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- POLICY -

Customer Feedback and Complaint Handling Policy

Policy Statement

This policy outlines how TAFE SA manages feedback and complaints about its services, facilities or service delivery in a fair, effective and timely manner.

The application of this policy enables TAFE SA to identify significant and recurring issues arising from feedback and complaints, inform systemic corrective actions, and strengthen continuous improvement across the organisation

Scope

In Scope

This policy applies to all complaints made by any TAFE SA student or members of the public, received via the Customer Resolution Team, about TAFE SA (hereby referred to as '*complainant*'), its agents, or related parties as well as decisions about complaints.

Out of Scope

Where the subject of a complaint is determined to be more appropriately managed under another TAFE SA policy and /or relevant third party, the complainant will be advised of the process. These matters include:

- Investigations relating to TAFE SA staff misconduct or grievance
- Assessment appeals and other academic decisions
- Investigations of student behaviour or conduct
- Suspicion of corruption, maladministration, fraud and whistleblower protection
- Criminal matters (referred to SAPOL)
- Critical incidents which are covered by the Crisis and Incident Management Policy.

Strategic Plan

The requirements set out in this policy support the principles set out in the TAFE SA Strategic Plan 2023-2033.

Principles

Complaints will be responded to in a way that is timely, consistent, confidential and fair management will be fair, effective, and timely

Accessibility

- All complaints received will be assessed and responded to in a timely and consistent manner.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because of their complaint, and have access to additional support should it be required, throughout the complaints process from lodgement through to resolution by TAFE SA staff; this includes, but is not

limited to, the Customer Resolution Team, Student Success and Wellbeing and Inclusion Team, Disability Support Team, Aboriginal Access Centre and the International Student Support Team.

Confidentiality and Privacy

- Ensure every complaint is handled confidentially to the extent that is practicable, this may require us to disclose to relevant authorised parties.
- Personal information disclosed during the complaint process will be managed in accordance with TAFE SA's Privacy Policy.

Fairness and Natural Justice

- Address each complaint in an objective, equitable and impartial manner.
- Manage a complaint in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice.
- Not treat complainants differently for choosing to make an anonymous complaint.
- Ensure cases of a sensitive nature e.g. gender-based violence, and other traumatic incidents, will be managed by an appropriately trained and experienced person in a trauma informed way. Such cases will be referred to Student Success and Wellbeing services for trauma-informed counselling and referral to external support services where relevant. TAFE SA staff affected by gender-based violence should be referred to their HR Business Partner for support.
- Manage conflicts of interest, real or perceived, by ensuring that complaints made about individuals are handled independently and provide an opportunity for an independent, internal review, where appropriate.
- Have an expectation that people making complaints, will treat TAFE SA staff with respect at all stages of the complaint process, act in good faith and not behave in an unreasonable or inappropriate manner in accordance with TAFE SA's Respectful Behaviours Policy. This will also include responding to any requests for additional information in a timely manner and not providing any false or misleading information.
- TAFE SA has responsibilities to adhere to the Safe Environments for Children, Young and Vulnerable People Policy.docx

Transparency

- Investigate a complaint thoroughly and to ensure procedural fairness and/or meet any legal requirements, TAFE SA may be required to disclose some or all the information provided in the complaint.
- Ensures that the data collected meets regular data analysis requirements including biannual and quarterly reporting for education business units, as well as Executive level reporting.

Complaint Handling

Refer to the Customer Feedback and Complaint Handling Procedure for the complaint handling processes.

Review and Appeal

A complainant has a right to request an internal review of a decision if new information arises or an error occurred in the process. Reviews will be conducted independently of the original decision. Complainants who are not satisfied with the outcome after internal review can refer the matter to an external third party such as Ombudsman SA or the National Student Ombudsman (NSO) (for higher education courses) or a relevant regulatory authority. See Customer Feedback and Complaint Handling Procedure for further details.

Record keeping and reporting

All complaints will be recorded in the TAFE SA complaint management system by the Customer Resolution Team and will be categorised to support management, trend analysis, and continuous improvement.

