.
- 4.5 Where **allegations are admitted or sustained**, outcomes for the respondent may include: a formal apology to the complainant, moved to another class, an official warning, transfer to another service provider and withdrawal from the service or program.
- Where **allegations are not admitted or sustained**, it may be necessary to take some actions as a result of the complaint. For example, the code of conduct may be distributed to all students to reiterate the standard of behaviour expected.
- 4.6 The process for dealing with complaints will be at no cost to the complainant and will not affect their enrolment or participation.

5. External Review

- 5.1 For complaints or appeals by AMEP students still exist, it can be referred to the AMEP Help Desk
- Phone 13 38 73 or 1300 062 314.
 - If the issue is not resolved the student may choose to refer the matter to the Complaints Unit of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) (see below).
 - If the student is dissatisfied after discussions with VRQA the student may contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman on 1300 362 072, by email ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au, or online www.ombudsman.gov.au
- 5.2 Learn Local and Skills First students may contact the Registering Body VRQA (Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority). This may be done in writing through the following options:
- Visit the VRQA website <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au> and complete the online form <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/making-a-complaint.aspx>
 - Send a letter to VRQA: Manager, Complaints Unit, VRQA, GPO Box 2317, Melbourne, 3001.
 - Ring the VRQA on (03) 6637 2806 if unable to make a complaint in writing.
 - If the student is dissatisfied after discussions with VRQA the student may contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman on 1300 362 072, by email ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au, or online www.ombudsman.gov.au
- 5.3 The decision made by the Commonwealth Ombudsman will be accepted by both parties as ending the matter and a letter will be sent to the party/parties involved.
- 5.4 For assessment appeals, there needs to be a clear relationship between the competencies to be demonstrated, the assessment evidence (the Rules of Evidence) and the assessment judgement (the Principles of Assessment).
- 5.5 Complaints or appeals regarding the occasional childcare service can be referred to:
- Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) of the Department of Education on 1300 307 415. A Notification of Serious Incident (Including Physical or Sexual Abuse) Complaints form must be completed and emailed to licensed.childrens.services@education.vic.gov.au
 - Also refer to Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure for more details on external complaints procedures regarding children.

6. Record Keeping

- 6.1 All complaints, informal and formal, should be documented by staff.
- 6.2 A Complaints Register is maintained and kept for a minimum of seven (7) years after the complaint has been made. Complaint information on the register includes:
- Name and contact details of the complainant
 - Details of the complaint
 - Actions taken
 - Date submitted and date closed.
- 6.3 Hardcopies of complaint forms and soft copies of correspondence are kept in the General Managers locked filing cabinet.
- 6.4 The softcopy Complaint Register and related correspondence is maintained on the restricted access F drive.
- 6.5 Complaints and appeals may indicate that there is a need for Wingate to review its policies, procedures and practices. The process should contribute constructively to the Wingate Ave's quality assurance process (AQTF, Element 1.1, 2.2).

7. Continuous Improvement

- 7.1 Feedback from clients, community members, students and stakeholders will be reviewed and used to make improvements to systems and processes, if appropriate.

- 7.2 Corrective actions from complaints will be used as an opportunity to improve systems and processes, if appropriate.

8. Privacy

- 8.1 Wingate Ave applies the information privacy principles set out in the PDP Act, the Health Records Act 2001 and the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) in relation to complaints and appeals.

Related Documents

Legislation, Acts & Standards	AQTF Essential Standards for Continuing Registration
	Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
	Child Safe Standards
	Education and Training Reform Act 2006
	Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
	Privacy & Data Protection Act 2014
	VRQA Guidelines for VET Providers 2022
Key Internal Documents	Code of Conduct
	Complaints and Appeals Policy
	Management of the RTO Policy
	Management of Government Funded Programs Procedure
	Quality Assurance Procedure
	Records Management Policy & Procedure
Key External Documents	VET funding Contract
	ACFE Board Pre-Accredited Training Delivery Guide
	VRQA Complaints processes
	https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/making-a-complaint.aspx
Key Internal Forms	Complaint and Appeals Register
	Complaint and Appeals Form

Definitions

Term	Definition
Appeals	Appeals are requests for a review or reconsideration of decisions made by the RTO. These decisions could involve assessments or access to support services.
Complaints	Complaints are allegations made by a learner or client that relate to the conduct of an RTO, its staff, a third party offering services on its behalf, or other learners in the RTO.
Complaints Process	A process by which a student/stakeholder of an RTO, or other interested parties, may raise a legitimate concern about the RTO's policies, procedures, services or products with a view to having them changed and improved (AQTF)

Superseded Version

Complaints and Appeals Procedure	Version 6	December 2024
Complaints and Appeals Procedure	Version 5	July 2023
Students Complaints and Appeals Resolution Procedure	Version 4	June 2022
Complaints and Appeals Resolution Policy and Procedure	Version 3	February 2015

Approved by:  General Manager by Delegation of Authority

