

Student Complaint and Appeal Policy and Procedure

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Policy owner	Principal Executive Officer
Responsible Officer	Registrar
Approving authority	Academic Board
Contact Officer	Head of Academic Support and Student Services
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Version	2025.2
Related Documents	Assessment Appeal Policy and Procedure Privacy Policy and Privacy Procedure Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Student Admission Policy and Procedure Student Handbook Governance Charter Quality Assurance Framework
HESF (Threshold Standards) 2021	Standard 2.4.1; 2.4.2; 2.4.3; 2.4.4; 2.4.5; 6.2.1; 7.2.1; 7.3.3
Policy Visibility	Public

1. Purpose

This Policy and the associated Procedure are designed to ensure that the Australian Institute of Higher Education ('the Institute') responds effectively in the event of student dissatisfaction, through fair, transparent, timely, and accessible complaint and appeal processes for both academic and non-academic matters, in line with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.

2. Principles

The key principles informing this Policy are the Institute's commitment to the following:

- Developing a culture that views complaints as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works.
- Setting in place a complaint handling system that is client focused and helps the Institute prevent complaints from recurring.
- Ensuring that any complaints are resolved promptly, objectively, with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality.
- Ensuring that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected

and that any party to a complaint is not discriminated against nor victimised;
and

- Ensuring that there is a consistent response to complaints, with access to internal and external review processes as required.
- Ensuring relevant staff have access to this policy and its related procedure and are trained in their application.

3. Context

The Institute is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable complaint handling system which is easily accessible and offered to complainants at no charge, and ensures students are informed of their right to escalate complaints and appeals to an external body if internal processes do not resolve the matter.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all students and relevant staff at the Institute, covering both academic and non-academic complaints and appeals.

5. Definitions

See the AIH Glossary of Terms for definitions.

6. Policy Details

6.1 Making a Complaint

Students and prospective students who wish to make a complaint should follow the process set out in the Student Complaint and Appeal Procedure. The Institute will respond to any complaint or appeal the student makes regarding his/her dealings with the Institute; the Institute's education agents or any related party the Institute has an arrangement with to deliver the student's course or related services. Complaints may relate to academic or non-academic matters, and students will not be charged a fee for lodging a complaint or appeal.

Before making a complaint, students (or persons seeking to enrol with the Institute) are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. Where this is not possible or appropriate, students retain the right to access the formal complaint process.

Students requesting a review of an assessment should refer to the Assessment Appeal Policy prior to utilising the steps outlined in the Student Complaint and Appeal Procedure.

Nothing in this Policy limits the right of a student to access external review mechanisms if internal processes do not resolve the matter.

6.2 Lodging an Appeal

Students (or persons seeking to enrol with the Institute) wishing to lodge an Appeal should follow the process set out in the Student Complaint and Appeal Procedure. Appeals may relate to academic or non-academic decisions and will be accepted without charge to the student. Students will be provided with a written outcome including reasons, and informed of further

avenues of appeal where available.

Legislation

This Policy complies with Higher Education Standards Framework standard 2.4 (Student Grievances and Complaints), which specifies that:

- Current and prospective students have access to mechanisms that are capable of resolving grievances about any aspect of their experience with the higher education provider, its agents or related parties.
- There are policies and processes that deliver timely resolution of formal complaints and appeals against academic and administrative decisions without charge or at reasonable cost to students, and these are applied consistently, fairly and without reprisal.
- Institutional complaints-handling and appeals processes for formal complaints include provision for confidentiality, independent professional advice, advocacy and other support for the complainant or appellant, and provision for review by an appropriate independent third party if internal processes fail to resolve a grievance.
- Decisions about formal complaints and appeals are recorded and the student concerned is informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons, and of further avenues of appeal where they exist and where the student could benefit.
- If a formal complaint or appeal is upheld, any action required is initiated promptly.

7. Student Complaint and Appeal Procedure

7.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to outline the protocols associated with the Student Complaint and Appeal Policy and the Assessment Appeal Policy and Assessment Appeal Policy Procedure, ensuring that the Institute responds effectively to both academic and non-academic complaints and appeals.

7.2. Scope

The Procedure can be utilised by students and those seeking to enrol in a course of study with the Institute, to submit a complaint of an academic or non-academic nature. It will be made available to students and those seeking to enrol with the Institute, regardless of the location of the campus at which the complaint has arisen, the mode in which they study, or their place of residence. No fee will be charged for lodging a complaint or appeal. If the student chooses to utilise this Procedure, the Institute will maintain the student's enrolment while the complaint and appeals process is ongoing.

