

COMPLAINTS, DISPUTES AND APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Maritime and General Programs – Career Start, Career Boost & Fee-for-Service

1. Applicable Standards, Contracts and Legislation

This Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure supports compliance with the following:

- 2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations – Outcome Standards 2.7 (a–e) and 2.8 (a–d) (complaints and appeals handling, natural justice, timely resolution, records, continuous improvement)
- Vocational Education and Training Skills Assure Supplier Agreement (SAS Agreement) 2025–2028
- Skills Assure Supplier Policy 2025–2028 – specifically the requirements that the SAS must:
 - Ensure appropriate avenues exist for Students (and employers, if applicable) to make complaints and that business processes are in place to resolve complaints in a timely and fair manner;
 - Keep and implement a documented procedure for dealing with complaints that any person may make about any of the services or the activities and actions of the supplier in providing the Services, and make it available for viewing by any person on request;
 - Have and comply with a dispute resolution procedure for disputes between the supplier and any other person with whom the supplier may interact in the provision of the services;
 - Maintain a reasonable internal process to manage appeals regarding Co-contribution fee waiver decisions.
- Career Start Program Policy 2025–28 and Career Boost Program Policy 2025–28
- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011
- Australian Consumer Law
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Australian Privacy Principles
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) and related regulations (where complaints involve safety or psychosocial hazards)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
- QMS Pillar RTOG4 – Complaints & Appeals (mapped to the Outcome Standards listed above).

Non-compliance with the SAS Agreement or SAS Policy may result in the Department exercising its rights under the Agreement, including suspension of funding, directives to cease enrolments, or termination. Nothing in this policy limits any person's rights under Australian Consumer Law or other legislation.

2. Purpose

Training & Personnel Australia (TPA) is committed to providing a fair, transparent, accessible and responsive process for managing complaints and appeals. This policy ensures that complaints and appeals are managed consistently, confidentially and in accordance with the principles of natural justice and

procedural fairness, and that TPA meets its contractual obligations under the SAS Agreement and SAS Policy 2025–2028.

It applies to all learners and prospective learners (Career Start, Career Boost and Fee-for-Service), staff, trainers, assessors, contractors, third-party providers, employers (where applicable), visitors and other stakeholders who interact with TPA in the provision of its services.

3. Definitions

- Complaint – An expression of dissatisfaction about TPA’s training delivery, assessment services, administrative processes, customer service, organisational decisions, staff/student/contractor conduct, fees or refunds, or any other matter affecting a person’s experience with TPA.
- Appeal – A request for review of a decision made by TPA, including assessment outcomes, recognition decisions, administrative decisions, complaint outcomes, refund decisions, co-contribution fee waiver decisions, or any decision affecting a learner’s participation or progression.
- Natural justice / procedural fairness – The right to be heard, the right to an unbiased decision-maker, and the right to a decision based on evidence.
- Dispute – Any disagreement between TPA and a student, employer, or other person with whom TPA interacts in the provision of its services that is not resolved through informal discussion.

4. Policy Principles

TPA will ensure that:

- Appropriate avenues exist for students (and employers where applicable) to make complaints, and that business processes are in place to resolve complaints in a timely and fair manner (as required by the SAS Policy).
- Natural justice and procedural fairness are applied at every stage.
- Complaints and appeals are treated seriously, impartially and without bias.
- Persons involved are treated respectfully and given a reasonable opportunity to present their views.
- Confidentiality is maintained where reasonably practicable.
- Victimisation, discrimination, intimidation or adverse treatment of any person who makes a genuine complaint or appeal, or participates in an investigation, is not tolerated.
- Complaints and appeals can be made at no cost to the individual.
- Outcomes are used to identify continuous improvement opportunities.
- A student’s enrolment is maintained while a complaint or appeal process is ongoing (unless the student’s behaviour poses a serious risk to others or the organisation).
- This documented procedure is available for viewing by any person on request and is published on the TPA website and in the Student Handbook.

TPA responds to allegations involving the conduct of the RTO, its staff, trainers and assessors, any third party delivering services on its behalf, and any student or client.

5. What Can Be Complained About or Appealed

Complaints may relate to (but are not limited to): training and assessment quality or delivery; marketing information; enrolment processes; student progress and support; the way a person has been treated; staff, student, contractor or third-party conduct; bullying, harassment, discrimination or psychosocial hazards; facilities, resources or equipment; fees, co-contribution fees, refunds or fee-waiver decisions; or any other matter affecting the person's experience with TPA's services.

Appeals may be lodged against assessment outcomes/results, recognition of prior learning or credit transfer decisions, refund assessments, co-contribution fee waiver decisions, responses to complaints, course admission decisions, or other general decisions made by TPA.

This policy also serves as TPA's dispute resolution procedure for disputes between TPA and any person with whom it interacts in the provision of its services.

6. Timeframes

TPA aims to finalise complaints and appeals as soon as practicable and in a timely manner. Where a matter cannot be finalised within 60 calendar days, the complainant or appellant will be advised in writing of the reasons for the delay and will receive regular progress updates until the matter is resolved.

