

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS: STUDENT, PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

This procedure defines the processes available for dealing with complaints against Shepparton ACE Secondary College concerning the conduct of Shepparton ACE Secondary College and appeals against the decisions made by the College. Appeals can also relate to assessment decisions. There are no costs associated with student and/or parent/guardian complaints and appeals.

Shepparton ACE Secondary College deals with any student and/or parent/guardian complaints and appeals against the College in a fair, effective, consistent and timely manner. Shepparton ACE Secondary College is committed to providing students with high quality vocational education and training. Students are entitled to, and should expect, a high standard of learning and assessment and support services from Shepparton ACE Secondary College. However, from time to time, students and/or parents/guardians may have concerns or complaints about matters or issues relating to their experience at Shepparton ACE Secondary College.

Shepparton ACE Secondary College views student and/or parent/guardian complaints as providing an opportunity to review and improve its policies and practices, and also to gain insight into student levels of satisfaction. All substantiated complaints will be reviewed as part of the Shepparton ACE Secondary College's Continuous Improvement procedure. The Principal and the Vice Principal are responsible for implementation of this procedure and ensuring that staff and students are made aware of its application. Students and/or parent/guardians who are concerned about the conduct of Shepparton ACE Secondary College staff are encouraged to attempt to resolve their concerns by first using the informal complaints process then the formal process.

Informal Complaints

Shepparton ACE Secondary College adopts the follow process for resolution of informal complaints. The informal process for dealing with a complaint is a person to person approach that commence with:

- a) the individuals concerned discussing the problem directly with Shepparton ACE Secondary College staff in an attempt to resolve the matter, and/or
- b) if this approach does not lead to a satisfactory outcome then complaints ought to be submitted in writing.

Individuals may seek advice either verbally or in writing about how to resolve a matter themselves.

Options for resolving complaints informally include:

- a) resolving the issue by speaking with or writing to the other party, or
- b) taking no further action after seeking some advice on ways in which the matter could have been resolved.

A complainant either resolves the matter themselves or leaves it unresolved in the informal process. The complainant may also decide to use the formal complaint resolution process in which case they will lodge a formal written complaint as described below.

Formal Complaints

Shepparton ACE Secondary College adopts the follow process for resolution of formal complaints.

1. Throughout the formal complaint resolution process complainants may be accompanied by a support person/advocate. This can occur at any stage of the formal complaint resolution procedure, including an appeal.
2. Individuals may choose to lodge a formal complaint by forwarding a signed, written complaint to the Principal and/or the Vice Principal. The written complaint must be made within *three months* of the incident. The Shepparton ACE Secondary College Complaints and Appeals Form may be used, and is available from any Shepparton ACE Secondary College staff member or at the Office. If the complaint relates to the conduct of the Principal the formal complaint will be forwarded to the Vice Principal.
3. Receipt of the formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing within seven (7) working days.
4. The Principal or the Vice Principal will appoint a Coordinating Officer (another Shepparton ACE Secondary College Staff member) to manage the formal complaint resolution process. A confidential file will be opened and maintained until resolution of the complaint is achieved. Proceedings will commence within seven (7) working days of receipt of the complaint. Complaint resolution will in most cases be resolved within a further seven days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint *i.e.* fourteen (14) working days of the formal lodging of the complaint.
5. The following information is required in written format
 - a) submission of complaint,
 - b) nature of complaint,
 - c) date(s) when cause of complaint occurred,
 - d) attachments (if applicable),
 - e) determined resolution, and
 - f) date of resolution.
6. A complaint may be withdrawn at any stage. Alternatively, the complainant may choose to have the complaint resolved informally.
7. Complainants may obtain advice from organisations outside Shepparton ACE Secondary College or their employing organisation at any time including legal advice.
8. Options for dealing with formal complaints include:
 - having the matter mediated, and/or
 - having the matter formally investigated.
9. When a complaint is formally mediated:
 - a) it may be successful in that an agreement is reached between the parties, or
 - b) it may be unsuccessful, in which case the complaint may either be withdrawn, or a formal investigation may commence if the complainant wishes. *The complainant is responsible for initiating further action.*

