
Complaint Handling Policy

Relevant standard: Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, Clause 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6.

AIWER is committed to providing a fair and transparent complaint handling process.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is generally negative feedback about services or people which has not been resolved locally.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to and may involve issues concerning the conduct of:

- AIWER as an organisation, it's trainers, assessors or other staff;
- Third party services provided on behalf of AIWER, its trainers, assessors or other staff; or
- A learner of AIWER

This is an important point to note in understanding that this policy has a broad application and is not simply relevant to complaints that may be made by learners. A complaint may be made by an employer about AIWER or by the trainer about the conduct of the learner. Throughout this policy we refer to the person making a complaint as simply the complainant.

Early Resolution of Complaints

In all cases, issues that arise during training and assessment that are the source of frustration or are in dispute should be resolved at the time they occur between the persons involved. It is often the case that complaints can be avoided by proper communication and respect between persons involved.

Relationship to Continuous Improvement

Frequently, the complaints handling process will explore weakness in the training and assessment or administrative system that can flow into the continuous improvement system as opportunities for improvement. This outcome of complaints handling is very positive and should be actively applied by all persons involved. It is for this reason that complaints received from stakeholders should be seen in a positive light and as opportunities for improvement.

Making a Complaint

A complaint may be received by AIWER in any form and does not need to be formally documented by the complainant in order to be acted on. Complaints may be made by any person.

The complaints policy must be publicly available. This means that the complaints policy and procedure must be published on the AIWER website.

To make a complaint, the person is recommended to complete the AIWER – Complaint Form. This form is available via our website or can be obtained from the AIWER office.

The completed complaint form is to be submitted to the RTO Manager either in hard copy or electronically via the following contact details:

AIWER

PO Box 543

Blackwood, SA 5051

Email: info@aiwer.edu.au

If a complainant has any difficulty assessing the required form or submitting the complaint to AIWER, they are advised to contact AIWER immediately at the following phone number:

Phone: [+61 8 7200 6650](tel:+61872006650)

A written record of all complaints is to be kept by AIWER including all details of lodgement, response and resolution. The complaints register within the student management system is to be used to record the details of the complaint and to maintain a chronological journal of events during the complaint handling process. Records relating to complaints handling must be stored securely to prevent access to unauthorised personnel.

The complaint is referred to the CEO; whereby the CEO reviews the complaint and determines if investigation or consultation is required; or if the matter can be solved internally.

Complaints are to be handled in the strictest confidence. NO AIWER representative is to disclose information to any person without the permission of AIWER CEO. A decision to release information to third parties can only be made after the complainant has given permission for this to occur. This permission should be given using the Information Release Form.

Communicating the Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure

The complaints handling policy must be:

- Publicly available on the AIWER Website
- Integrated into the AIWER Learner Handbook
- Included in the AIWER Policy and Procedure

Complaint Handling Timeframe

- Written acknowledgement by AIWER **no later than 24 hours** from the time the complaint is received. This acknowledgement is intended to provide the complainant assurance that AIWER has received the complaint and will review the relevant issues and provide a response as soon as practical. The acknowledgement must inform the person that they will receive a written response.
- The handling of a complaint is to commence within **seven (7) working days** of the lodgement of the complaint and all reasonable measures are taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.
- A written response must be provided to the complainant within **fourteen (14) working days** of the lodgement of the complaint.
- As a benchmark, AIWER should attempt to resolve complaints as soon as possible. A timeframe to resolve a complaint within **thirty (30) calendar days** is considered acceptable and in the best interest of AIWER and the complainant.
- A complainant should also be provided with regular updates to inform them of the process of the complaint handling. Updates should be provided to the complainant at a minimum of **two (2) weekly intervals**.
- Complaints must be resolved to a final outcome within **sixty (60) calendar days** of the complaint being initially received. Where AIWER Chief Executive Officer considers that more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint, the CEO must inform the complainant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required.

Principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

A complainant is to be provided an opportunity to formally present his or her case at no cost. The principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness must be incorporated into the complaint handling process to ensure that decision-making is fair and reasonable. Natural justice must be observed when it affects the rights, interests or legitimate expectations of individuals. The following principles are to be applied:

- **CEO bias.** Where the Chief Executive Officer of AIWER feels that they may have bias or there is a perception of bias process or where the person making the complaint is not satisfied with how the matter has been handled, the complainant is to be referred directly to an independent third-party for consideration and response.

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- **Responding to Allegations.** Where a complaint involves one person making allegations about another person, it is a requirement for AIWER to hear both sides of the matter before making any judgements about the complaint should be settled. A person who will be affected by a decision made by AIWER as a result of a complaint has the right to be fully informed of any allegations and to be provided adequate opportunity to be heard and respond. The person has the right to:
 - Put forward arguments in their favour,
 - Show cause why a proposed action should not be taken,
 - Deny allegations
 - Call for evidence to disprove allegations and claims,
 - Explain allegations or present an innocent explanation, and
 - Provide mitigating circumstances (information aimed at reducing the severity, seriousness of something).

AIWER also has an obligation to fully consider the substance of allegations and the response provided by parties before making a decision. Decisions must be communicated to the complainant and relevant person's subject of allegations in writing. This is to include advising these persons of their right to seek a third-party review of decisions made by AIWER.

- **Referring matters to authorities.** Where an allegation is made that involves alleged criminal or illegal activity and it is considered outside the scope and expertise of AIWER to investigate the matter, then in these circumstances AIWER reserve the right to report these allegations to law enforcement authorities. Persons related to the matter involving alleged criminal or illegal activity will be advised in writing if this course of action is being taken.
- **Third Party Review.** Where the person making a complaint is not satisfied with the handling of the matter by AIWER, they have the opportunity for a body or person that is independent of AIWER to review his or her complaint following the internal completion of complaint handling process. Before a person seeks a review by an independent third party, they are requested to first allow AIWER to fully consider the nature of the complaint and to respond to the person in writing. If after this has occurred, the person is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right then seek a review by an independent third party. To request a review by an independent third party, the complainant should inform the RTO Manager of their request who will initiate the process with the Chief Executive Officer.

In these circumstances, the AIWER Chief Executive Officer will advise of an appropriate party independent of AIWER to review the complaint outcome (and its subsequent handling) and provide advice to AIWER in regards to the recommended outcomes. The independent third-party is required to respond with their recommendations within **fourteen (14) working days** of their review being requested. This advice is to be accepted by AIWER as final, advised to the person making a complaint in writing and implemented without prejudice.

Where the AIWER appoints or engages an appropriate independent person to review a complaint, the AIWER will meet the full cost to facilitate the independent review.

Unresolved Complaints

Once the complaint handling process has concluded; where the person making a complaint remains not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint handling procedure, the person is to be advised that they have the right to refer the matter to any external authority/agency that may be relevant to their complaint.

The following external agencies are nominated in the first instance as relevant points of referral the person may consider:

- In relation to consumer related issues, the person may refer their complaint to the **Office of Fair Trading**.
- In relation to the delivery of training and assessment services, the person may refer their complaint to the **National Training Complaints Service** via the following phone number: 13 38 73 or visit the website at: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-training-complaints-hotline>
- In relation to matters relating to privacy, the person may refer their complaint to the **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner** via the following details: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/individuals/how-do-i-make-a-privacy-complaint> or call on 1300 363 992

This guidance is also communicated to learners within the Learner Handbook and also within the publicly available policies and procedures on AIWER website. It is expected that the above agencies will investigate the persons concerns and contact the AIWER for information. External agencies will typically request a copy of any record of how the complaint was handled from the person. AIWER is to ensure that the person is provided with a written response that they may use for this purpose.

The AIWER is to cooperate fully with agencies such as the National Training Complaints Service, the Office of Fair Trading or ASQA that may investigate the handling of a complaint. AIWER considers that it would be extremely unlikely that a complaint is not able to be resolved quickly within AIWER internal arrangements.