Under the *State Records Act 1997 (SA)*, TAFE SA is required to keep a full and accurate record of its activities. TAFE SA will securely maintain a record of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes.

In accordance with the Premier's Circular PC013 - Annual Reporting Requirements, the annual reports of all agencies will contain information relating to complaints received during the year.

In addition, a quarterly report will be made available for reporting via the Academic Governance Measures which are presented to the Academic and Quality Committee and Higher Education Academic Board.

Compliance audits are conducted by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), the Department of Employment and Workforce Relations (DEWR) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). Reviews may be conducted at the request of Ombudsman SA or the VET Student Loans Ombudsman (VSLO).

The above agencies periodically assess TAFE SA's complaint handling practices. All records of feedback and complaints must be completed at a standard that enables the above level of reporting to occur when required.

Roles and Responsibilities

Position	Responsibility
Business Unit Complaint Handler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for determining the appropriate actions to be taken and ensure follow up in a timely manner. Ensure the Business Unit creates records detailing all verbal and written engagement associated with the complaint and decisions made.
Complainant/Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treat TAFE SA staff with respect at all times and act appropriately, honestly and in good faith. Adhering to the Terms & Conditions - TAFE SA and Student Code of Behaviour and related policies. Where a complainant requires an advocate (e.g. parent or employer) they will be responsible for providing formal consent on an approved TAFE SA Student Consent to Release Personal Information form to act on their behalf.
Customer Resolution Team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure independent, impartial and high-quality complaint resolution across TAFE SA that aligns with the Complaint Management Framework. Coordinates the complaints resolution process which includes liaising with relevant stakeholders Support organisational capability, assurance and continuous improvement in complaint handling,
Director Strategic Planning and Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure reviews of complaint decisions are conducted independently and in accordance with policy/procedure timelines. Support continuous improvement processes to address issues identified in complaints. Ensure employees managing complaints are resourced appropriately and supported in a timely manner.
Executive Director, Students, Strategic Planning and Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountable for effective implementation of the 'Customer Feedback and Complaint Handling Policy' and 'Customer Feedback and Complaint Handling Procedure'. Accountable for effective implementation of TAFE SA's complaint's framework. Promotes a culture that values complaints and effective resolution. Supports use of the complaint management system and data to inform improvements.
Manager, (Strategic Policy and Advice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide leadership and guidance to employees involved in complaints handling processes. Encourage employees to identify opportunities for service improvements. Undertake mediation with relevant parties when required. Ensure escalated or high-risk complaints are managed effectively to a high standard through relevant decision makers/delegates (complaint handlers) and/or Customer Resolution Team members.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership and oversees the process to facilitate employee training (in collaboration with Workforce Development) and promote TAFE SA staff's understanding the Complaint Management Framework. • Works with the Customer Resolution Lead, to identify a TAFE SA response to external agencies representing a complainant. • Review the Complaint Management Framework on a regular basis to ensure continued suitability, adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency.
TAFE SA employees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist people who wish to make a complaint to access TAFE SA's complaints process. • Respond to complaints as relevant to their role and responsibilities and in accordance with Complaint Management Framework. • Have a sound understanding of TAFE SA's Complaint Management Framework. • Access support and guidance from the Customer Resolution Team members where a complaint cannot be resolved at the local level. • All Tafe SA employees are bound by the Code of Ethics and the respectful Behaviours Policy.
Team Leader/Supervisor (Customer Resolution Lead)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership, governance and assurance of complaint management across TAFE SA that aligns with the Compliance Management Framework. • Strengthen organisational capability and continuous improvement in complaint management

