



Complaints and Appeals Policy

1. Purpose

Australian Engineering College (AEC) has implemented a documented complaint handling and appeals process and policy to provide the overseas student with comprehensive, free and easily accessible information about that process and policy.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that learners at Australian Engineering College (AEC) have a fair, inexpensive complaints and appeals process that includes access to an independent external body, if necessary, AEC will make sure Complaints and Appeals processes are independent, easily accessible and inexpensive for the parties involved.

This Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure is designed to ensure that AEC responds effectively and efficiently to individual cases of dissatisfaction in accordance with the requirements of:

- Standards for RTO 2015
 - Clause 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6
- The National Code 2018
 - Standard 10

This policy has been documented for the overseas student to lodge a formal complaint or appeal if a matter cannot be resolved informally.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all enrolled and prospective overseas students of AEC, trainers, assessors or other staff of AEC, education agents of AEC and any other related party who wish to make or lodge complaints about matters which falls within the responsibility of the Australian Engineering College.

3. Responsibility

Chief Executive officer (CEO) will be responsible for the implementation of this policy and ensuring that staff and students are made aware of its application.

To ensure that Australian Engineering College provides fair, inexpensive complaints and appeals process, AEC will:

- Manage and respond to any complaint or appeal that the overseas student makes regarding his or her dealings with institute, institute's trainers/assessors or other staff, AEC's education agents or any related party that AEC has an arrangement with to deliver the overseas student's course or related services. Institute does not have any arrangement with 3rd party to deliver student's course.
- Make arrangements in place for a person or body independent of internal and external to AEC to hear complaints or appeals arising from AEC's internal complaints and appeals process or refer students to an existing body where that body is appropriate for the complaint or appeal.
- Initiate appeal process if required to manage requests for a review of decisions, including assessments decisions.
- Commence the assessment of the complaint or appeal within 10 working day of it being made and finalise the outcome as soon as practicable.
- Take all the complaints and appeals seriously and resolve Complaints and Appeals quickly and equitably, using the principles of natural justice. The procedures for complaints and appeals will be fair, objective and accessible.
- Identify potential causes of complaints, appeals, and takes appropriate corrective action to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.
- Record, acknowledge and deal with the complaints and appeals in a fair, effective and efficient manner.

4. Definitions

Complainant refers to a person who has lodged a complaint with AEC.

Complaint means a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any service provided by the RTO i.e., Australian Engineering College, AEC's education agents or any related party that AEC has an arrangement with to deliver the overseas student's course or related services.

Appeal refers to the process where a student requests for the case to be reviewed if dissatisfied with a decision made by AEC.