Appeals against assessment decisions or co-contribution fee waiver decisions should preferably be lodged within 30 calendar days of the original decision being notified.

7. Making a Complaint or Appeal

Where appropriate, individuals are encouraged to attempt informal resolution first by discussing the matter with the person involved or with a Trainer/Assessor, Administration or the Director.

Formal complaints and appeals may be made verbally, by email, in writing, or via TPA's Complaints / Appeals Form. They should include as much detail as possible (what happened, how it affected the person, any evidence, steps already taken, and suggested resolution).

TPA will acknowledge receipt in writing within five (5) business days.

Employers (where training is employer-sponsored) may also raise complaints or disputes through the same process.

8. Resolution Process

Complaints and appeals are investigated by a person who is, where reasonably practicable, independent of the original matter. Investigation may include interviews, review of records and policies, and consultation with relevant parties (including third parties where services are delivered on TPA's behalf).

In the case of an assessment appeal, an assessor independent of the original decision will re-assess the work. The outcome of that independent assessment becomes the result for the task.

Appeals regarding co-contribution fee waiver decisions are managed through the same process and are linked to TPA's Fees & Refunds Policy and Procedure.

The complainant or appellant will receive a written outcome that includes TPA's understanding of the issue, steps taken, the decision and reasons, any corrective actions, and information about further review options.

Records of all complaints, appeals and disputes and their outcomes are maintained securely in accordance with TPA's Privacy Policy and Procedure and Records Management practices. Outcomes are reviewed for continuous improvement.

9. Independent Review and External Avenues

Where a person remains dissatisfied after the internal process, they may request an independent external review. Costs will be advised in advance; the person requesting the review normally bears the cost unless TPA decides to appoint the independent party.

External avenues available include:

- National Training Complaints Hotline – 13 38 73 or ntch@education.gov.au
- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) – www.asqa.gov.au/complaints (ASQA may require evidence that internal processes have been exhausted)
- Queensland Training Ombudsman – 1800 773 048
- Fair Trading Queensland (for fee/refund related matters) – 13 74 68
- Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (for privacy-related matters)
- The Department of Trade, Employment and Training (where relevant to funded training under the SAS Agreement).

TPA will cooperate fully with any external investigation or mediation and will implement recommendations arising from an independent review within a reasonable timeframe.

10. Procedures

10.1 Complaints Management

1. Receive the complaint (written, email, verbal or form). Record it on the Complaints and Appeals Register.
2. Acknowledge in writing within 5 business days.
3. Investigate (gather information, interview parties, involve third parties if relevant). Aim for timely resolution within 60 calendar days; advise of any delay and provide regular updates if longer.
4. Provide written outcome with reasons and further review rights.
5. Update the Register, file records, and consider continuous improvement actions at the next management review.

10.2 Appeals Management (including fee-waiver appeals)

- Acknowledge the appeal in writing within 5 business days and record it.

- For assessment appeals – arrange independent re-assessment.
- For co-contribution fee waiver appeals – review against the criteria in the Fees & Refunds Policy and Procedure and the relevant Program Policy.
- For other appeals – investigate the original decision and reasons; gather further information as needed.
- Provide written outcome with reasons.
- Update records and consider continuous improvement.

10.3 Independent / External Review

- If requested or if TPA determines it is necessary, arrange or cooperate with an independent party.
- Provide full cooperation and relevant records (subject to privacy law).
- Implement recommendations within a reasonable timeframe and notify the person of the outcome.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

- Director – Overall accountability, management of significant or complex matters, approval of outcomes involving independent parties, and continuous improvement oversight.
- Administration / Student Support – Receipt, acknowledgement, recording, and day-to-day coordination of complaints, appeals and disputes.
- Training Manager / relevant managers – Investigation of training/assessment related matters and assessment appeals.
- All staff – Respond respectfully to concerns, maintain confidentiality, participate in investigations when required, and report any victimisation.

12. Related Documents and Continuous Improvement

- TPA Student Handbook (includes information on how to make a complaint or appeal)
- TPA Privacy Policy and Procedure
- TPA Fees & Refunds Policy and Procedure (includes co-contribution fee waiver process)
- Complaints and Appeals Form / Register
- Continuous Improvement Register / processes

This policy is published on the TPA website and is available for viewing by any person on request. Complaints, appeals and disputes data are reviewed regularly to identify trends and opportunities for improvement. Outcomes feed into management reviews and continuous improvement activities.

13. Review



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This Policy and Procedure is reviewed at least annually or earlier if there is a material change to the 2025 Standards, SAS Agreement, SAS Policy, or TPA operations. Next scheduled review: August 2027.

Version	Date	Description	Author	Approved By
1.1	08/2026	Updated to explicitly incorporate all relevant SAS Agreement / SAS Policy 2025-28 contractual obligations on complaints, disputes and fee-waiver appeals	Brooke Lo Giudice	Jasmine Whittle CEO