



Domestic Student Complaints and Appeals Process

POL-04_01-1003

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Domestic Student Complaints and Appeals Process

Preamble

This policy is issued under the authority of Melbourne City Institute of Education Pty. Ltd. as Trustee for MCIE Unit Trust and applies to all its trading names: Melbourne City Institute of Education, Explore English, My Choice In Education, and Institute for Online Learning. All policies are governed by the MCIE Policy & Procedure Framework and must be implemented consistently across the organisation.

Purpose

The Domestic Student Complaints and Appeals Process provides a framework to enable current and prospective student's academic and non-academic concerns to be effectively managed, while actively contributing to MCIE's ongoing commitment to Continuous Improvement. If a complaint cannot be resolved within the organisation, MCIE's complaints and appeals process includes referral to an independent external body.

Scope

This policy applies to the management of complaints and appeals in relation to matters concerning the delivery of training and assessment services as well as those employed by or contracted to the Institute for the delivery of training, conduct of assessments, administrative duties, and/or provision of support services. Complaints and appeals addressed by this policy and procedure may relate to MCIE processes or between parties including:

- a. Student - student
- b. Student - staff member (including academic disputes)
- c. Student - external agency such as those stakeholders cooperating with the institution in its professional experience or community engagement placements, for example, workplace-based training or work placement (Commercial Cookery or Early Childhood Education and Care)
- d. Prospective student - staff member

This policy applies to all staff.

Policy Statement

MCIE provides a complaints and appeals process that is transparent, fair, and equitable for academic and non-academic matters for current students and young people and/or those seeking to enrol.

Recognising that situations may arise in which a student feels aggrieved, MCIE has put in place this policy and procedure to ensure it responds to and resolves student issues efficiently and effectively, with an appropriate level of concern.

Legislative, Regulatory and Contractual References

This policy supports compliance with the following requirements:

Standards for RTOs 2025

- Standard 2.7 – Feedback and complaints management
- Standard 2.8 – Appeals management

Skills First

- VET Funding Contract 2024–25 – Clause 4.5 (Complaints), Clause 7 (Student information and support), Clause 10 (Records)

Other Applicable Legislation

- Privacy Act 1988
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)

Definitions

Term	Word or Phrase to be defined
Appeal	is when a student submits a request for the review of a decision made by MCIE or by a third party working on behalf of MCIE. Decisions which may be appealed, may relate to assessment or student progress, these are just some of the decisions a student may appeal.
Appellant	an individual who submits a request for an appeal.
Complaint	is when an individual has an issue with another individual, a process, the facilities, equipment or services provided by MCIE or a third party working on behalf of MCIE.
Complainant	an individual who submits a complaint.

Term	Word or Phrase to be defined
Continuous Improvement	a systematic and ongoing practice involving the monitoring and evaluation of an RTO's performance and operations to identify issues, analyse data, and take action to enhance the quality of services and improve learner outcomes.
Respondent	an individual who a complainant has made a complaint against.
Victimisation	the action of singling someone out for cruel or unjust treatment. "We should be able to speak up without fear of victimization"

Out of scope

This policy and procedure do not apply to any matter dealt with under the:

- Student code of conduct
- Student discipline policy
- Overseas student complaints or appeals
- Young people and children – please see MCIE's **POL-15_01-1034 Child Safety Policy**

Roles & Responsibilities:

- **Student Support Team:** First point of contact, manages complaint registration.
- **Heads of Department/Course Coordinators:** Responsible for addressing and resolving complaints.
- **Operations Manager:** Oversees escalated complaints.
- **Director Quality and Governance:** Ensures compliance and manages systemic issues.
- **Managing Director:** Final authority for complaints and appeals resolution.

