
Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Policy

Policy/Document Approval Body:	Academic Board
Date Created:	26 th February 2010
Policy Custodian:	Dean of Engineering
Policy Contact:	Accreditation Manager
File Location:	W:\Data - ALL.Standard\Policies and Procedures\EIT Policies and Procedures
Location on EIT website:	http://www.eit.edu.au/organisation-policies
Review Period:	Three years
Revision No:	3
Date of Revision:	13 th October 2010
Definitions :	<p>Student Advocate: An independent person, who can provide a student with unbiased objective advice about a proposed complaint, the process to resolution and suggest possible outcomes.</p> <p>Grievance: A defined issue to be investigated as described in this policy (and associated procedure). This is due to the failure of informal processes in resolving the issue. The result of resolving the grievance may be disciplinary action against a staff member or student or compensation for the student.</p> <p>Mediator: A disinterested and skilled individual in mediating complaints in an academic environment who is considered impartial and objective by both student and staff member or complainant and subject of the complaint.</p>
Purpose:	This policy's intention is to set out the way the EIT will ensure a high quality management process for student complaints and grievances.
Scope:	<p>This procedure applies to all the professional staff, students and academics currently attending or working for the EIT or who have attended in the past. It relates to complaints that have arisen from a student's past or current involvement with the EIT.</p> <p>It excludes discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying by staff. These issues are dealt with in specific policies covering these issues. Assessment of student work is necessarily referred to in this policy but is dealt with in another specific policy.</p>
Overview :	The policy describes the best practice approach to handling grievances from when they are initiated to dealing with them in a fair, prompt, confidential and objective manner with an appropriate resolution to (optimally) the satisfaction of all parties.



Essential Supporting Documents: ACPET external appeals procedure for students residing in Australia
<http://www.acpet.edu.au/students/student-support/appeals>
Overseas Students Ombudsman complaints procedure for students residing outside of Australia
<http://www.oso.gov.au/making-a-complaint/>

Related Documents: Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Procedure

1.0 Introduction

During the provision of engineering education to students, it is probable that students will raise suggestions, concerns, complaints or grievances about their experiences at the EIT.

The EIT recognises that effective communication is of paramount importance when attempting to resolve difficulties experienced by students. The EIT is committed to a culture of openness, fairness and continuous improvement, which includes being open to criticism. All parties in the action will be treated fairly and with dignity.

2.0 Principles of Resolution

The resolution procedures of the EIT are based on the following principles:

- All suggestions, concerns, complaints or grievances from students will be acknowledged and treated promptly and fairly.
- No student should suffer any discrimination or unfair action as a result of making a complaint.
- Informal resolution of complaints is always the best option and should be harnessed as often and as quickly (but professionally) as possible.
- Professional staff who are experienced in dealing with these issues are critical for achieving successful outcomes in this policy area. This includes the use of appropriate student advocates and mediators.
- All parties have to be considerate, cordial and treat each other with respect, and allow no tolerance of intimidatory or threatening activity.
- All parties want to achieve a win-win solution with good faith displayed throughout.
- If errors arise, these are to be acknowledged and then corrected so as to minimise losses to all parties affected.
- All procedures used to resolve complaints are conducted with the principles of natural justice being paramount and the need to always be objective, fair and respectful of all parties.
- It is crucial that both parties put significant effort into detailed communications and understanding of all the issues.



- Consideration should be given to applying lateral thinking and creative strategies in resolving complaints (as opposed to the “winner-takes-all” strategy).
- All parties to the complaint should be regularly notified as to the progress of the procedure.
- All exchanges of information should rely on the utmost level of confidentiality as often as possible.
- Once a decision has been reached, all parties should be informed as quickly as possible, in writing about the results of the complaint.

3.0 Reasons for complaint

Typical reasons for a complaint include the following:

- A student impacted in the inappropriate, irregular or incorrect application of EIT policies and procedures.
- A student impacted by bias, prejudice or perceived unfair treatment
- A penalty that seems excessively harsh being applied to a student.
- A student impacted by negligent, unusual or inappropriate conduct by a person involved.
- A student impacted by a decision which didn’t take all the facts and issues into account.

4.0 Grounds for appeal

This is always an awkward stage, where the student may have minimal belief that the system will work adequately and fairly. The ethos of the EIT should be to emphasise that in many cases there are further stages for dealing with a complaint or grievance beyond the initial contact. Typical reasons for appeal include:

- An irregularity in the procedures followed.
- New evidence and facts that have emerged that would change the decision.
- The penalty imposed or decision reached could be considered unreasonable.

5.0 Categories of complaint

There are various categories of complaint and they include:

- Academic matters, such as academic decisions, content or structure of programs, teaching quality, research supervision, intellectual property, plagiarism and cheating.
- Administrative matters, such as policies, procedures, decisions and access to required resources.
- Intimidation by other students or staff members
- Collective complaints by a number of students with a similar issue.

6.0 Review and history

It is vital that the Dean or the Human Resources Manager make available to the Academic Board a summary of incidents, concerns, complaints and grievances of both a formal and an informal nature.



7.0 Further External Appeal(s)

The complainant may not be satisfied with the internal processes of the EIT and should be entitled to proceed to a higher authority for resolution. External appeals can be dealt with by:

1. An arbitrator from the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET).
2. An arbitrator from the office of the Overseas Students Ombudsman;
3. An academic member of staff who can mediate or arbitrate based in a local university in the country in which the student resides;
4. The Director of the Western Australian Department of Education Services

The EIT notes that the advice of these external bodies is that, ordinarily, students should first attempt to resolve complaints and grievances using the prescribed internal procedures of the EIT before seeking external assistance. To have external bodies approached with regard to complaints and grievances reflects poorly on the EIT and staff members and members of the EIT's boards should do all in their power to help resolve issues internally.