5. Procedures

Information about the complaints and appeals process

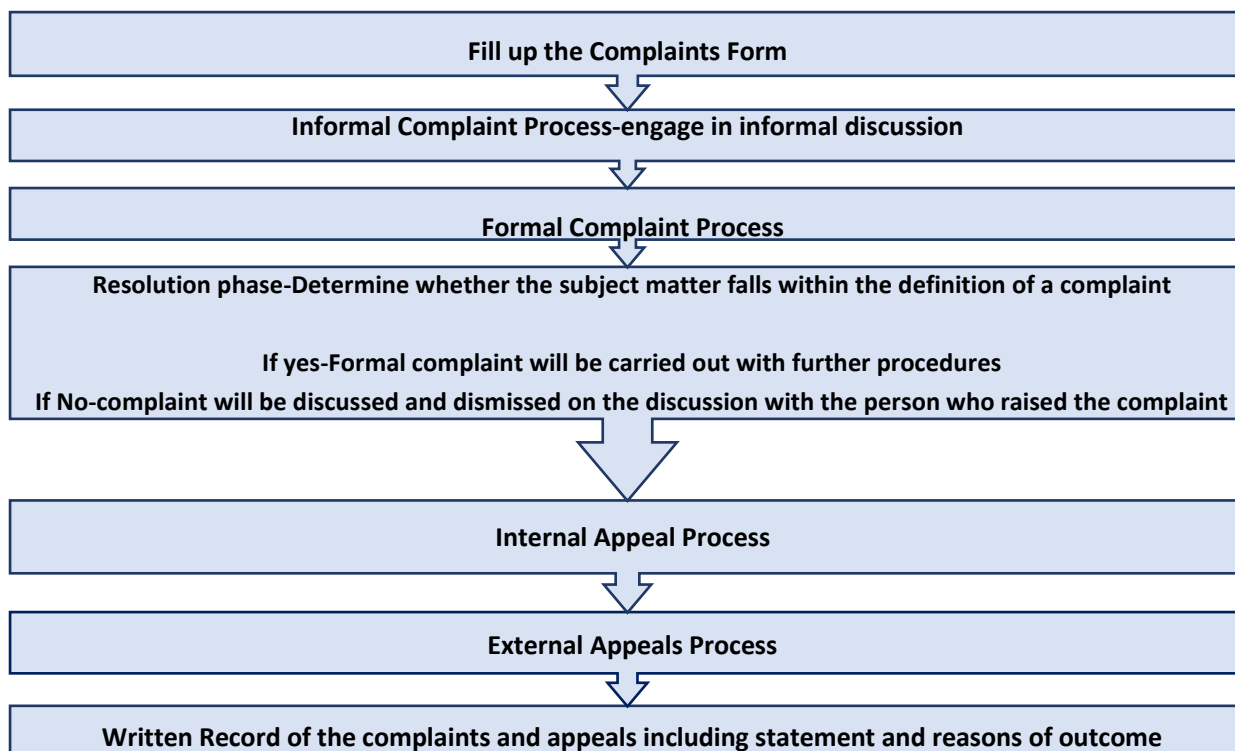
Applicants for enrolments are provided with necessary information about the complaints and appeals process in the pre-enrolment information like AEC's Student Handbook, written agreements, etc. Information on complaints and appeals policy and procedures is available online at AEC's website www.aecollege.com.au.

Students will be provided with information about the complaints and appeals process during orientation. CEO will responsible for ensuring that all the management staff, student services staff, marketing staff, trainers and assessors and students at AEC are aware of the policy and procedures for complaints and appeals. Provision of information about the AEC's complaints and appeals process is an important aspect of the induction process for new members of the staff.

Complaint Procedure

The Institute will maintain a Complaints/Grievance Register, and a Complaints and Appeals Form, which will allow the identification and details of the following:

- Submission date of the complaint or appeal
- Nature of the complaint or appeal
- Date/s when the cause of complaint occurred
- Attachments (if applicable)
- Determined Resolution
- Date of Resolution.
- Independent Dispute Resolution (Commonwealth Ombudsman)



5.1. Informal Complaint Process

Students who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to initially engage in informal discussion about the matter with the staff member/s involved. Any student with a complaint may first raise the issue informally with Administration Officer or Trainer and attempt an informal resolution of the complaint.

Complaints dealt in this way will not become part of the formal complaints process and will not be documented, recorded or reported on unless the staff involved determines that the issue in question or complaint is relevant to the wider operation of AEC.

AEC staff involved in the discussion of an informal complaint or appeal will do their best to resolve the matter effectively and quickly.

Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint will be advised to register a formal complaint.

What can a complaint be about?

A complaint can be about:

- any aspect of the service provided, or not provided by AEC
- any aspect of the training and assessment
- behavior or decisions of staff, or
- policies and/or procedures of AEC
- any action by any relevant third party

5.2. Formal Complaint Process

Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal process can register a formal complaint in writing to Administration Officer/Complaints Officer. Students can also send an email alternatively to info@aecollege.vic.edu.au.

Lodging a complaint

To register a formal complaint, student must complete “Complaints section” of the student’s “Complaints and Appeals Form” and submit it to the Administration Officer/Complaints Officer and Appeals Officer providing:

- a clear and detailed statement of the complaint, including the parties involved
- a suggested solution that the student believes would settle the complaint (e.g., an appropriate solution will focus on achieving a productive study environment or relationship, rather than apportioning blame).

Complaint will be lodged in the complaint register.

The resolution phase: Administration Officer/Complaints Officer will determine whether the subject matter falls within the definition of a complaint. This period is called the resolution phase.

The resolution phase will commence within 10 working days of the complaint being lodged in writing i.e., assessment of complaints or appeal will commence within 10 working days of it being made and the outcome will be finalised as soon as possible.

