


POLICY AND PROCEDURE		
Ref. to Legislative Frameworks: HESF 2021: Standards 2.4, 6.2.1j, 7.2.2f, 7.3.3c National Code: 10, 8.14	Complaints and Appeals (Higher Education)	
Version: 1.0	Approved by: Chief Executive Officer	Approved on: 21/04/2026 Review by: 21/04/2028

Revision History

Version	Description of Change	Policy Developer(s)	Effective Date
1	New HE specific Policy. Adapted and seperated HE from the Group Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure_v11	Group Compliance Manager	21/04/2026

1 PURPOSE

AAPoly is committed to providing an accessible, impartial, and timely complaints and appeals process that upholds academic integrity, protects student rights, and ensures decisions are evidence-based, well-documented, and subject to review.

This policy establishes a fair, transparent, and consistent framework for managing student complaints and appeals within AAPoly Higher Education, ensuring alignment with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) requirements, and the ESOS legislative framework. It ensures that all complaints and appeals are handled in accordance with principles of procedural fairness, timely resolution, and continuous improvement.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to current and former (limited to 12 months of the student completing or terminating their enrolment), AAPoly Higher Education students and staff involved in academic and administrative decision-making.

3 DEFINITIONS

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction regarding academic or non-academic matters.
Informal Complaint	A concern or grievance expressed by a student verbally or in writing that is addressed through discussion, mediation, or direct negotiation with the relevant staff member, aimed at a quick resolution without activating formal investigation procedures.
Formal Complaint	A written grievance lodged via AAPoly Student Complaint Form. Formal complaints trigger specific procedural requirements, including written outcomes, reasons for decisions, and the right to internal and external appeal under Standard 10 of the National Code.
Academic Complaint	Relates to teaching, assessment, academic decisions, or academic staff conduct.
Non-academic Complaint	Relates to services, facilities, administration, or support services.
Appeal	A request to overturn a decision made by the College, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• outcome of assessment marks/course credit;• refusal for leave of absence/release letter/refund request;• issuance of an intention to report (ITR) letter for unsatisfactory course progress/non-payment/ misbehaviour; or• decisions related to late enrolment.
Procedural Fairness	Decisions that are made without bias, based on evidence, and allowing all parties the opportunity to respond.
Support Person	A person chosen by the student to accompany them during the appeal process.
Resolution	Plans or actions developed and mutually agreed upon by AAPoly and the complainant to address/resolve the complaint.
National Student Ombudsman (NSO)	A government agency that provides a free and independent service for students to resolve complaints about their higher education provider.

Student Management System (SMS) - Paradigm	A platform used to manage and maintain student-related information and administrative processes, including but not limited to student admission and enrolment, attendance, academic records, course progress, communication, compliance reporting, and personal details.
Sensitive Complaint	A complaint that involves matters of a highly personal, traumatic, or protected nature, including but not limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, or any other form of gender-based violence; domestic or family violence; serious bullying, harassment, or intimidation; or any complaint where the complainant requests a trauma-informed or person-centred approach due to the nature of the issue.

4 POLICY PRINCIPLES

- AAPoly provides higher education students with access to a fair, transparent, and well-documented complaints and appeals process, including clear information on how to lodge and progress a complaint or appeal.
- Complaints and appeals are managed in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness, ensuring impartial decision-making, the absence of bias, and the opportunity for all parties to present their case.
- AAPoly ensures that complaints and appeals are handled in a timely manner, with outcomes communicated in writing, including the reasons for decisions and information on further review options.
- There is no cost to students for accessing the internal complaints and appeals process.
- Students may be accompanied and assisted by a support person of their choice at any stage of the process.
- Students are protected from victimisation or disadvantage when lodging a complaint or appeal. Student enrolment remains active for the duration of any appeal proceedings.
- All matters are handled confidentially, with accurate records maintained securely and outcomes are reviewed to support ongoing continuous improvement.
- Systemic issues are escalated to governance bodies such as the Board of Directors and Academic Board.
- AAPoly provides students with the right to access an independent external review body, including the NSO, if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the internal complaints or appeals process.
- Complaints and appeals regarding academic integrity are managed in accordance with the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).
- Complaints and appeals related to Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment (SASH) incidents are managed in accordance with [Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment Procedure](#).