Appeals

Following the resolution or completion of the formal complaint resolution process the complainant may appeal against the decision in accordance with the following process:

1. A written appeal must be lodged with the Principal or the Vice Principal within fourteen (14) days of the complainant being notified of the decision resulting out of the original formal complaint resolution process. Shepparton ACE Secondary College Complaints and Appeals Form may also be used by the appellant.
2. The Principal or the Vice Principal will then delegate responsibility for organising an Appeals Committee ('the Committee'). The Committee will be comprised of at least three members and will always have an odd number of members. Committee membership may consist of a representative of the Shepparton ACE Secondary College or school council, management from the employing organisation of the complainant, and a neutral third party nominated by the Principal. The Committee members must not have been involved in the conduct of the original Formal Complaint Resolution Procedure.
3. The Committee is not a formal court or tribunal, therefore it is not bound by any formal legal rules (aside from the rule of natural justice) and lawyers will not make submissions to the Committee. The Committee will consider appeals in the following manner:
 - a) If no new information is provided with the written appeal, then the Committee will review the decision resulting out of the original Formal Resolution Complaints Procedure. This process will require the Committee to review the information presented to the original decision maker to consider whether the decision reached was reasonable in all the circumstances of the complaint. The Committee will, by majority, make a written recommendation to the Principal as to whether the original decision was reasonable, generally within five (5) days of conducting the review.
 - b) If new information is provided with the written appeal, the Committee may reconsider the complaint. If the Committee decides to reconsider the complaint, a hearing will be conducted at which the parties to the complaint may make a written or verbal presentation to the Committee. The Committee will, by majority, make a written recommendation as to the outcome of the complaint to the Principal, generally within five (5) days of conducting the hearing.
4. The recommendation of the Committee will then be considered by the Principal and a final decision made. This final decision will not be subject to any further internal review process.
5. Where complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint as proposed by Shepparton ACE Secondary College, they may approach an independent person or panel such as the VRQA for assistance to pursue the matter further.
6. Students and/or parent/guardians are also advised that there are further options if they wish to pursue their complaint:

VRQA:

<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/making-a-complaint.aspx>

Administrative Appeals Tribunal:

<http://www.aat.gov.au>

7. Students and/or parent/guardians are advised that they may appeal against any decision made by Shepparton ACE Secondary College that affects them, including Assessment Decisions.

Appeals against Assessment Decisions

1. Shepparton ACE Secondary College's policy is that candidates are entitled to one re-sit, or two attempts, at satisfactorily completing an assessment task. Assessors may require the candidate to submit further evidence before the final assessment outcomes are registered.
2. Where a candidate does not meet the evidence requirements for an assessment task after a second attempt, the final assessment outcome for the unit of competency will be recorded as: Not Yet Competent C, ; NYC,
3. Where the candidate is dissatisfied with the final assessment outcome, they may lodge an appeal. In the first instance the candidate should pursue the matter as an informal process by discussions with the Assessor.
4. Appeals may be based upon the following circumstances:
 - insufficient information provided to the candidate prior to the assessment,
 - incorrect information provided to the candidate prior to assessment,
 - assessor did not consider all evidence submitted, and
 - any other matter deemed relevant by the Principal and submitted by the candidate.
5. In these circumstances the candidate should forward a written appeal, or use the Complaints and Appeals Form to the Principal. The appeal should outline the candidate's concerns and detail:
 - the candidate's full personal details, i.e. name, address, date of birth, Shepparton ACE Secondary College student ID (VETtrak No.),
 - the date and time of the assessment,
 - the unit of competence being assessed,
 - all information that the candidate wishes to be considered for the appeal, and
 - the reason for the appeal.
6. Upon receipt of an appeal the Principal will:
 - reply in writing to the appellant acknowledging receipt of the appeal within five (5) working days of receipt of the appeal,
 - inform the appellant that they may bring a support person with them if desired,
 - inform the assessor of the appeal,
 - access all evidence submitted by the candidate for consideration **by the Appeals Committee**,
 - convene an appeal meeting comprising an independent assessor and the Shepparton ACE Secondary College Principal to consider the appeal, and
 - notify the candidate of the outcome of the appeal and the reasons for the decision. This notification will be in writing and forwarded within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the appeal.
7. If the candidate's appeal is denied, the candidate may re-enrol in the next scheduled relevant Shepparton ACE Secondary College training program, undertake further training and undertake assessment.
8. No further appeals mechanism exists beyond this point in the process.
9. Notwithstanding the above, Shepparton ACE Secondary College will endeavour to the best of its ability, support each candidate and offer on going assistance to enable each individual to achieve success in their studies.