Where it is determined that the subject matter falls within the definition, the following procedures will take place:

Acknowledging the Lodging of a complaint

Each formal complaint lodged by a student will be acknowledged in writing. The acknowledgement will be provided to the student in person and/or sent through the email in writing by the student support/admin staff.

The student support/admin staff will forward the complaint for action to the relevant department as soon as practicable and should not take more than 10 days. Parties to complaint will not be part of the investigation team.

Recording the complaint

Details of the complaints will be recorded in AEC’s complaints and appeals register and a copy will be filed in the student’s file. The original complaint will be forwarded to the Administration Officer/Complaints.

The Administration Officer/Complaints Officer will be responsible for ensuring that all of these actions are completed within five working days of the lodgement of the complaint.

Acting on Complaint

All concerned parties will be contacted for investigation. Students will be given an opportunity to respond and present their case with supporting evidence.

Administration Officer/Complaints Officer will set an agenda for the meeting and discuss what steps should be taken.

The right to be accompanied by a support person during the complaints/appeals process: Parties making complaint will be invited for meeting and each involved party may be accompanied and assisted by a support person, according to the principles of natural justice. There will be an attempt to resolve the complaint by using the process outlined by the student for settlement (if appropriate) or through meeting, mediation and/or conciliation.

All the information will be gathered as required to assist with the settlement of the complaint, including, providing the respondent with the statement of the complaint and all the relevant documents.

Complaints will be investigated thoroughly in spirit of natural justice and principal fairness. Best possible resolution will be achieved keeping a student-centered approach based on the facts and documents.

Time frame

Person making a complaint will be informed of the outcome in writing and all the complaints will be finalised as soon as practicable understanding the student's requirements and other matters but maximum within 60 days of receipt of complaint.

Where AEC considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, the institute will inform the complainant or appellant in writing, including reasons on why more than 60 calendar days are required, and will regularly update the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.

If complaint falls outside the definition of complaints, Administration Officer/Complaints Officer will advise the student accordingly. Administration Officer/Complaints Officer may dismiss a complaint if, in his/her view, the complaint is ill advised, misguided, frivolous, malicious or vexatious.

Note: It is to be noted that AEC will respond to any complaint or appeal the overseas student makes regarding his or her dealings with AEC, AEC's education agents or any related party that AEC has an arrangement with, to deliver the overseas student's course or related services.

At the conclusion of the resolution phase, Administration Officer/Complaints Officer will write to both the student and the respondent indicating the outcome of the process and specifying any action that has been agreed upon by the parties as part of that process. Students have the right to appeal within 20 days of the complaints if dissatisfied with the outcome.

Record the decision: Institute's decision and reasons for the decision will be recorded by the Administration Officer/Complaints Officer and placed in the student's file.

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint process, students may initiate an internal appeal process by completing a Complaints and Appeal Form from the website www.aecollege.com.au or student administration/ reception.

5.3. Internal Appeals Process

Internal appeals may arise from a number of sources including appeals against refund decisions, assessment outcomes, appeals against disciplinary actions and appeals against decisions arising from the complaints. The essential nature of an appeal is that it is a request by student who is dissatisfied with the outcome to reconsider a decision made by AEC.

An Internal Appeal Process is initiated by a student lodging an Appeal by filling up "Appeals section" in the "Complaints and appeals" form available from the Student Administration and/or AEC's website.

• Acknowledging the Lodging of a complaint

Appeals are acknowledged by sending written confirmation of the complaint that is done by the Training Manager or representative.

• Consideration of Appeal by Training Manager/Appeals officer

Where an appeal relates to the following matters, the Student Appeals Form must be lodged within 20 working days (International Students):

- Notification of an intention to report the student to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) or due to unsatisfactory Course Progress.
- Notification of an intention to suspend

- or cancel a student's enrolment due to misbehaviour, or other extenuating circumstances (ref. Student Code of conduct for details available on Student's handbook).