Principles

All parties to a complaint (complainant, respondent or MCIE) have the right to be:

- heard
- respected (all complaints should be treated seriously)
- treated with courtesy, without bias, pre-judgement, discrimination, or victimisation
- informed of any complaint made which relates to them

- provided with an opportunity to respond to any complaint pertaining to them
- informed about the status of any complaint which has been formally raised and to which they are a party or in which they are named

An appellant has the right to be:

- heard
- respected (appeals are treated seriously)
- treated without bias or pre-judgement
- informed about the status of any appeal which they have formally raised

MCIE will encourage the parties to approach a complaint/appeal with an open view and attempt to resolve issues through discussion and conciliation. Where a complaint/appeal cannot be resolved through discussion and conciliation, MCIE acknowledges there may be a need to establish an appropriate appeals committee to mediate between the parties.

MCIE will take all reasonable steps to prevent complainants/appellants suffering any disadvantage (including through victimisation) as a result of lodging a complaint.

A student's enrolment with MCIE will not be suspended, cancelled, or affected in any manner during the complaints/appeals process.

A student may withdraw a complaint at any point in the process.

Access to the domestic student complaints and appeals process

All employees, trainers, assessors, and prospective domestic students will be provided access to a copy of the **Domestic Student Complaints and Appeals Process** which is also available online at the following link:

 <http://www.mcie.edu.au/domestic-student-complaints-and-appeals-policy/>

All parties will familiarise themselves with and have a clear understanding of the steps involved in the complaints and appeals procedure. Through-out the process they will adhere to all relevant MCIE policies, associated written procedures and standards of conduct.

There is no charge to the student for accessing the internal complaints and appeals process at MCIE.

Privacy and confidentiality

A MCIE staff members handling a complaint, or an appeal will maintain appropriate confidentiality throughout the process.

Responsiveness

Complaints and appeals will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible, consistent with the need to act fairly. To ensure the fair, consistent and appropriate management of important but not urgent complaints and appeals, students are asked to submit them online through the MCIE Ticketing System at www.mcie.edu.au/student-complaints-form/ or to complaint@mcie.edu.au. All complaints and appeals submitted will go to MCIE's complaints inbox.

Urgent complaints, those complaints which have potentially detrimental health or wellbeing impacts should follow the Critical Incident process.

Important but not urgent complaints and appeals

All complaints and appeals addressed to complaint@mcie.edu.au or which are submitted through the MCIE Ticketing system online at <https://www.mcie.edu.au/student-support/> are addressed in the following manner:

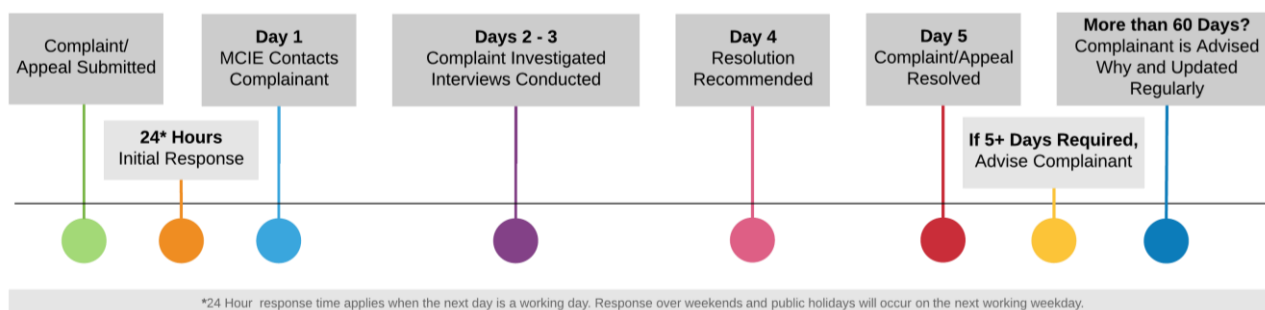
- the complaint/appeal is acknowledged automatically by email within half an hour of submission, to the email address provided as part of the submission process.

Note: If the complainant/appellant does not receive the advice from MCIE Teamwork Desk they should resubmit their request or advise a member of the MCIE team that they have attempted and been unsuccessful.