5 PROCEDURE

5.1 Informal Complaint

- Students are encouraged, in the first instance, to attempt to resolve concerns informally by discussing the matter directly with the relevant staff member (e.g., lecturer or Student Services officer), depending on the nature of the issue.

- Staff receiving an informal complaint must actively listen, clarify the issue, and make reasonable efforts to resolve the matter promptly and fairly at the point of contact.
- Where appropriate, staff should provide guidance on available options, clarify relevant policies, and document the interaction if the matter is significant or may escalate.
- If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, the student must be advised of their right to lodge a formal complaint and provided with information on how to do so, in section 5.2 (below).

5.2 Formal Complaint

Complaint submission

- Students wishing to submit a formal complaint must do so in writing using the Student Complaint Form and include sufficient detail about the issue, relevant dates, and any supporting documentation. Formal Complaints can be submitted to studentadmin@aapoly.edu.au.
- Complaints may relate to academic or non-academic matters, including but not limited to teaching quality, assessment outcomes, administrative processes, or student services. For academic integrity issues, please refer to [Academic Integrity Policy](#).
- Student Services officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within two (2) working days and record the complaint in Paradigm and in the Complaints and Appeals Register.
- Student Services officer will conduct an initial review to determine the nature, seriousness, and appropriate handling pathway for the complaint.
- The complaint will be referred within two (2) working days of acknowledgement of the receipt to the appropriate decision-maker (e.g., Academic Dean for academic matters or relevant manager for non-academic matters), ensuring there is no conflict of interest.
- The appropriate decision-maker will review all relevant information, including the complaint submission, supporting documents, and any relevant student records.
- The appropriate decision-maker may seek additional information from the student or staff involved and may conduct meetings or interviews where clarification is required.
- All parties involved will be given the opportunity to present their perspective, and the process will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness.

Complaint outcome

A written outcome will be provided to the student within ten (10) working days of receipt of the complaint, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

The outcome will include:

- the decision reached;
- clear reasons for the decision;
- any actions to be taken by AAPoly; and
- information about the student's right to lodge an internal appeal if dissatisfied.

For academic related complaints reviewed by the Academic Dean, a copy of the written outcome must be forwarded to the Department Head Student Services for recording.

Where it is found that the complaint is valid, AAPoly will implement appropriate corrective and/or preventative actions and record these for continuous improvement purposes.

If the student accepts the outcome of the complaint and does not wish to escalate the complaint further, the matter is considered resolved. The Manager, Student Services finalises the decision and record the outcome in the Complaints and Appeals Register and uploads the outcome letter to the Paradigm.

How to lodge a complaint about the higher education provider

To complain about the provider, students can lodge a complaint to

- NSO – via online at nso.gov.au, or phone 1300 395 775
- TEQSA – via online at teqsa.gov.au

5.3 Sensitive Complaints Process (Trauma-Informed)

- AAPoly recognises that some complaints involve highly sensitive matters, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic and family violence, or gender-based violence. These complaints require a trauma-informed, person-centred approach and will be processed in accordance with [Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment Procedure](#).
- Sensitive complaints will be managed in accordance with the following principles:
 - safety – ensuring the student's physical and emotional safety;
 - choice – maximising student control over the process;
 - collaboration – working with the student, not making decisions for them;
 - trustworthiness – clear, transparent communication;

5.4 Internal Appeals

Appeal submission

Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint or any academic or administrative decision may appeal within twenty (20) working days of receiving the decision.

Appeals must be submitted in writing by email to studentadmin@aapoly.edu.au to Student Services using the “Appeal Form” and must clearly outline the grounds for appeal, supported by any relevant evidence.

Grounds for appeal may include, but are not limited to:

- procedural irregularity in the original decision-making process;
- new or additional evidence that was not reasonably available at the time; or
- evidence that the decision was unreasonable or inconsistent with policies.