- **Time Frame and Acting on an Appeal**

Within 10 working days of receiving the Complaints and Appeal Form, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will appoint an Investigator or convene a Student Appeal Committee to hear the appeals and propose a final resolution. This Investigator or Committee will not include any person who has heard the original complaint. The Investigator or the Student Appeals Committee will:

- a. Meet with the student (and support person, if present) and provide the student with an opportunity to present their case with any supporting evidence provided in the meeting at minimal or no cost. At any given meeting to discuss an appeal, students will be given the opportunity **to be accompanied and assisted by a support person.**
- b. At the conclusion of the meeting, students will be informed about the timeframe within which the Institute will provide a written outcome of the appeal. The timeframe will generally be 10 working days. After the meeting, the Investigator or Committee will, impartially, consider all the evidence and make a decision.

Student Appeal Committee

- Chief Executive Officer
- Student Support Officer
- Investigator or nominee appointed by the CEO

**AEC will ensure that assessment of the complaint or appeal is conducted in a professional, fair and transparent manner.*

The outcome will be documented and will include the reasons for the decision. If the decision goes against the student, the outcome will include information for the student of **his or her right to an external appeal.** Details of the suitable external appeal bodies will be made available to the student with information at no cost associated with that.

If more than 60 days: Where it is apparent that appeals will take more than 60 calendar days, appellant will be informed in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required, and the students will be regularly updated on the progress of the matter.

Recording the appeal: AEC will keep a written record of the complaint or appeal, including statement of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome with signature and date of student and Training Manager.

A written statement of the outcome of the internal appeal, including detailed reasons for the outcome will be sent to the student.

If matter remains unresolved or student is unsuccessful or dissatisfied with the outcome:

There might be cases where matter is still unresolved after the implementation of above procedures and the internal appeals process exhausted, or if the student is not successful in the AEC's internal complaints and appeals process. In such cases, Institute will advise the overseas student within 10 working days of concluding the internal review of the overseas student's right to access an external complaint handling and appeals process without any cost charged by AEC.

Note: Students' enrolment will be kept active until both internal and external appeal is concluded.

9.4. External Appeals Process

After the student has been advised of the external complaint handling process and procedure, AEC will provide students with contact details of the appropriate complaints handling and external appeals body.

AEC will refer the student to **Commonwealth Ombudsman** to lodge an external appeal or complain about the decision.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman offers free and independent service for overseas students who have a complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their private education or training provider.

In most cases, the purpose of the external appeals process is to consider whether the registered provider, i.e., AEC in this case, has followed its policies and procedures, rather than make a decision in place of the Institute. External appeal authority will be provided with sufficient information within due timelines requested.

For example, if an overseas student appeals against his or her subject results and goes through the internal appeals process of the Institute, the external appeals process would look at the way in which the internal appeal was conducted; it would not make a determination as to what the subject result should be. Complaint's outcome will be entered in complaints register after external appeals have given a decision and copy of all relevant documents will be attached in that register.

Outcome

If the internal or any external complaints handling or appeal process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the overseas student, AEC will immediately implement the decision or recommendation and/or take the preventive or corrective action required by the decision and advise the overseas student of that action or outcome.

Written record of the complaints or Appeal and statement of the outcome will be kept and maintained by AEC.

Examples of an external or independent body or person may include:

- private conciliators or dispute resolution counsellors
- a complaints and appeals body established by a peak industry body
- representatives of Commonwealth and state or territory government departments including the Office of the Training Advocate; or
- Commonwealth and state or territory offices of the Ombudsman may be the appropriate body for a public provider.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Commonwealth Ombudsman is a free and independent service

The Commonwealth Ombudsman contact details are:

- **Website:** <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>
- **Email:** ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
- **Contact Number:** 1300 362 072

The Commonwealth Ombudsman investigates complaints about problems that overseas students have with private education and training in Australia.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman also:

- a. Provides information about best practice complaints handling to help private education providers manage internal complaints effectively.
- b. Publishes reports on problems and broader issues in international education that Commonwealth Ombudsman identify through investigations.

To make a complaint, please use the [online form](#).

Please be advised that due to impacts from COVID-19 you may experience a higher than usual waiting time, when using the phone service. It is for this reason that you use the online form for your convenience.

If you're unable to complete the online form, you can call 1300 362 072. Commonwealth Ombudsman's phone service operates from 10:30am to 3:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT) Monday to Friday.