Complaints of an academic nature include matters related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study. Complaints of a non-academic nature include all other matters. Students will receive written outcomes with reasons for decisions and advice on further avenues of appeal where applicable.

During all stages of this Procedure, the Institute will take all steps to ensure that:

- The complainant and any respondent have the opportunity to present their case at each stage of the Procedure.
- The complainant and any respondent have the option of being accompanied/assisted by a third person (such as a family member, friend or counsellor) if they so desire in formal interviews.
- The complainant is entitled to ask for assistance in the form of a translator/interpreter at any time during the process.
- The complainant and any respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against.
- At all stages of the process, discussions relating to complaints and appeals will be recorded in writing. A full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of this Procedure will be provided to the complainant and/or any respondent if requested.

Students should continue their studies as usual during the complaint procedure, except in circumstances where their well-being, health or safety is potentially at risk, or where the student poses a risk to the well-being, health or safety to others.

There is no cost to the complainant for utilising the internal stages of this complaint and appeals process. Costs for an external appeal will be shared equally by the Institute and the complainant.

Nothing in the Student Complaint and Appeal Policy and associated Procedure limits the rights of students or persons seeking to enrol with the Institute to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other higher education provider policies or under statute or any other law. In addition, these dispute resolution procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

7.3. Definitions

See the AIH Glossary of Terms for definitions.

7.4. Actions and Responsibilities

7.4.1 Before an Issue Becomes a Formal Complaint

Students (or persons seeking to enrol with the Institute) are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. Academic Staff, Administration Staff and Student Support Officers are available to assist students resolve their issues at this level. This step is mandatory for grievances regarding assessment marks, but for all other grievance's students may proceed directly to lodging a Formal Complaint. Where informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, students retain the right to access the formal process without prejudice and will be provided with written confirmation of any outcomes reached at this stage.

A process for requesting a review of an assessment decision forms part of the Assessment Appeal Policy and Procedure. Students should utilise this process in

the first instance if they wish to have an assessment decision reviewed. Students who remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the review of their assessment decision may then progress to the Student Complaint and Appeal Procedure as shown in the Section 7.4.6 Stage 1 Flow Chart.

7.4.2 Stage One – Formal Complaint

Formal complaints must be submitted by completing the Student Complaint Application Form and submitting to student services. The process is outlined in Section 7.4.6 Stage 1 Flow Chart.

- Students will submit formal complaints to student services via studentservices@aih.edu.au.
- In the case that a student has submitted a complaint form directly to another department or staff member, they will be directed to re-submit to student services for processing. In cases deemed sensitive or at the student's request, the complaint form can be submitted directly to Academic Services via academicservices@aih.nsw.edu.au.
- Student services process the complaint form, check that all evidence is included, and submits to Academic Services.
- The Academic Support Services Officer, will process the formal complaint, notify the student that the complaint has been received, collate the evidence, and refer the case to the Dean (or delegate) for investigation within 5 working days.
- The Dean (or delegate) will take all reasonable measures to resolve the complaint as soon as practicable, ensuring the process is fair, impartial, and transparent, and consistent with procedural fairness principles.
- The Dean (or delegate), will, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve. Such clarification may be sought by written request or by a face-to-face interview with the complainant. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview, the complainant will have an opportunity to formally present his/her case. The complainant or the respondent may bring a support person to accompany them to any such meeting.
- The Dean (or delegate) will provide a written outcome within 20 working days, outlining the decision, reasons for the outcome, and any actions to be taken. If additional time is required, the student will be informed in writing and updated regularly until the matter is finalised.
- The complainant will be advised in writing of their right to access Stage Two of this Procedure if they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One, including instructions on how to lodge an appeal and the timeframe for doing so.
- If this stage of the complaint handling process results in a decision that supports the student, the Institute's Dean (or delegate) will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required, and advise the student of the outcome in writing.

7.4.3 Stage Two - Appeal

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint, they may lodge an appeal by completing the [Notice of Appeal Form](#). The process is outlined in Section 7.4.6 Stage 2 Flow Chart. Appeals must be lodged within 20 working days of receiving the written Stage One outcome, unless an extension is approved due to compelling or exceptional circumstances.