Unresolved International Student Complaints

Where an international student complaint is unable to be resolved, the international student may refer the matter to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's services are free, independent and impartial.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can consider matters relating to:

- refusing admission to a course

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- fees and refunds
 - course or provider transfers
 - course progress or attendance
 - cancellation of enrolment
 - accommodation or work arranged by your provider
 - incorrect advice given by an education agent.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can investigate complaints about education agents who have an agreement with a provider to represent them in Australia or overseas. The following website provides more information about accessing the services of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

<https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/complaints/international-student-complaints>

The AIWER is to cooperate fully with agencies such as the National Training Complaints Service, Overseas Students Ombudsman, the Office of Fair Trading or ASQA that may investigate the handling of a complaint. AIWER considers that it would be extremely unlikely that a complaint is not able to be resolved quickly within AIWER internal arrangements.

Record Management of Complaint Records

Records relating to complaints will present in two formats. There will be electronic records in the form of email correspondence and other documents which are communicated electronically and hard copy records which are submitted by the complainant or generated by AIWER. There is also a record of the complaint maintained within the AIWER student management system. This includes the details about the complaint and a diary log which records the progress of the complaint handling and closure. This record also records identified opportunities for improvement that result from complaints handling.

All records regardless of their format will be saved in a digital format into a secure folder located on the AIWER file storage. Each file is to be clearly labelled with the document title or subject and the date of which the document was received or generated. This folder must only be accessible to persons authorised by the Chief Executive Officer. Records stored on the student management system are to be accessible only to administrators and managers.

To ensure records are maintained in a safe and suitable condition, the following is to apply:

- Records must be kept securely to prevent them being accessed by any non-authorised personnel.
- Records must be kept confidential to safeguard information and to protect the privacy of complainants.
- Records must be kept to avoid damage by fire, flood, termites or any other pests.
- Electronic data storage must be safe from destruction by fire or flood and should take account of the risk of component failure of a single storage device. Electronic data is also to be backed-up off site.

A correspondence record must be made for each complainant making a complaint. All email and letter communication should be retained with the complainant correspondence record within the complaint handling file.

Period of retention of Complaints Records

AIWER is to retain records relating to complaints handling for a minimum of five (5) years.

Destruction of Complaints Records

AIWER CEO is the only person who can authorise (in writing) the destruction of complaint handling records. Records are only to be authorised for destruction after the retention period has lapsed. Documents identified for destruction are to be shredded before being recycled.

