

Complaints & Appeals

1. Purpose

ACES is committed to providing a transparent, accessible, and fair process for managing complaints and appeals. We value feedback from all stakeholders as an opportunity to improve our services and maintain the highest standards of quality and integrity in line with the Standards for RTOs 2025.

2. Standards:

Standards 2.7 and 2.8, and the Compliance Requirements for transparency, procedural fairness, accessibility, and continuous improvement

3. Scope

This policy applies to all ACES students, staff and contractors.

4. Policy Principles

- **Accessibility:** The complaints and appeals process is available on ACES website, and available in multiple formats and languages as required. Information about how to make a complaint or appeal is available on the [ACES website](#) and in the [Student Handbook](#).
- **Support:** ACES provides additional support for complainants and appellants who are vulnerable or require assistance (e.g., due to language, disability, or cultural needs).
- **Procedural Fairness:** All parties are afforded natural justice, including the right to present their case, be accompanied by a support person, and receive written outcomes and reasons for decisions. Complaints and appeals are handled impartially and without bias.
- **Timeliness:**
 - Complaints are acknowledged within 3 business days and resolved within 20 business days where practicable.
 - Appeals are acknowledged within 5 business days and resolved as soon as practicable.
 - If more than 60 calendar days are required, the complainant/appellant is informed in writing of the reasons and provided with regular progress updates.
- **Transparency:** All outcomes and reasons for decisions are provided in writing. The process for escalating unresolved complaints and appeals, including to external bodies, is clearly communicated.
- **Continuous Improvement:** All feedback, complaints, and appeals are recorded, and used to inform ongoing improvements to ACES's services, policies, and procedures.
- **Record Keeping:** All records are maintained confidentially for at least five years and are accessible to parties involved.

5. Complaints Procedure

a) **Informal Resolution:**

- Students and stakeholders are encouraged to resolve concerns directly with the relevant staff member where appropriate.

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- If not appropriate or unresolved, proceed to formal complaint.
- b) **Lodging a Formal Complaint:**
 - Complaints can be submitted by phone, email, or mail.
 - Required information: date, name, nature of complaint, event date, and any supporting evidence (Complaints Form [HERE](#)).
- c) **Acknowledgement and Assessment:**
 - Complaints are acknowledged in writing within 3 business days.
 - Complaints are assessed and prioritised, with consideration for those who are vulnerable or require special assistance.

6. Investigation and Resolution:

- a. The CEO shall investigate.
- b. All parties may present their case and be accompanied by a support person.
- c. Resolution and written outcome provided within 20 business days where practicable.
- d. If >60 days required, written notice and regular updates provided.

7. Documentation:

All stages are documented, with records kept on the Complaints Register.

8. Escalation:

If unresolved, information is provided about the right to appeal at no cost.

9. Appeals Procedure

- a) **Lodging an Appeal:**
 - Appeals must be submitted in writing to the CEO (nicole@aces.edu.au).
 - Appeals are acknowledged within 5 business days.
- b) **Assessment and Independent Review:**
 - Appeals are assessed by an independent staff member not involved in the original decision.
 - All parties may present their case and be accompanied by a support person.
 - Written outcome provided as soon as practicable.
 - If >60 days required, written notice and regular updates provided.
- c) **External Review:**
 - If not satisfied with the internal appeal outcome, appellants are provided with details for external review (e.g., ASQA) at no or low cost.
- d) **Implementation of Outcomes:**
 - Any decisions or recommendations in favour of the appellant are implemented immediately, and the appellant is advised in writing.
- e) **Continuous Improvement:**
 - All complaints and appeals are analysed for trends and used to improve ACES's operations.
- f) **Confidentiality and Record Access**
 - All records are kept confidentially for at least five years.

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- Parties may access records relating to their complaint or appeal.

This policy was last updated: 8th March 2025

Signature:



Nicole Bijlsma

CEO of Australian College of Environmental Studies