- within one working day of the submission of the complaint/appeal a relevant member of MCIE's team will contact the complainant/appellant. Concern for the complainant/appellant is expressed.
- as is reasonable, all complaints should be *resolved* within 5 working days, if resolution is not possible this is communicated to the complainant, and where relevant, the respondent.
- where MCIE considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, MCIE will:
 - inform the complainant/appellant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required
 - regularly update the complainant/appellant on the progress of the matter

Response Timelines

MCIE complaint resolution process should not exceed 5 working days



Support during the complaint process

A student may seek confidential, independent professional advice from the Operations Manager at any stage during the complaint process.

Any discussions or interviews in which a student participates during a complaint process under this policy, the student may, at their discretion, be accompanied by one other person who they have designated as their support person. A support person may be a family member, counsellor, or other professional support person. **However, a support person is not two or more persons acting at the same time.** An advocate may also be referred to as a support person.

A support person may not be a person who was involved in, associated with, or alleged to have been involved in or associated with the subject matter of the complaint.

A support person may only make submissions on behalf of a complainant if invited to do so by the complainant or the committee dealing with the matter.

Documented discussions

All discussions relating to complaints and appeals are to be recorded in writing and the complainant/appellant provided with a written statement of the outcomes, including reasons for decisions.

Continuous improvement

The MCIE Complaints and Appeals Process includes a requirement for a determination to refer the issue at the core of a complaint to the Continuous Improvement Process. When an issue is to be referred to the continuous improvement process the manager responsible for the complaint or appeals outcome will forward details of the issue and items to be addressed for continuous improvement to cir@mcie.edu.au. The item will also be added to the agenda for the next scheduled Management Meeting. The Director of Quality and Governance will manage the processes of review and implementation.

Process for complaint or appeal management

Resolution through informal dialogue

A student or prospective student who has any concern that falls within the scope of this policy is encouraged to attempt to resolve that concern informally and as close to the source of the concern as possible.

Step 1. Receiving the complaint

A student may approach a staff member directly with a complaint or lodge a complaint via the MCIE's Student requests form on our website / select the Complaint option. Completing this form raises a ticket which is registered in a complaints file in Teamwork Desk. The ticket created is unique to the complainant and it may only be accessed by the complainant, the MCIE Student Support Team and MCIE's senior managers.

Direct: a staff member receiving a complaint is encouraged to address *minor* complaints, in the first instance.

For more serious complaints (e.g. about a trainer or other staff member, academic load, etc), if the staff member receiving the complaint is unable, or is not confident they are able to adequately manage the complaint, or has received the same complaint from multiple students or from the same student multiple times, they:

- a. should encourage the student(s) to lodge the complaint online (MCIE Student requests form on our website / select the Complaint option). To lodge a complaint online students should enter the details of their complaint online. The complaint form will prompt them about what important information to include in their report. The form is available at <https://www.mcie.edu.au/student-support/>
- b. they may also email their complaint to complaint@mcie.edu.au, both approaches will register their complaint in Teamwork Desk and ensure it is managed according to MCIE processes. Students should be advised that:
 - they will receive an automated email from Teamwork Desk to confirm that their complaint has been submitted
 - a ticket will be raised for each complaint submitted
 - this complaint will then be assigned to the appropriate Head of Department or their proxy
 - they will be informed of the progress of their complaint by email, may also login to their profile in Teamwork Desk to check the progress of their complaint or to comment on the progress at any time they choose
 - the Head of Department will contact them within five working days of receiving their complaint, to clarify their concern, make a time to meet them or to recommend a resolution

- c. submit a complaint on behalf the student by submitting a complaint form via MCIE's website <https://www.mcie.edu.au/student-support/> or emailing details to complaint@mcie.edu.au or submitting it directly through Teamwork Desk <https://mcieaust.teamwork.com/desk/#/login>, and advise the complainant that:
- they will receive an automated email from Teamwork Desk to confirm that their complaint has been submitted
 - this complaint will be assigned to the appropriate Head of Department or their proxy
 - that they will be informed of the progress of their complaint by email and may also login to their profile to check the progress of their complaint or to comment on the progress at any time they choose
 - the Head of Department will contact them within five working days of receiving their complaint, to clarify their concern, make a time to meet them or to recommend a resolution
- d. refer the complaint directly to the respective Head of Department

Note: Step c. should only be taken when the utmost urgency is required or a student refuses to follow or allow someone else to follow options **a.** or **b.** on their behalf. After referral and when initial discussion about the matter has concluded, the process for recording through Teamwork Desk in point **b.** should be followed.

