

STUDENT GRIEVANCE HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Overview

Skyline Higher Education Australia ("SHEA") is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system which is easily accessible to all complainants, easy to navigate, promotes cultural safety, and minimises administrative barriers.

SHEA 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 student focussed and helps SHEA to prevent grievances from recurring;
- Ensure that students are aware of their right to access the complaints and appeals process within 20 working days;
- Ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality;
- Conduct the assessment of grievances and appeals in a professional, fair and transparent manner;
- 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 SHEA's services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters, such as:

- the enrolment, induction/orientation process;
- the quality of education provided;
- academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study;
- an issue about one of SHEA's education agents or anyone that SHEA has an arrangement with to deliver our courses or any related services;
- handling of personal information and access to personal records;
- the way someone has been treated.

These grievance procedures are transparent, designed and periodically reviewed, in consultation with students and staff, including those with lived experience of or being directly affected by, discrimination, harassment, victimisation or violence. SHEA will ensure it responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

2. Policy coverage

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term "complainant" applies to both current students of SHEA and persons seeking to enrol with SHEA.

Complainants are entitled to access the grievance procedures set out in this policy regardless of the location of the campus of SHEA at which the grievance has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence.

SHEA will respond to any grievance or appeal that a student may have regarding their dealings with SHEA or with SHEA's education agents or anyone that SHEA has an arrangement with to deliver its courses or any related services.

3. Before an issue becomes a formal grievance

Complainants are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. There are staff available to assist the resolution of issues at this level. Complainants may raise an informal grievance by contacting the Student Support Officer on campus, by phone +61 2 9096 3750 or via email at: admin@shea.edu.au. Even though it is not mandatory for complainants to raise a grievance informally, it is highly recommended so that any issues can be dealt with promptly.

4. Procedure

This procedure can be utilised by complainants to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study. Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all other matters including grievances in relation to personal information that SHEA holds in relation to an individual.

During all stages of this procedure SHEA will take steps to ensure that:

- the complainant and any respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against;
- the complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case and each party to a grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings (either physically or virtually) and may seek independent advice;
- 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 a respondent;
- where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that either supports the complainant or supports SHEA, SHEA will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome and the reasons for the decision;
- A complainant shall have access to all stages of this grievance procedure at no cost.

4.1 Stage one – formal grievance:

Formal grievances must be submitted in writing on the *Student Grievance Form* available from the SHEA website and sent to the Registrar at: admin@shea.edu.au.

Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged in writing within five working days. The grievance handling process will commence assessment upon receipt of the formal grievance within ten working days and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.

The Registrar, or their nominee, will, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve.

Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request with the complainant. When such clarification occurs verbally the complainant or any respondent may ask another person to accompany them.

The Registrar, or their nominee, will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and will 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.

4.2 Stage two – internal appeal:

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with the CEO (who is senior to the original decision maker) within twenty working days of receiving notification of the outcome of their formal grievance via: ceo@shea.edu.au.

The CEO will appoint an appropriate person or committee to consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within ten working days. In the event that the formal grievance lodged in Stage one has been made against the CEO the appeal will be handled by the Chair of the Board of Directors or their delegate (who will not be the CEO).

Where possible such consultations should take the form of verbal interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to support them during these interviews.

Following the consultation, the CEO, or their nominee, will provide a written statement of the outcome of the internal appeal to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the grievance, including detailed reasons for the outcome, within ten working days of concluding the appeal. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the external review process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

4.3 Stage three – external review:

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may refer the matter to the National Student Ombudsman (NSO).

The NSO is a free and independent service that offers students an accessible, safe and confidential service to resolve grievances about their higher education provider.

The NSO can consider grievances on many issues, including:

- Student safety and wellbeing, including gender-based violence, discrimination, racism, antisemitism and islamophobia
- Student enrolment and exclusion
- Student applications for special consideration
- Providers changes to course structures
- Providers grievance and appeal procedures
- Providers failure to clearly explain their decisions.

For information on how to refer a matter to the NSO refer to the National Student Ombudsman website https://www.nso.gov.au/ or phone 1300 395 775 for more information.

Where a particular matter cannot be considered by the NSO, then a complainant may request an external review of the grievance through the Resolution Institute Student Mediation Scheme. Complainants can contact the Resolution Institute directly as follows:

Address: Suite 602, Level 6, Tower B, Zenith Centre, 821-843 Pacific Highway Chatswood NSW 2067

Phone: 02 9251 3366 **Freecall:** 1800 651 650

Email: infoaus@resolution.institute

4.4 Outcomes from an internal or external review:

SHEA agrees to be bound by any recommendations arising from an internal or external review as per sections 4.2 and 4.3 above and will ensure that any decision or recommendation in favour of a student will be implemented immediately and/or take the preventive or corrective action required by the decision and advise the student of that action.

5. Further action

If a grievance still remains unresolved after the external dispute resolution process, the complainant may decide to refer the matter to a specialised external agency such as:

Anti-Discrimination NSW
https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/lodge-complaint-anti-discrimination-nsw

NSW Fair Trading
https://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/help-centre/online-tools/make-a-complaint

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints

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.

6. Enrolment status

Where a current student chooses to access this policy and procedure, SHEA will maintain that person's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing unless the student's health or wellbeing, or the wellbeing of others, is likely to be at risk.

Where a current student does not access the internal or external appeals process or withdraws from the process by notifying SHEA in writing, any decision to terminate the student's enrolment may be implemented in accordance with SHEA's policies and procedures.

7. Record keeping and confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure including a statement of the outcome and reasons for the outcome 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 Registrar. These records will be maintained digitally.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by SHEA's *Privacy and Personal Information Procedures*.

8. Approval, publication and training

This Policy and Procedure will be made available to students and persons seeking to enrol with SHEA through publication in the OpenZone Student Hub and on SHEA's website (www.shea.edu.au).

For the purposes of communicating to and training staff, this Policy and Procedure will be included in the Staff Handbook and form part of the staff induction process (which will be facilitated by the Registrar).

9. Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Board of Directors	17 May 2022	Document creation and initial approval
1.1	CEO	03 November 2022	Inserted phone number
2.0	Board of Directors	21 June 2023	Updated external appeal avenues for international students
2.1	CEO	19 September 2023	Minor edits in some sentences and words
2.2	CEO	18 December 2023	Minor change to section 4.2 in case a grievance is lodged against the CEO
2.3	CEO	28 October 2024	Minor change resulting from feedback on FEE-HELP application
3.0	Board of Directors	18 June 2025	Changes to external review procedures to include the National Student Ombudsman
3.1	Board of Directors	16 September 2026	Minor amendments arising from 2026 compliance mapping exercise against the National Code to align with Standards 8, 9 and 10 and HESF 2026 Schedule 1 Amendment to Standard 2.4

Document owner: CEO

10. Student grievance handling flowchart