Note: For appeals against the intention to report the student for unsatisfactory course progress, the Appeal Form must be submitted to the Academic Dean within the same timeframe as outlined in the [Student at Risk and Academic Support \(HE\) Procedure](#).

Review Process

Appeals are reviewed by an independent and relevant staff member who was not involved in the original decision.

The reviewer assesses all documentation, including the original complaint, decision, and any new evidence submitted, if any.

The reviewer may request further information or conduct meetings with relevant parties to ensure a comprehensive and fair review.

Appeal Outcome

A written outcome will be provided within ten (10) working days of receiving the appeal.

The outcome will clearly state:

- whether the original decision is upheld, varied, or overturned;
- the reasons for the decision; and
- any actions to be implemented.

Students are advised that they may access an external complaints and appeals process if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal appeal.

5.5 External Appeals

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal appeals process, they may lodge a complaint with the appropriate independent external body National Student Ombudsman (NSO) within 5 working days of the internal appeal outcome. The NSO is a free and independent service for higher education students to escalate complaints about the actions of their higher education provider.

Students must notify Students Services at studentadmin@aapoly.edu.au if they choose to access an external appeals process.

AAPoly will cooperate fully with the external body and provide relevant documentation as required.

Where applicable under ESOS, AAPoly will maintain the student's enrolment until the external appeal process is finalised.

To lodge an external complaint with NSO

Students can lodge an external complaint via:

- online at nso.gov.au
- phone 1300 395 775

5.6 Special Conditions (International Students)

- AAPoly will not report a student on a student visa for unsatisfactory course until all internal and external appeals processes have been completed.
- Students will be informed of any implications for their visa status in accordance with ESOS requirements.

5.7 Withdrawal of Complaint or Appeal

- A student may withdraw a complaint or appeal at any stage by submitting a written request to Student Services at studentadmin@aapoly.edu.au.
- Student Services will acknowledge the withdrawal in writing, and the matter will be closed and recorded as withdrawn.

5.8 Record Keeping and Continuous Improvement

- Complaints and appeals, including supporting documents, correspondence, and outcomes, are recorded in Complaints and Appeals Register and securely stored in the Student Management System.
- Records are maintained in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Complaints and appeals data will be analysed by Student Services every six months to identify trends, systemic issues, and opportunities for improvement.
- Outcomes of this analysis will be reported to the CEO to inform quality assurance processes and continuous improvement initiatives across the institution.

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** is responsible for ensuring that the organisation maintains a transparent and fair complaints and appeals process. Review and investigate the complaints and appeals.
- **Academic Dean** is responsible for ensuring that academic appeals are reviewed by an assessor independent of the original decision.
- **Department Head (includes Academic Dean and relevant managers)** is responsible for ensuring that all feedback, complaints, and appeals are managed fairly, promptly, and in accordance with this policy.
- **Designated Head Student Services** is responsible for ensuring that student complaints and appeals are managed in a supportive, timely, and confidential manner and liaise with relevant departments to facilitate resolution and implement agreed actions.
- **Student Services officers** are responsible for communicating progress and outcome to students and logging and maintaining all records in the student file in the SMS and also in the Complaints and Appeals Register.
- **Staff** is responsible for understanding this policy and procedure and knowing what to do when a customer feedback, complaint or appeal is received. Designated staff handling complaints will receive additional training in procedural fairness and natural justice, trauma-informed processes, and confidentiality requirements.

FEEDBACK

Please contact the CEO through email suggestionstotheceo@aapoly.edu.au to convey any queries or feedback about this policy. The CEO will respond in writing to the query or feedback within two weeks after the query or feedback is received, unless in an urgent or extenuating circumstance when an immediate response is required. The query or feedback and the response will be recorded in the Continuous Improvement register and utilised in the future review of the policy and procedure.

REFERENCES

Source	Document Title
Internal	Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure
	Data and Records Management Policy and Procedure
	Access, Equity and Diversity Policy and Procedure
	AAPoly Student Complaint Form
	AAPoly Appeal Form
External	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
	National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
	TEQSA Guidance Note: Grievance and complaint handling
	National Student Ombudsman: Confidentiality requirements in complaint-handling policies