



# Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures

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## Policy Philosophy

The purpose of this policy is to standardise the handling of complaints and appeals and ensure a continuous improvement approach that guarantees Absolute Medical Response is committed to providing the highest quality of support to our students. The processes governed by this policy are known as the Absolute Medical Response Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures. They outline a clear progression for registering a complaint or appeal with a focus on resolution and corrective actions.

## Scope

Absolute Medical Response is committed to providing an effective, efficient, timely, fair and confidential academic and non-academic grievance handling procedure for all students. Academic matters include those matters which relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a VET course of study.

This policy is designed to accommodate all complaints and appeals from students currently studying with Absolute Medical Response, prospective students wishing to study with Absolute Medical Response, individuals engaging with Absolute Medical Response for professional development, such as work experience and/or on the job training and industry representatives.

## Purpose

Non-academic matters include those matters which do not relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a course. Non-academic grievances tend to arise from events occurring at a provider or from decisions made by a provider.

In accordance with the *VET Student Loans Act 2016* and the associated VET guidelines, as an approved course provider the following policy and procedural document has been drafted to provide clarity around the processes and procedures for student grievances (*Subdivision F— Dealing with complaints, Subsection 88, VET Student Loan Rules 2016*) Subsection 88 (Grievance Procedure) states:

- 1) An approved course provider must have a grievance procedure to deal with complaints from its students about:
  - i. academic matters (including matters relating to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards for an approved course); and
  - ii. non-academic matters (including matters relating to enrolment in a course and personal information held by the provider).
- 2) The grievance procedure must:
  - i. clearly set out the stages of the procedure; and
  - ii. encourage the timely resolution of complaints, including by specifying reasonable periods for dealing with each stage of the procedure; and
  - iii. contain the internal and external stages referred to in subsections (3) and (4); and
  - iv. clearly provide that there is no charge for either the internal stage or the external stage; and
  - v. provide for implementation of decisions made in following the grievance procedure; and
  - vi. provide for due consideration of recommendations arising from the external stage of the grievance procedure; and
  - vii. require the provider to allow parties who have used the procedure to access the records of that use, but otherwise keep the records confidential.

The internal stage of the grievance procedure must include:

- i. a process for the lodging and hearing of a formal complaint; and
  - ii. a requirement for the complainant to be given written notice of a decision on the formal complaint, including:
    - a) the reasons for the decision; and
    - b) advice about how to appeal the decision; and
  - iii. a process for appealing the decision to an independent senior officer of the approved course provider, or to an internal committee or unit with appropriate expertise; and
  - iv. a requirement for the appellant to be given written notice of the decision on appeal, including:
    - a) the reasons for the decision; and
    - b) advice about how to have the decision reviewed; and
  - v. provision for each party to this stage of the procedure to be accompanied or assisted by another person, at that party's cost.
- 3) The external stage of the grievance procedure must include:
- i. a process for having a decision on appeal reviewed by an external and independent person or body with appropriate expertise; and
  - ii. provision for each party to the review to be accompanied or assisted by another person at the review, at that party's cost; and
  - iii. a requirement for each party to be given written notice of the decision on review, include the reasons for the decision.

## Policy Statement

This policy provides a framework to support effective, timely and appropriate complaints and appeals management. It ensures all parties are kept informed and forms the basis of the quality culture within Absolute Medical Response. An effective complaints and appeals management process allows us to:

- Identify areas for improvement
- Track and monitor data to develop a more proactive approach to dealing with situations with the express aim of minimising customer dissatisfaction
- Allow customers and the public to provide feedback in a fair and equitable system that recognises and resolves their concerns / grievances.

Absolute Medical Response is committed to providing a high standard of care and service. Effective complaints handling will ensure that our students feel their right to complain about care and service delivery is respected and their feedback welcomed.

All complaints and appeals will be treated fairly and confidentiality will be ensured. Staff must recognise that there must be no reprisals against any student making a complaint. Should this occur, disciplinary action, with possible dismissal will be taken.

## Record Keeping

Records of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes will be preserved for a period of no less than five (5) years by Absolute Medical Response. Students wishing to access these records may do so upon written request to the Training and Education Manager. Records will be stored electronically in a secure and confidential manner.

## Complaints and Appeals Handling

Absolute Medical Response undertakes to apply the following principles to its complaints and appeals handling:

- A complainant or person lodging an appeal is to be provided an opportunity to formally present his or her case at no cost.
- Each complainant or person lodging an appeal may be accompanied and/or assisted by a support person at any relevant meeting.
- The handling of a complaint or appeal is to commence within 10 working days of the lodgement of the complaint or appeal and all reasonable measures are taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.
- The complainant or person lodging an appeal is to be provided a written statement of the outcome, including details of the reasons for the outcome.
- The complainant or person lodging an appeal is to have the opportunity for a person or a body that is independent of Absolute Medical Response to review his or her complaint or appeal following the internal Absolute Medical Response complaint or appeals process. It is noted that a review of findings by an independent person or body will generally only relate to the appeals process and is less likely to be required in complaints handling.
- Absolute Medical Response shall maintain the enrolment of the complainant or person lodging an appeal during the complaint or appeals process.
- Decisions or outcomes of the complaint or appeals process that find in the favour of the student shall be implemented immediately.
- Complaints and appeals are to be handled in the strictest of confidence. No Absolute Medical Response representative is to disclose information to any person without the permission of Absolute Medical Response Directors.
- A decision to release information to third parties can only to be made after the complainant has given permission for this to occur. This permission should be given using the Information Release Form located in the Privacy Policy.
- Complaints and appeals are to be considered on the basis of procedural fairness and lead to opportunities for improvement as a Continuous Improvement Report.
- Students who are not satisfied with the complete complaint handling by Absolute Medical Response may refer their complaint to ASQA for consideration. Students are to be advised that registering bodies will require the student to have exhausted all avenues through Absolute Medical Response before taking this option.
- Appeals of assessment decisions are not able to be referred to ASQA and are to be determined by an approved independent body.