Definitions

Term	Definition
Appeal Panel	When a complainant seeks an appeal of a Level 2 decision by making a formal request. Panel Representatives will be nominated by TAFE SA Executive and will be independent of the decision being reviewed. The Panel will consist of a minimum of 3 TAFE SA staff members, with at least one delegate at Education Manager Level, who will preside as the Chairperson.
Business Unit Complaint Handler	A TAFE SA employee with relevant authority who can receive and make a decision in order to resolve the matter quickly and efficiently. This may include (but is not limited to) a Team Leader, Manager, Education Manager, Business Operations Manager or Business Unit Director.
Complaint	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an agency, related to its products, services, employees or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is either explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required

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Complainant/Customer	Previous, current or future students, members of the public, employers, parents, guardian or caregivers
Complaint Management Framework/System	As per PC039 – Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector, A complaint management system includes policies, procedures, practices, employees, hardware and software used by an agency for the management of complaints and feedback
Crisis	An unforeseen incident or potential incident, event or occurrence that impacts across TAFE SA and may disrupt organisational strategy. In line with the policy’s risk-based approach, it is likely to have critical consequences and requires the intervention of an Executive Director/Dean / Crisis Management Team. (As outlined in the Crisis and Incident Management Policy.pdf)
Critical Incident	An unforeseen instance of something happening or potentially happening, or event or occurrence that impacts more than a functional team or area and will probably require cross-organisational coordination and external stakeholder management. In line with the above risk-based approach, it is likely to have major consequences and requires the intervention of an Executive Director/Dean / Critical Incident Management Team. (As outlined in the Crisis and Incident Management Policy.pdf)
Feedback	Feedback is an opinion, comment or expression of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to or about the agency, regarding products, services, employees or its handling of a complaint. A response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. Feedback can be either positive or negative.
Higher Education	Higher Education as the qualifications delivered under the TEQSA registration and accreditation.
Natural Justice	The duty to act fairly and includes two rules: <i>The fair hearing rule</i> – meaning that all parties must be given the opportunity to present their case and be fully informed about allegations and decisions made and <i>No bias rule</i> – meaning that a decision maker must have no personal interest in the matter.

Document Type/ Number	Document/Reference Title
PPMF TAFESA 1184	<i>Academic Integrity Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1098	<i>Assessment Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 70	<i>Course Admission Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 142	<i>Creation and Capture of Official Records Procedure</i>
PPMF TAFESA 182	<i>Credit and Debt Recovery Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1248	<i>Crisis and Incident Management Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1249	<i>Crisis and Incident Management Procedure</i>

OFFICIAL

PPMF TAFESA	<i>Customer Feedback and Complaint Handling Procedure</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1105	<i>Fraud and Corruption Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1154	<i>International Students Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1093	<i>Privacy Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1198	<i>Quality Audit Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 140	<i>Records Management Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1086	<i>Requesting Legal Services Procedure</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1010	<i>Respectful Behaviours Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1213	<i>Safe Environments for Children, Young and Vulnerable People Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1078	<i>Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 136	<i>Student Conduct and Disciplinary Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1040	<i>Student Critical Incident Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 138	<i>TAFE SA Consultation and Change Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 1104	<i>TAFE SA Procurement and Contract Management Policy</i>
PPMF TAFESA 195	<i>Work Health and Safety and Injury Management Policy Statement</i>
Code of Behaviour	<i>Student Code of Behaviour</i>
Code of Ethics	Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector
Code of Practice	TAFE SA Code of Practice
Complaint Management Framework (OSA)	<i>Complaint Management Framework – Ombudsman SA – March 2016</i>
DPC Circular	<i>Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector PC039</i>
Higher Education Standards	<i>Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021</i>
Internal Complaint or Feedback Form	<i>Business Unit - Complaint or Feedback Record</i>
Standards for RTOs 2025	<i>Standards for RTOs 2025</i>
Standards for RTOs 2025 Practice Guides	<i>Standards for RTO's 2025 (VET Students)</i>
Standards Australia	<i>Guidelines for complaint management in organizations ISO 10002:2022</i>
Strategic Plan	TAFE SA Strategic Plan 2023-2033
TAFESASIS029	<i>Student Consent to Release Personal Information</i>
Terms & Conditions	<i>Terms & Conditions - TAFE SA</i>

Document Control

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