- Students will submit the appeal form to student services (studentservices@aih.edu.au). In the case that a student has submitted an appeal form directly to another department or staff member, they will be directed to re-submit to student services for processing. In cases deemed sensitive or at the student's request, the appeal form can be submitted directly to Academic Services via academicservices@aih.edu.au. Student services process the appeal form, check that all evidence is included, and submit to Academic Services.
- The Academic Support Services Officer will:
 - Acknowledge receipt of the appeal to the student.
 - Review the submission to ensure all required documentation and evidence are included.
 - Refer the appeal to the Principal (or delegate) for eligibility review and procedural oversight.
- The Principal (or delegate) will:
 - Ensure the appeal is managed impartially, fairly, and in a timely manner, consistent with the Institute's principles of natural justice.
 - take all reasonable measures to resolve the appeal as soon as practicable.
 - Refer any unresolved appeals to the Chair of the Appeals Committee for formal determination.
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- The appeal must set out the grounds for the appeal and supporting evidence should be provided in addition to any new information not previously provided in support of the complaint. In the case of an assessment appeal, the student must refer one or more grounds stated in the Assessment Appeal Policy.
- The Appeals Committee membership and terms of reference are outlined in the Institutional Governance Framework.
- The Chair of the Appeals Committee will:
 - Assess the appeal based on the documentation provided or convene a hearing if further clarification is required.
 - Provide a written outcome to the complainant within 20 working days of receiving the referral, including:
 - The decision of the Appeals Committee.
 - Reasons for the decision.
 - Any actions to be taken.
 - If the review takes longer, the student will be notified in writing and provided with regular updates until a final decision is made.

- The complainant will be advised of their right to progress to Stage Three – External Review if they consider the matter unresolved. Clear instructions will be provided on how to access external review bodies appropriate to their student status (domestic or international).
- For international students, if the outcome of the complaints and appeals process requires the suspension or cancellation decision to proceed, PRISMS will be updated once Stage One and Stage Two of the complaints and appeal process is concluded.

7.4.4 Stage Three – External Review

If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal complaints and appeals process, they have the right to seek an external and independent review of their case. External review options vary depending on whether the student is a domestic or international student, as outlined below. Students will be informed in writing of the appropriate external body and how to access it at the conclusion of Stage Two.

Domestic students:

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may request an independent mediation through the Resolution Institute (formerly LEADR/IAMA), an impartial professional body that provides independent dispute resolution services.

The Resolution Institute can be contacted directly at:

- Address: Suite 602, Level 6, Tower B, Zenith Centre, 821–843 Pacific Highway, Chatswood NSW 2067
- Phone: (02) 9251 3366
- Freecall: 1800 651 650
- Email: infoaus@resolution.institute
- Website: <https://www.resolution.institute>

Costs of mediation are shared equally between the Institute and the complainant. As a guide, mediator fees are approximately \$440 for the first four hours (or part thereof), with \$165 per subsequent hour. Most disputes are typically resolved within the initial four-hour allocation. Students are encouraged to contact the Resolution Institute directly for the most current fee schedule. The Institute will reimburse its share of the costs promptly once invoiced.

International students:

If an international student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal, they can access an external appeal process, through the Commonwealth Ombudsman, at no cost. This service is independent and impartial.

Students can find information or lodge a complaint through:

- Website: <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au>
- Phone: 1300 362 072

- Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Any recommendation or decision in favour of the student arising from the external review process will be actioned and implemented immediately upon receipt of the outcome, and the student will be notified in writing of the implementation.

Further Action:

If a complaint remains unresolved after the internal and external review processes, the complainant may choose to refer the matter to an appropriate external authority, depending on the nature of the issue. Students will be provided with guidance and contact details for these bodies upon request.

Possible avenues include (but are not limited to):

- Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW – for matters relating to unlawful discrimination, harassment, or vilification.
- NSW Fair Trading (Office of Fair Trading) – for consumer protection matters.
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) – for concerns relating to the Institute’s compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 or the TEQSA Act 2011. Further information is available on the TEQSA website:
<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/complaints>.
- Other external authorities as relevant to the nature of the complaint (e.g., professional registration bodies or other government regulators).