Appeals related to Deferment, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment

Where a student has decided to access the appeals process in relation to deferment, suspension or cancellation of their enrolment, AEC will not update the student's status or report to Department of Home Affairs (DHA) via PRISMS until the appeal process is completed.

AEC is required to maintain all relevant responsibilities until:

- the internal and external complaints processes have been completed and the breach has been upheld;
- the overseas student has chosen not to access the internal complaints and appeals process within the 20-working day period;
- the overseas student has chosen not to access the external complaints and appeals process;
- The overseas student withdraws from the internal or external appeals process, by notifying the Institute in writing.

Note: *Please note that the following procedures do not remove your right to seek other dispute resolution services, or to seek other legal remedies, provided by external bodies, such as, the Dispute Settlement Commission of Victoria, Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria, or the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria.

Students Rights as Consumer

Complaints and Appeals Policy, and Procedure do not remove the right of students to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws.

Important Contacts

Staff	Contact details	What assistance they can provide
Administration Officer/Complaints Officer	03 9088 6440	Your contact to manage your complaints.
Appeal committee - Chief Executive Officer - Student Support Officer - Investigator or nominee appointed by the CEO	03 9088 6440	If you are not satisfied with outcome of complaint. You can lodge an appeal with appeals committee.
Commonwealth Ombudsman	In Australia 1300 362 072 Outside Australia: +61 262760111	External appeals
Australian Skills Quality Authority	https://www.asqa.gov.au/contact	Complaints about providers and their practices



Appendix 1

AEC Complaints and Appeal Quality Checklist

AEC staff, team must follow this checklist when handling complaints and appeals and must pay close attention to timelines as long as it takes to resolve the issue more it costs goodwill to organisation.

Process Stage	Action	Time-line	Completed (Please tick)
Complaints lodgment	Formal complaint is received and correct complaint form is provided	As soon as complaint is raised with staff and informal process is completed	
	Fully completed form is received from complainant and all fields are completed	As soon as practicable	
Acknowledgement and records	Complaint is acknowledged and written acknowledgement is sent to the students.	As soon as practicable or preferably in 3 days of receipt	
	Further contact is made if the complaint information is insufficient.	As soon as practicable or preferably in 3 days of receipt	
	Complaint is lodged in complaint register.	As soon as practicable or preferably in 3 days of receipt	
Investigation	Resolution phase- Complaint is checked if the matter falls within the definition of complaint for further investigation	As soon as practicable but should not take more than 10 days.	
	Complaint is forwarded for action to the relevant department (if required). Parties to complaint cannot be part of the investigation team.	As soon as practicable but should not take more than 10 days	
	All concerned parties are contacted for investigation. Student is given an opportunity to present his/her case and respond at minimal or no cost.	As soon as practicable or within 3 days of receipt	
	Parties making complaints are invited for meeting and an option of bringing a support person is provided.	As soon as practicable or within 3 days of receipt or	
	Complaint is investigated thoroughly in spirit of natural justice and principle fairness. Best possible resolution is achieved keeping student centered approach and fact based.	As soon as practicable as and no later than 60 days of complaints.	



Outcome	Complaint outcome is received and communicated to all the parties with the advice on right to appeal within 20 days of the complaint if dissatisfied with the outcome	As soon as practicable but no later than 60 days	
	Where it is apparent that complaint will take more than 60 days, complainant or appellant are informed in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required and are regularly updated on the progress of the matter.	As soon as practicable and must inform well before 60 days of complaints resolution deadline.	
	Outcome is recorded in complaint register	As soon as practicable	
Internal appeals	If dissatisfied with the outcome, Students are advised to lodge complaint within 20 working days of the complaint outcome.	Within 20 working days	
	Appeal is acknowledged by sending written confirmation to the complainant	As soon as practicable or within 3 days of receipt	
	Appeals are sent to the appeal committee.	As soon as practicable but should not take more than 10 days.	
	Along with Appeal Committee, an Investigator is appointed to hear the appeal. Students are given opportunity to present their case with supporting evidence accompanied or assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings.		
	Appeals are investigated thoroughly in spirit of natural justice and principle fairness	As soon as practicable as and no later than 60 days of appeal.	
	Where it is apparent that appeals will take more than 60 days, appellant are informed in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required and are regularly updated on the progress of the matter.	As soon as practicable and must inform well before 60 days of complaints resolution deadline.	
	Internal appeal is complete. Outcome is recorded in complaints and appeals register with reasons and is placed in students' file. Students are provided with a written statement and detailed reason of the outcome of internal appeal	Within 60 days	



