

Appeals Policy and Associated Procedures

Policy Area:	Student Appeals / Assessment Decision Review
Standards Reference:	Outcome Standard 2.8
Responsibility:	CEO, RTO Manager, Trainer & Assessor, Student Support Staff
Classification:	Internal Academic Governance Policy – Complaints, Appeals, and Assessment Integrity

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Appeals Policy and Associated Procedures is to provide students with a fair, transparent, and accessible mechanism to appeal decisions made by the Institute of International Studies (IOIS). This policy ensures that students have the opportunity to seek an impartial review where they believe a decision is incorrect, unfair, or not made in accordance with approved policies and procedures.

This policy establishes clear principles, timeframes, and processes for lodging, assessing, and determining appeals, ensuring that all appeals are handled consistently, objectively, and without bias. It safeguards students from disadvantage by ensuring that decisions affecting enrolment, progression, assessment outcomes, or access to services are subject to review by an appropriately authorised and independent decision-maker.

The policy supports procedural fairness by ensuring that students are informed of their appeal rights, given the opportunity to present their case and supporting evidence, and notified in writing of the appeal outcome and reasons for the decision.

This policy meets the requirements of the **Standards for RTOs 2025**, including requirements relating to fair treatment, learner protection, feedback, complaints and appeals management.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Appeal** – A request by a student to review a decision made by IOIS, particularly relating to assessments, enrolment, deferrals/suspensions, or course progress decisions.
- **Appellant** – A person lodging an appeal.
- **Assessment Appeal** – An appeal against an assessment decision (e.g., a grade or competency judgement).
- **Independent Assessor** – A qualified person not previously involved in the decision, appointed to review an assessment appeal.
- **Decision** – The outcome of a formal process, including assessment judgements, enrolment decisions, or disciplinary actions.

3. POLICY STATEMENTS

Students have the right to appeal a range of academic and administrative decisions made by IOIS.

Appeals may be lodged when a student believes a decision was incorrect, unfair, or made without proper consideration of relevant evidence.

Appealable decisions include, but are not limited to:

- **Assessment outcomes**, where the student disagrees with the competency judgement, marking, interpretation of evidence, or believes assessment processes were not applied correctly.
- **Enrolment decisions**, including refusals, conditions placed on enrolment, or administrative determinations affecting commencement.
- **Course progress or attendance reporting**, where the student feels the information provided is inaccurate or does not reflect their documented engagement or efforts.
- **Decisions to defer, suspend, or cancel enrolment**, particularly where the student believes procedural fairness was not followed, evidence was misinterpreted, or compassionate and compelling circumstances were not adequately considered.

Appeals must be lodged within 20 working days from the date the decision is formally communicated to the student.

This timeframe ensures that matters are addressed while evidence and information remain current. Appeals submitted after this period may only be accepted when the student provides credible evidence of compassionate or compelling circumstances that prevented timely submission.

IOIS will maintain the student's enrolment and access to training and support services while the appeal is being reviewed.

This ensures the student is not disadvantaged during the process.

Exception: If an appeal relates to behavioural misconduct posing a safety risk to staff or students, IOIS may restrict physical access to campus while still ensuring that the student can continue their appeal and academic engagement through alternative arrangements.

For assessment-related appeals, IOIS will appoint an independent assessor who was not involved in the original assessment decision.

The independent assessor must:

- hold the same or higher vocational competency as required for the unit
- be experienced and current in VET assessment practices
- review assessment evidence objectively and impartially
- apply the principles of fairness, validity, reliability, and sufficiency

This ensures the appeal review is unbiased, credible, and defensible.

All appeals will be handled at no cost to the student.

IOIS covers all administrative, assessment, and review costs associated with the appeal process. Students will not be charged for appealing an assessment result, procedural decision, or enrolment matter, ensuring accessibility and equity for all learners.

4. PROCEDURES

Step 1: Lodging an Appeal

- A student who wishes to appeal a decision made by IOIS must complete an **Appeal Form**. This form is available from **Student Support** or on the website.
- The form must be submitted within **20 working days** of the date the decision was communicated to the student. Appeals received outside this timeframe may not be considered unless there are compassionate or compelling circumstances.

- On receipt of the Appeal Form, the **Student Support Officer** will:
 - log the appeal,
 - confirm that the form is complete, and
 - acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing within **3 working days**.
- The acknowledgement will include the next steps, the staff member managing the appeal, and the expected timeframe for resolution.