Student and/or parent/guardian complaints to VRQA

Students and/or parent/guardians are advised that they may complain directly to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/complaints.aspx>

Student and/or parent/guardian complaints

The national register (TGA), training.gov.au, lists all schools in Australia and the qualifications, courses and units of competency they are registered to provide (i.e. their scope of registration). You can use the training.gov.au search function to confirm that your training organisation is an RTO.

You can find out if an organisation is registered with the VRQA on the State Register, available on the VRQA web-site.

Once you have used training.gov.au and the State Register to find your training provider, you can check:

- your provider's scope of registration (select the 'Scope' tab to see the qualifications, courses and units of competency your provider is registered to deliver),
- whether your provider is registered by VRQA (if your training provider is registered with VRQA the training.gov.au entry for your VET provider will show, under the 'Registration' tab, the 'Registration Principal' as the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority.)

AQTF Standards for Continuing Registration 2010 and the VRQA Guidelines for VET Providers (2009) require that all VRQA RTOs provide appropriate mechanisms and services to efficiently and effectively address learners' complaints and appeals.

If you are a student or parent/guardian of a student of a VRQA RTO and you intend to make a complaint, you must first follow your RTO's internal complaints and appeals procedures.

If, after following your RTO's internal procedures, you still believe the RTO is breaching or has breached its legal requirements, you can submit a complaint to VRQA by completing the online complaint form.

VRQA provides a Step by Step guide as to 'How to make a complaint to the VRQA' on its website:

<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/making-a-complaint.aspx>

| Date | Version No. | Change | Author(s) |
|------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| March 2024 | 2.1 | Added version control | Kylie Richards |

COMPLAINTS FORM

This form may be used by students and/or parent/guardians who wish to make a complaint.

| | |
|------------|--------------------|
| Name: | Student ID Number: |
| Address: | |
| Telephone: | Date of Incident: |
| Course: | |

Describe the nature of the complaint:

Describe efforts made to resolve the issue:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Office Use Only

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Detail Action Taken: | |
| | |
| Signature of the Principal: | Date: |
| | |

APPEALS FORM

This form may be used by students and/or parent/guardians who wish to appeal.

1. An assessment outcome OR
2. The responses of Shepparton ACE Secondary College to a complaint initiated by and/or affecting a student OR
3. Any decision made by Shepparton ACE Secondary College affecting the student.

Name of Student: _____ Date: _____

Student Identification Number (VETtrak): _____

If Appeal is made in relation to an Assessment Outcome, please fill in this box.

Unit Title: _____ Assessment Task: _____

Course or qualification: _____

Name of College trainer/assessor _____

Reason for Appeal (*if insufficient space, please attach additional pages*)

Signature _____ Date: ___ / ___ / ___

Contact Details

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Office Use Only

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Detail of process: | <i>Init.</i> Principal or Proxy |
| Date Appeal acknowledged in writing: | |
| Resolution Process/es followed: | |
| Outcomes : | |
| Complaint registered: | |
| Date: ___ / ___ / _____ Init: _____ | |