	Student's enrolment is kept active until the internal appeal and external appeal is concluded.	Until external appeal is finalised	
	If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, Student is informed about his/her right to access an external complaint handling and appeals process at minimal or no cost. External body can be Commonwealth Ombudsman (it is free of cost).	Within 10 working days of completion of internal complaints handling and appeals process.	
External appeals	Student is advised of the rights to access an external complaint handling and appeals process without any cost charged by AEC.	Within 10 days of concluding the internal review	
	External appeal authority is provided with sufficient information within due timelines requested.	As soon as practicable or timelines specified by external agency	
	Student's enrolment is kept active until the external appeal is concluded.	Until external appeal is finalised	
	Complaints outcome is entered in the complaints register after external appeals and copy of all the relevant documents are attached.	Preferably in 3 days of receipt or as soon as practicable	
	AEC implements the decision/ recommendation and takes preventive/corrective action required by the decision.	As soon as practicable	
	Students are advised about the decision and action	As soon as practicable	
	Written record of the complaint or appeal and statement of the outcome is kept and maintained by AEC.	As soon as practicable	



Appendix 2

Complaints and Appeals Form

Personal Details:	
Full Name:	
Position of Complainant/Appellant:	
USI no:	
Phone No:	
Email:	
Address:	
If the complainant is a student, please provide the following details	
Student ID:	
Course Name:	
Date:	
Complaint/Appeal details	
<p>Complaint Details</p> <p>Date the cause of complaint occurred: _____</p> <p>Reason for the complaint:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> General Operations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assessment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> ESOS related complaint</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify</p> <p>Have you complained about the issue before?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, please give the date, the complaint was lodged:</p>	<p>Appeals Details</p> <p>Date to which this appeal refers to: _____</p> <p>Reason for the appeal:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assessment outcome</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Discipline/misconduct</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any outcome of any application for request</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any disciplinary action taken against you.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below)</p>
Complaint/Appeal Summary	
<p>(Please give detailed explanation of the complaint/appeal and attach any supporting evidence)</p> <p>(Provide explanation on how you believe this complaint can be resolved)</p>	



Declaration

- All the information provided in this form is correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- I am happy to attend any meeting with relevant persons required to resolve the issue.
- I understand that if I am dissatisfied with the decision after the internal appeal procedures; I can seek assistance from external complaints handling body i.e., Commonwealth Ombudsman which is free of cost.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

***Office use: (*marked items to be filled up by staff or compliant handling party)**

*Receiving staff member:	
*Date:	
*Method of lodgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Mail
*Name of the members empaneled to resolve the issue	
*Actions proposed by the panel/ determined resolution	
*Implementation of Proposed action by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuous improvement Request. <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling by the relevant persons. <input type="checkbox"/> Change of any service or member. <input type="checkbox"/> External Counselling agency <input type="checkbox"/> Referred to:



	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)
Date of Resolution	Xx/xx/xxxx
*Outcome	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Successful <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unsuccessful
*Method to communicate the outcome with the complainant/appellant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mail
*Response of complainant/appellant	<input type="checkbox"/> Agrees and accepts the decision made by the panel (The student signs the acceptance and the record is placed in student's admin file) <input type="checkbox"/> Disagrees and unhappy (AEC will contact the student to help him/her to access services of Commonwealth Ombudsman)
<p>Declaration by complainant/Appellant (Please read and tick before signing it):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I acknowledge that the outcome of the complaint/appeal lodged by me have been informed to me.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I agree with the decision made by the panel and I am happy to accept it.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I disagree with the decision made by the panel and would like to escalate it to an external body, and I have been advised of all the required information in this regard.</p> <p>Signature: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Australian Engineering College representative</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Signature: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	