

POLICY TITLE: Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure (for Academic and Non Academic Matters)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure there is an open and transparent approach to the handling of any grievances. The driver and particular approach, content and timeliness of any grievance handling specified in this policy and its procedures are a requirement of the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (the Department) under the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

This policy applies to all domestic students enrolling or seeking to enrol in the Bachelor of Photography course.

Policy

Photography Studies College (Melbourne) is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system which is easily accessible and offered to all complainants at no charge.

Photography Studies College (Melbourne) aims to:

- Develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works;
- Set in place a grievance handling system that is client focussed and helps **Photography Studies College (Melbourne)** to prevent grievances from recurring;
- Ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality;
- Ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against nor victimised;
- Ensure that there is a consistent response to grievances.

A grievance can be defined as a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of Photography Studies College (Melbourne)'s services and activities, such as:

- **academic matters**, including:
 - student progress
 - assessment
 - curriculum and awards in a course of study
 - the quality of education provided
- **non academic matters**, including:
 - the enrolment, induction/orientation process
 - handling of personal information including information collected for the purposes of FEE - HELP and repayment of FEE - HELP Loans
 - access to personal records
 - the way someone has been treated such as bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination.

This Policy and Procedure is designed to ensure that Photography Studies College (Melbourne) responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction from any student (or those seeking to enrol) regardless of where the grievance has arisen, the mode of study or place of residence.

In relation to non-academic matters, these procedures apply to students who are, or would be, entitled to FEE-HELP assistance as well as persons seeking to enrol with Photography Studies College (Melbourne) in a unit of study that meets the course requirements who are, or would be, entitled to FEE-HELP assistance.

In relation to academic matters, these procedures apply to students who are, or would be, entitled to FEE-HELP assistance. This policy does not apply to international students.

Procedures

Before an issue becomes a formal grievance

Students (or persons seeking to enrol with PSC) are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. **Photography Studies College (Melbourne)**'s Communications & Student Officers are available to assist students to resolve their issues at this level. All records of such conversations are recorded on the TEAM's student management data base by the Communications & Student Officers.

Formal Grievance Procedure

This formal procedure can be utilised by students, including enrolled students, or persons seeking to enrol in a course with Photography Studies College (Melbourne) to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature.

Grievances of an academic nature include matters related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study.

Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all other matters including complaints in relation to personal information that Photography Studies College (Melbourne) holds in relation to the individual.

All steps in this procedure are logged in Photography Studies College (Melbourne)'s Complaints Register which is formally reviewed by management as part of its continuous improvement processes.

During all stages of this procedure Photography Studies College (Melbourne) will take steps to ensure that:

- the complainant and the respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against;
- the complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case, and each party to the grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings;
- a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided if so requested by the complainant or the respondent;
- where the internal or external complaint handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, Photography Studies College (Melbourne) will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome;
- there is no cost to the complainant for utilising this grievance and appeals process.

Stage one – formal grievance:

Formal grievances must be submitted in writing to the relevant Communications & Student Officers. Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged within five working days and the complaints process will commence within ten days of the receipt of the written complaint and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.

The Communications & Student Officers will then, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve.

Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request or by a face-to-face interview with the complainant. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview the complainant or respondent may ask another person to accompany them. The clarification given should be recorded.

The Communications & Student Officers, will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within ten working days. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance.

Stage two – internal appeal:

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with Director Communications & Students (who is senior to the original decision maker). An appropriate person or committee will be appointed to consult with the complainant and other **relevant parties within ten working days**.

Where possible such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to these interviews.

Following the consultation, the Director Communications & Students (or nominee) will provide a written report to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within ten working days. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

Stage three – external mediator:

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may make a written request to Photography Studies College (Melbourne) that they wish the matter be dealt with through an external dispute resolution process facilitated by an external mediator.

Photography Studies College (Melbourne) will then advise the external mediator in writing of the request within five working days.

The external mediator will arrange for a Round Table Discussion (RTD) to be held between Photography Studies College (Melbourne) and the complainant within ten working days of the written notification from Photography Studies College (Melbourne). The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to meetings with the external mediator or the mediator.

Photography Studies College (Melbourne) will bear any costs associated with the mediation.

Contact Details for the external mediator:

EdMediation
Education Dispute Mediators
Level 4, 488 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria. 3000
<http://www.edmediation.com.au/>

The external mediator will report to Photography Studies College (Melbourne)'s Director Communications & Students or their nominee, the outcome of the mediation, including any recommendations arising, within fourteen days of the completion of the review.

Once the Director Communications & Students, or their nominee, receives the report of the outcomes from the RTD or independent mediation, they will provide a written report to the complainant within ten working days on the recommended actions to resolve the grievance.

Photography Studies College (Melbourne) agrees to be bound by the independent mediator's recommendations and the Director Communications & Students, or their nominee, will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within thirty days of receipt of the mediator's report.

Further action

If a grievance still remains unresolved after the external mediation process, the complainant may decide to refer the matter to the Tertiary Student Enquiry Line on 1800 020 108.

The Tertiary Student Enquiry Line on 1800 020 108. can provide general information on Commonwealth supported places, assistance under HELP, and the Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number (CHESSN).

Other relevant contacts

Victorian Ombudsman: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au
TEQSA: complaints@teqsa.gov.au

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this Policy and Procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

Enrolment status

Where a student chooses to access this Policy and Procedure, **Photography Studies College (Melbourne)** will maintain the student's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

Record keeping & confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the Director Communications & Students.

All records relating to complaints will be treated as confidential and will be covered by PSC's *Privacy and Personal Information Policy* and *PSC's Record Management Policy* and associated policies

Approval, publication and training

The Policy and Procedure was first approved by Photography Studies College (Melbourne)'s Managing Director on 18 December 2009, updated on 13 May 2010 and revised again in May 2011 for approval as a Policy under the Photography Studies College (Melbourne) Application for Registration as a Non Self Accrediting Higher Education Institution. It was revised in November 2012 and was approved by the PSC Governing Council on 11 December 2012. It has again been revised in July 2013 and was approved by the Photography Studies College (Melbourne) Governing Council on 20 August 2013.

This Policy and Procedure is made available to students and prospective students through publication in the Student Handbook and on the website.

For the purposes of communicating to staff this policy and procedure forms part of the staff induction process and is included in the Staff Handbook.

Related Policies

Fair Treatment and Equal Benefits and Opportunity

Academic Appeals

Student Conduct

Plagiarism

Assessment

Student Progress and Exclusion

Student Support

RPL and Credit Transfer

Student Application and Admissions

Academic Integrity

Privacy and Personal Information

Record Management

Related Forms and Documents

Student Handbook

Staff Handbook

Withdrawal Form

Complaints Register

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