Indirect: students may lodge an online complaint at any time through the MCIE website, Students Complaints Form at www.mcie.edu.au/studentcomplaints-form/ or email their complaint to complaint@mcie.edu.au.

In all instances:

A written record of a complaint should be maintained. This is best achieved through Teamwork Desk, the ticketing system which provides:

- a ticket ensuring:
 - MCIE management has overview of the complaint
 - the complainant has access to view the progress of their complaint at any time
 - all communications about the issue are recorded in one place and are accessible to all parties of the complaint
- the date of submission
- student identity details
- student contact details
- full and specific details of the complaint
- sufficient information to enable an appropriate response

- the opportunity to include supporting information
- the opportunity to present their case at each stage of the process
- the opportunity to provide feedback as to the satisfactory (or unsatisfactory) resolution of the complaint

Step 2. Record the complaint

The complainant submits their complaint or appeal via complaint@mcie.edu.au, [online complaint record form](#), [by phone](#), [social media](#) or [in person](#). If a complainant requires support to complete this task a member of the Student Support Team, Operations Manager or other member of MCIE's team they trust, may help them through to submission process.

Where a complaint submission is supported by a member of the MCIE team, and if it is deemed that the complainant is at immediate risk, the complainant is immediately referred to the Operations Manager or other senior manager for support.

Step 3. Acknowledge the complaint

The complaint details are forwarded to Teamwork Desk via 'Zaps' that are part of the online complaint form submission, they are automatically emailed to - MCIE's complaint register, a ticket is raised and the receipt of the complaint is acknowledged. MCIE's complaint register is a confidential inbox that only senior members of MCIE's team may access. The ticket is received and allocated to the appropriate responsible member of the leadership team.

Step 4. Assess the complaint

Ensure that the complainant is safe. Address any risks to their wellbeing or safety. Then discuss the issue with the complainant gathering as much information about:

- what, where when and how the issue had occurred
- who was involved
- who, if anyone, witnessed it
- record the details of the event

Importantly

- a. any person lodging a complaint wants to be taken seriously, irrespective of the nature of the complaint
- b. not all complaints can be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, but must be confident MCIE has done everything in its power to resolve the complaint
- c. keep the complainant informed of the complaint progress
- d. be informed on the resolution outcome in a timely manner.

Some complaints may necessitate time to research, interview other parties, investigate. In these instances:

- a. do so expeditiously
- b. keep detailed notes (records of interview) about conversations
- c. keep an open mind

Any lower level of complaint management must be exhausted before proceeding to the next higher level.

A complaint that relates to:

- a. an academic matter, including a matter arising in connection with a professional experience or workplace engagement placement, or
- b. a non-academic matter

should be referred to the relevant Department Head.

A complaint that relates to another student may seek support from staff of the relevant Department, or from the Operations Manager. The complaint should be addressed to the Director of Quality & Governance in the first instance.

A complaint against the conduct of a member of staff that might be in contravention of the Staff Code of Conduct will be referred to the Managing Director or the Director of Quality and Governance who will determine whether the complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant Human Resources policy.

Step 5. Plan the involvement of a child, young or vulnerable person (if applicable)

When working to resolve a child or young person's complaint the following principles must be followed:

- support children to raise complaints, include a support from their family or community
- ensure MCIE can appropriately respond to, and report suspected child abuse.

Ensure communications and conversations are:

- child-focused
- easily understood by children and their families
- easily understood by staff and volunteers.