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## Procedures for making a complaint

### Phase One

In the case of a **non-academic complaint** or appeal where a person associated with Absolute Medical Response feels wronged by the actions of another person associated with Absolute Medical Response, the following procedure should be implemented:

- The person who feels wronged (the Complainant) should attempt to speak personally with the person responsible for the complaint, or seek clarification and/or assistance to do this by contacting the Operations Manager or the Administration Manager of Absolute Medical Response. The problem may simply be one of misunderstanding and may be quickly resolved.

Failing that:

- The Complainant person should document the facts of the complaint, taking care to ensure that the complaint is neither frivolous nor based on personal prejudices.
- The Complainant should deliver the documented complaint using words such as, "I believe we have a situation that is unresolved, and I have written it down so that you can see exactly what it is. Can we make a time to sort this out please?"

Any **non-academic complaint** regarding finance or refunds should be discussed with either the Operations Manager or the Administration Manager.

Any **academic complaint** regarding the structure, delivery, assessment or assessment result of a training program, should be discussed with the appropriate trainer(s) or the National Training and Education Manager.

### Phase 2

#### Initiate the complaint process

Complaints must be submitted in writing within one month of the incident occurring, to the following:

- E-mail: [training@amr-aus.com.au](mailto:training@amr-aus.com.au) or
- Postage: PO Box 550 Plumpton 2761

#### Investigating the complaint

Absolute Medical Response will notify students immediately upon receipt of the formal complaint. The complaint handling process will then commence within ten (10) working days and all reasonable measures will be taken to implement an effective resolution with twenty-eight (28) working days.

#### Resolving the complaint

For all complaints submitted the investigation will be conducted in a fair and impartial manner.

Where Absolute Medical Response requires more than 28 days to consider a complaint, students will be notified and communication will be maintained with the student ensuring they are regularly updated on the progress of the case. Initially the Training and Education Manager will manage the complaint and if escalation is required it will be forwarded onto the Director.

## Communicating the outcome

Once an outcome has been determined all parties will be advised in writing. Results of the investigation will be added to the students file and retained securely in an electronic manner.

Any corrective action/s necessary will be implemented and communicated to staff to ensure similar issues are avoided in the future. If deemed necessary by Absolute Medical Response an education/training program will be designed for further development of staff. Dependant on the complaint and the outcome any external organisations that may assist will be notified, for example Police, Counselling, Consumer Affairs.

## Phase 3

### Appeals Process

Applications by students for reconsideration of an unfavourable decision or finding are to be treated with the highest importance.

#### Initiate the appeals process

An appeal must be made in writing and specify the particulars of the decision or finding in the dispute. Appeals must be lodged within twenty-eight days (28) days of when the decision or finding is communicated to the student. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the following:

**E-mail:** [training@amr-aus.com.au](mailto:training@amr-aus.com.au) or

**Postage:** PO Box 550 Plumpton 2761

#### Resolve the appeal

The following procedures will be followed when an appeal is received:

- The student will immediately receive acknowledgment that the appeal has been received
- The National Training and Education Manager is to arrange for a re-assessment of the student as soon as possible.
- The student is also to be offered the opportunity to undertake additional training before this re-assessment.
- The reassessment is to be conducted by a different trainer/assessor than who conducted the initial assessment. The student may be offered up to 3 re-assessments.
- If after the reassessment, the student remains not-yet-competent and is unsatisfied with the assessment outcome, the student is to meet with the Training Manager to discuss the assessment process and the assessment outcome.
- If after consultation with the National Training and Education Manager, the student remains unsatisfied with the assessment process, the case is to be escalated to the Directors who will personally meet with the student
- If the student is seeking a refund of their tuition fees based on an unfavourable outcome, this may be considered by the National Training and Education Manager on its merits. If the Training Manager does not approve a refund and considers that Absolute Medical Response has dealt with the matter appropriately and has provided the student all reasonable opportunity to demonstrate their competence, the student is to be advised of the opportunity to refer the matter to the Office of Fair Trading in relation to their dispute over the requested refund.



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## **Communicating the outcome**

Once a decision has been reached in regards to the appeal all parties involved will be notified immediately in writing. Any corrective action that needs to be taken as a result of the appeal must be initiated within fourteen (14) days and communicated to all staff to ensure similar complaints are avoided.

Results of the appeal will be added to the student's file and retained securely in an electronic manner. If deemed necessary by Absolute Medical Response an education/training program will be designed for the further development of staff. Depending on the appeal and the outcome any external organisations that may assist will be notified, for example Police, Counselling, Consumer Affairs.

## **Phase 4**

### **Record Keeping**

The Complaints and Appeals Register is to be kept up to date at all times to accurately reflect how the matter was responded to and the duration from the date the appeal was received to the date the appeal was resolved. Absolute Medical Response considers that it would be extremely unlikely that complaints and appeals are not able to be resolved quickly within Absolute Medical Response internal structures.

### **Approval, publication and training**

This policy and procedure was approved by the Training and Education Manager and the Directors. It will be available to students of Absolute Medical Response online on our student portal and will be referenced in our student handbook.