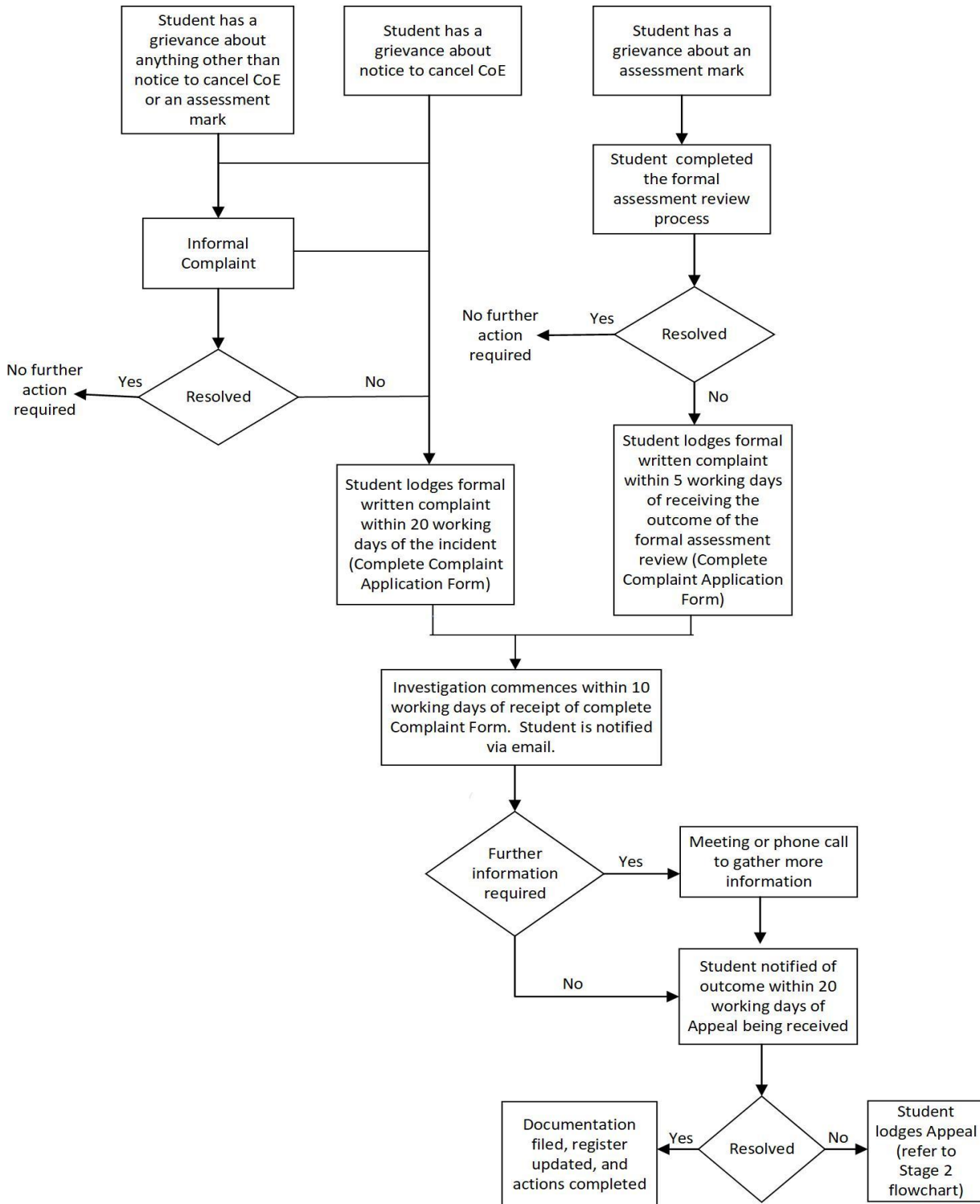
7.4.5 Record keeping and Confidentiality

All records of complaints and appeals, including documentation and outcomes, will be retained for a minimum period of five (5) years. These records will be securely stored, treated as confidential, and only accessible to authorised staff in accordance with the Institute’s Records Management Policy and Privacy Policy. Summary data on complaints and appeals outcomes will also be reviewed regularly by Academic Governance committees to identify trends, systemic issues, and opportunities for continuous improvement.