Step 2: Review

- The **RTO Manager** is responsible for overseeing the review of the appeal.
- If the appeal relates to an **assessment decision**, the RTO Manager will appoint an **independent assessor** who:
 - has not been involved in the original assessment,
 - holds the required vocational competencies and training/assessment credentials, and
 - is impartial and objective.
- If the appeal relates to other types of decisions (e.g., course progression, deferral, suspension, cancellation), the RTO Manager will review relevant records, policies, and evidence, and may interview the student and any relevant staff members.
- The review or investigation will commence within **5 working days** of receiving the appeal.
- During the process, principles of **natural justice** and **procedural fairness** will be upheld. This means the student will have the opportunity to present their case, no one with a conflict of interest will make decisions, and all evidence will be considered fairly.

Step 3: Decision

- Following the review or independent reassessment, a decision will be reached.
- A **written outcome** will be provided to the student within **20 working days** of receipt of the appeal. The written response will include:
 - a summary of the appeal,
 - the steps taken to review the appeal,
 - the decision made,
 - the reasons for the decision, and
 - information about external appeal options if the student is not satisfied with the outcome.
- If, due to exceptional circumstances, the appeal cannot be finalised within **20 working days** IOIS will inform the student in writing, explain the reasons for the delay, and provide **regular updates**. In any case, the process will not exceed **40 working days** unless agreed with the student.

Step 4: External Appeal Options

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal, they may escalate the matter to external agencies for independent review:

- **Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO)** – for international students only.
 - Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

- The OSO investigates complaints about private education providers, including appeals about assessment decisions, course progress, and enrolment matters.
- **Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)** – for compliance-related issues.
 - Website: www.asqa.gov.au/complaints
 - ASQA does not advocate for students but investigates systemic non-compliance with the Standards for RTOs or the National Code.
- **National Training Complaints Hotline** – a national service for lodging VET-related complaints.
 - Phone: 13 38 73 (Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm nationally).
 - Email: ntch@education.gov.au

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Student Support Officer

The Student Support Officer is responsible for ensuring students clearly understand their right to appeal and the steps involved in the process.

Their duties include:

- Providing students with the official appeal form and explaining how to complete it correctly.
- Outlining the student's rights, including access to support services, maintenance of enrolment during the appeal, and the principles of procedural fairness.
- Assisting students who require help due to LLND needs, cultural factors, or personal circumstances.
- Ensuring that appeals are logged accurately in the Appeals Register and forwarded promptly to the RTO Manager for action.
- Maintaining confidentiality and offering guidance in a supportive, unbiased manner.

RTO Manager

The RTO Manager is responsible for the effective oversight, coordination, and outcome of all appeals lodged at IOIS. Duties include:

- Ensuring appeals are managed impartially, consistently, and within the required timeframes.
- Reviewing the circumstances surrounding the decision being appealed, verifying that IOIS policies and procedures were followed.
- Appointing an independent assessor for assessment-related appeals and ensuring they are provided with all necessary documentation.
- Evaluating all evidence, ensuring procedural fairness has been upheld, and documenting the reasoning behind decisions.
- Communicating outcomes to students in writing and ensuring they are informed of their right to access external review options if dissatisfied.
- Ensuring systemic issues identified through appeals are incorporated into continuous improvement processes.

Independent Assessor

The Independent Assessor plays a critical role in safeguarding assessment integrity. Their responsibilities include:

- Conducting an objective, unbiased review of assessment decisions without influence from the original assessor or IOIS personnel.

- Examining assessment tools, learner evidence, mapping documents, and any supporting materials relevant to the appeal.
- Verifying that the competency judgement aligns with the training product requirements and the principles of assessment and rules of evidence.
- Reassessing the student where necessary to ensure a fair and informed decision.
- Preparing a written report outlining findings, recommendations, and justification for the final competency decision.
- Ensuring transparency, neutrality, and compliance throughout the review process.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO is responsible for ensuring the appeals framework reflects strong governance and regulatory compliance. Responsibilities include:

- Providing high-level oversight of the appeals process and ensuring it aligns with the Standards for RTOs 2025.
- Reviewing complex, sensitive, or escalated appeals where additional scrutiny is necessary.
- Confirming that decisions made through the appeal process are evidence-based, fair, and defensible.
- Approving final appeal outcomes where required and ensuring implementation of any systemic corrective actions.
- Ensuring that IOIS maintains appropriate records, monitoring practices, and continuous improvement measures arising from appeal trends.

Document Version Control

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1.0	IOIS Appeal Policy and Associated Procedures V1.0	July 2025