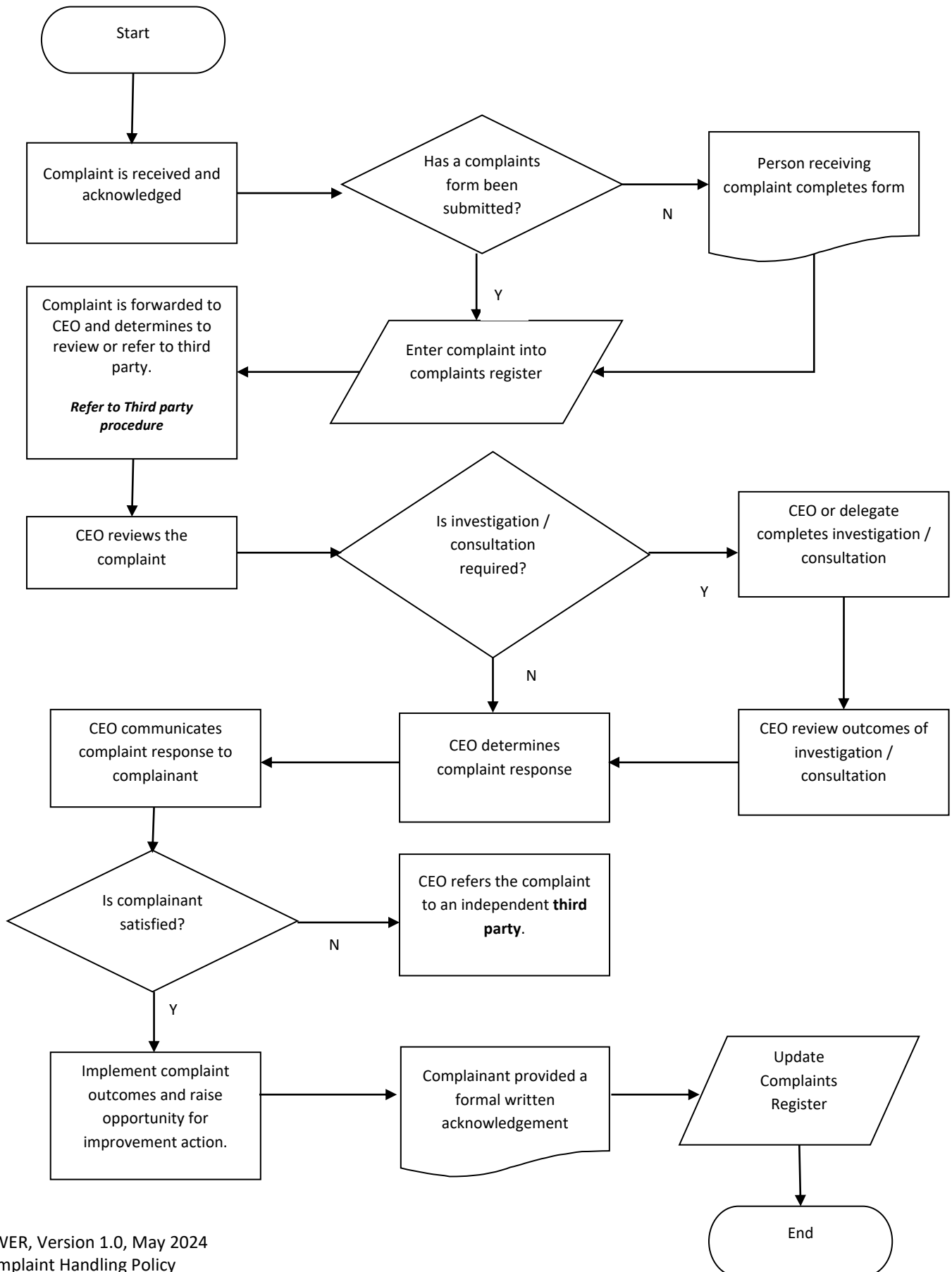
Complaint Handling Procedure

AIWER will apply the following procedure to its complaint handling:

- a) A complaint may be received in any form (written or verbal) although persons seeking to make a complaint are recommended to complete the complaint form which is available to them on the website. There is no time limitation on a person who is seeking to make a complaint.
- b) The complainant must be provided a written acknowledgement as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours from the time the complaint is received using the written acknowledgement email template. The acknowledgement must inform the complainant that they will receive a written response within 14 days and explain the complaints handling process and the person's rights and obligations.
- c) The complaint must be entered into the complaints and appeals register. The complaints and appeals register identifies the complainant, relation with AIWER, nature of complaint, findings/outcomes, any links with the Continuous Improvement report and the dates received & closed. Prior to entering the complaint form into the register, check if the person has not already submitted a complaint, if it is accurately recorded or if it has been recorded as a subsequent contact.
- d) The complaint is forwarded to the Chief Executive Office for review. The CEO will determine if the complaint requires further investigation or consultation.
- e) Where a complaint is made about or involves allegations about another person, AIWER is obliged to inform this person about this complaint or allegation and provide them the opportunity to respond and present information in response to the issues raised.

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- f) Where a complaint is received by AIWER which involve allegations about alleged criminal conduct, AIWER are to recommend the person making the complaint refer the matter to the relevant State or Territory Police Service.
 - g) The CEO reviews the outcomes of the investigation/consultation and determines the complaint response within an acceptable timeframe. The complaints response letter template can be used to identify the findings and outcomes to the complainant.
 - h) AIWER shall maintain the enrolment of the complainant during the complaint handling process.
 - i) Decisions or outcomes of the complaint handling process that find in favour of the learner shall be implemented immediately.
 - j) The complainant is entitled to be heard with access to all relevant information and with the right of reply ensuring natural justice and procedural fairness is applied at every stage of the complaint process.
 - k) AIWER must request written acknowledgement from the complainant once the complaint has been resolved.
 - l) Complaint handling procedures should conclude with an analysis of the circumstances to identify any opportunities for improvement.
 - m) The complaint must be accurately updated and recorded in the Complaints Register.

Complaints Handling Process



Third Party Review Process