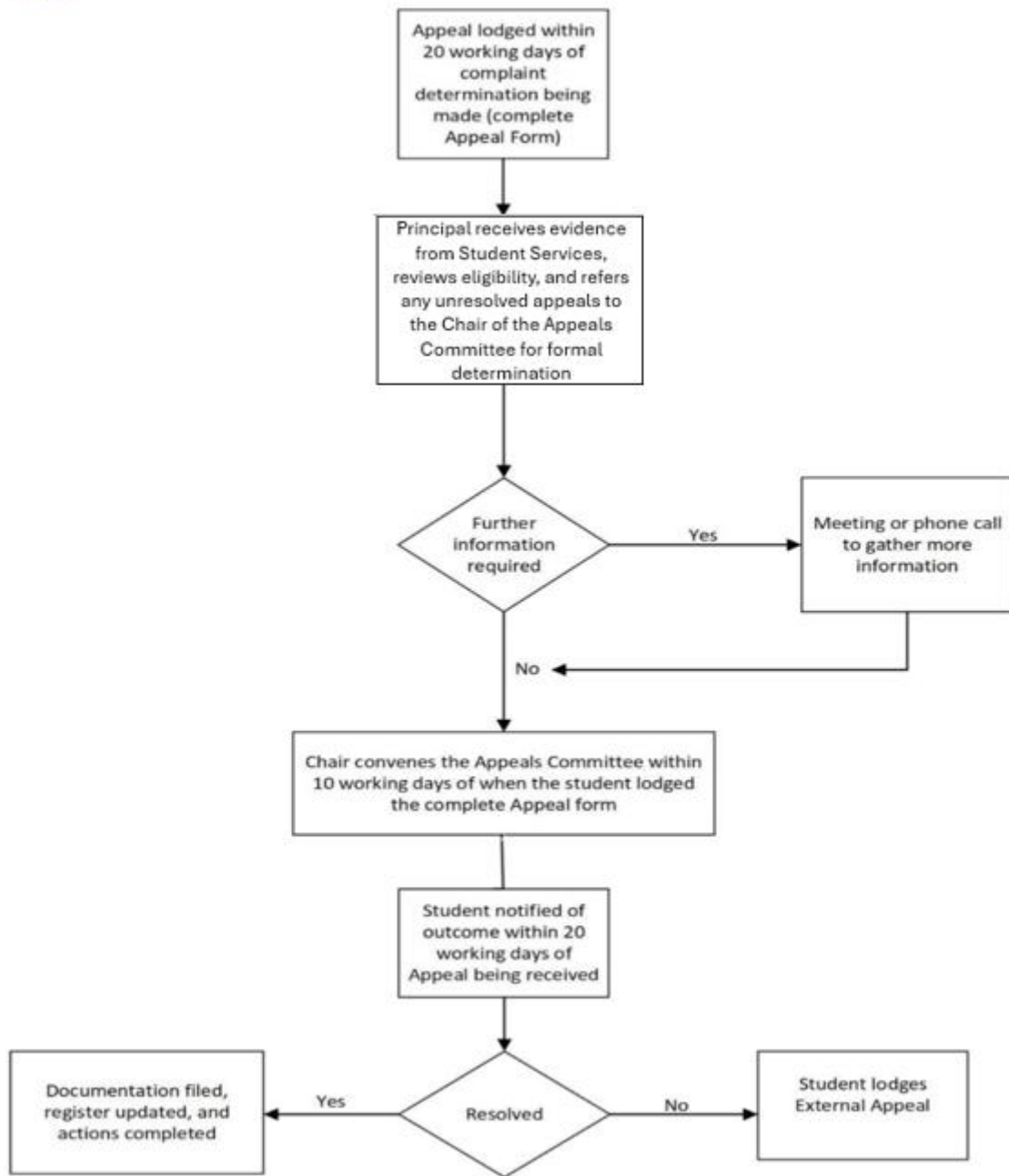
Parties to a complaint may request access to relevant records in writing to the Principal (or delegate). Such access will be provided where appropriate and in line with the Institute’s privacy and confidentiality obligations.

7.4.6 Complaint and Appeals Procedure Flow Chart

Stage 1



Stage 2



8. Version Control

This Policy and Procedure has been endorsed by the Australia Institute of Higher Education Academic Board as at October 2025 and is reviewed every 3 years. The Policy is published and available on the Australian Institute of Higher Education website <http://www.aih.edu.au/> under 'Policies and Procedures'.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2016-2	Registrar	Updated template.	6 July 2016	6 August 2016
2017-1	Ms. McCoy	Restructured document; added box to beginning Renamed policy	22 February 2017	6 March 2017
2019.1	Principal	Updated the policy owner and responsible officer from Executive Dean to Principal, and Registrar to Head of Academic Support and Student Services	18 November 2019	19 November 2019
2021.1	CEO/Principal	Update to be in line with standard 10.4; amendment to Flowchart to fix errors (spelling and 10 days should be 20 days re appeal process)	9 April 2021	9 April 2021
2022-1	Registrar	Updated Higher Education Standards Framework [Threshold Standard] 2021	25 May 2022	25 May 2025
2025.1	Acting Head of Quality Assurance	Policy Owner updated from Principal to PEO; Responsible Officer updated from Principal to Registrar; Policy Visibility information added to the table on page 1; merged the Student Complaint and Appeal Policy with its associated Procedure; clarified roles and responsibilities across stages of the complaints and appeals process; enhanced procedural guidance to ensure clarity and transparency; aligned with student-facing communication requirements; updated HESF alignment to include Standards 6.2.1, 7.2.1, and 7.3.3.	6 August 2025	7 August 2025
2025.2	Quality and Compliance Coordinator	Updated to clarify complaint and appeal processes, external review pathways, stage 2 flow chart, and governance oversight in line with HESF 2.4.	31 October 2025	1 November 2025