MCIE's staff must make sure they:

- take the child or young person's complaints seriously and that they respond to them promptly and thoroughly
- where relevant co-operate with law enforcement

- ensure any suspected abuse is reported under the mandatory reporting rules
- maintain the child's privacy
- get advice on the employment law obligations where they are required.

MCIE staff supporting a child or young person's complaint should also read MCIE's [POL-15_01-1034_Child Safety Policy](#)

Step 6. Resolve the complaint

It is the responsibility of the complainant to state the grounds for their complaint fully and to provide all relevant evidence to help resolve the complaint.

If the complaint has been made with a member of MCIE staff, or has been assigned to a member of staff through Teamwork Desk, that staff member should seek to:

- resolve the complaint immediately (as is reasonable)
 - express concern
 - apologise (if appropriate)
 - resolve the issue (or escalate – arrange for the matter to be addressed by another staff member)
- follow-up
- manage the complaint as described in Step 1, and/or
- refer the complainant to the Operations Manager (as is appropriate)

Step 7. Notify the complainant of the outcomes

The complainant will be notified, in writing (as appropriate via the Teamwork Desk), of the outcome of the investigation and/or the proposal for resolution of their complaint under this policy within 5 working days of the lodgement of the complaint.

A further time period may be required in cases where additional investigation is required, or a counter-complaint lodged, or where the matter is referred for resolution under a different institution policy.

The complainant will be notified of:

- a. the process undertaken to consider the complaint
- b. the outcome of any investigation, including any recommendation(s) for administrative action that MCIE will consider
- c. the process of escalation of the complaint if the student is not satisfied with the proposed resolution/s

Step 8. Provide details of the final outcome

A copy of the advice to the complainant detailing the final outcome will be added to the complainant's ticket or file.

Step 9. Add the issue into the Continuous Improvement Process

The circumstances leading to all complaints are analysed to identify if underlying issues should be referred to the Continuous Improvement Process. In this instance details should be sent to cir@mcie.edu.au and be added to the Management Meeting Agenda.

Process for Escalation

In the first instance the complainant should try to resolve the issue. This may mean discussing the issue with others who are part of the issue, the issue should be discussed, a resolution agreed to, and details recorded. If the complainant is not satisfied with the agreed resolution, the standard procedure is to refer the complaint to the next management level up.

For example: where a Trainer has attempted to resolve a student issue but was not able to gain the student's agreement to the resolution, the issue would be referred to a Head of Department. The next level of escalation if unresolved at HOD level, is to the Operations Manager, followed by the Managing Director. If

MCIE is unable to resolve the issue a student may submit their complaint to the:

**National Training Complaints Hotline,
Phone: 13 38 73 – Select option 4.
Written complaints can be emailed to NTCH@education.gov.au**

Students also have the option to have their complaint/appeal heard by a third-party mediator who is employed by the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria <https://www.disputes.vic.gov.au>. These services are free, and a referral is not required. Telephone: 1300 372 888.

Students are not required to pay any fees to have their complaint or appeal reviewed and resolved by MCIE when handled in-house and considered an 'informal' complaints process.

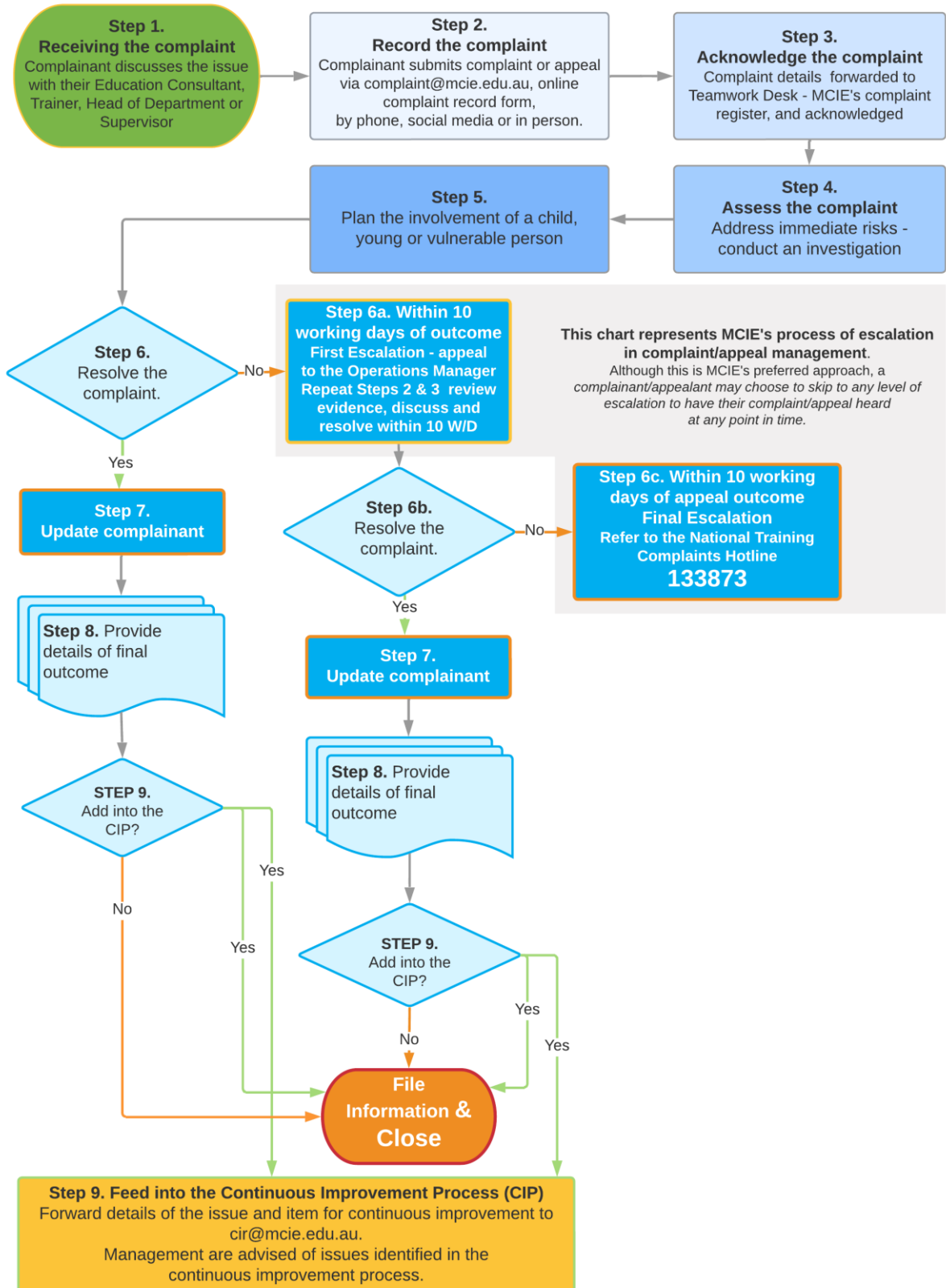
IMPORTANT NOTE: A student may skip to any level of escalation to have their complaint heard without moving through each of the levels.

Relevant ACTS, regulations and 2025 Standards for RTOs

- Privacy Act 1988
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Outcome Standard 2

Domestic student complaints and appeals process

For adults and young people 01-1003



Related documents.

Document Number	Title
POL-10_01-1016	Critical Incident Policy
POL-13_01-1027	Student Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy and Procedure
POL-15_01-1034	Child Safety Policy
DOC-04_06-2003	Domestic Student handbook

Version history and change table

Date	Version No:	Changes Made	Approved By	Next Scheduled review
2019	1	First iteration	BD	
19/09/2024	2	File name and title did not match, added to QMS, updated naming conventions of lined documents, added this version history table	BD	19/09/2024
13/04/2024	3	Review and update to ensure it meets the requirements of the RTOs 2025	BD	13/04/2024
08/06/2025	4	Updated links and simplified the flowchart Legislative, Regulatory and Contractual References	BD	06/06/2026
1/10/2025	5	Restructured policy to MCIE standard format, added Preamble	DQG	1/10/2028