

STUDENT GRIEVANCE & APPEALS POLICY

PURPOSE

The Whitehouse Institute is committed to the provision of fairness and a caring attitude and proper avenues of redress for student concern. As such, the Whitehouse Institute has developed a mediation and grievance/appeal resolution procedure which is supported by management and is made available to all staff and students. Where possible the Whitehouse Institute encourages the resolving of any student grievance and appeal in an informal manner, however where unsuccessful all students of the Whitehouse or those seeking to enrol in a course of study with the Whitehouse Institute are entitled to access the grievance procedures as set out in this policy.

PART A provides procedures for prospective and current students on resolving grievances and appeals on academic matters

PART B provides procedures for prospective and current students on resolving grievances and appeals on non academic matters

PART C provides a list of the types of grievances to which this policy does not apply

POLICY

The student grievance resolution procedures of the Institute are based on the following principles:

Students of the Whitehouse Institute or those seeking to enrol in a course of study with the Whitehouse are entitled to access the grievance procedures set out in this policy, regardless of the location of the campus of the Institute at which the grievance has arisen, the student's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

A student may withdraw a complaint or grievance at any time during the grievance resolution process. When this occurs the matter will be concluded and deemed to be resolved. If the original complaint or grievance was made in writing then the withdrawal must also be in writing to the relevant staff member who is handling the matter at the time the withdrawal is being affected or, in cases before the Board of Governors Grievance Resolution Panel, to the CEO as Secretariat of the Grievance Resolution Panel.

The complainant and/or respondent have the right to be represented by a third person (such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person) if they so desire.

The respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against in any of the stages set out in this policy.

The procedure is without charge to current and potential students.

There is provision for external review of decisions by an independent person or body established or nominated by the Whitehouse Institute. The independent person or body will be the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET). ACPET will undertake the following actions within 10 working days to mediate a resolution:

- Meet with the complainant to hear their grievance or appeal
- Meet with the respondent to hear their response

- Provide a written account of the review process and a recommended solution
- Convene a meeting of both parties and attempt to obtain their agreement to a resolution.

If ACPET makes recommendations in relation to a grievance they have reviewed, ACPET will forward those recommendations to the relevant person within 10 working days of commencing the external review. This person will ensure that the recommendations are implemented within 10 working days of receiving the recommendations.

At all stages of the grievance and appeals process, reasons and a full explanation for decisions and actions taken as part of the procedures will be given in writing if so requested by the complainant and/or respondent.

This policy is communicated to all staff through the Policy and Procedures Manual. The Senior Education Officer is responsible for the induction of all staff in the application of all policies.

The procedures set out in this policy do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other higher education provider policies or under statute or any other law.

Records of all grievances and applications for review of decisions are kept and accessible to all interested parties for a period of 5 years. Such records remain confidential.

Records of grievances and their outcomes will be kept strictly confidential and filed in a separate file (not kept on the student or staff file) and stored in the office of the Student Administration Manager for a period of 5 years. Parties to the complaint will be allowed supervised access to these records.

Students or People seeking to enrol in any accredited higher education course of the Whitehouse Institute have three stages at which a complaint may be addressed. Each stage is free of charge/costs.

PART A

Resolving grievances and appeals on academic matters

All students of Whitehouse Institute can use these procedures to submit a grievance about an academic matter. Academic Grievances Procedures are for grievances which include, but are not limited to:

- academic progress decisions
- assessment matters
- a decision of a member of academic staff that affects the academic program of an individual or group/s of students
- selection or admission decisions
- recognized prior learning and/or credit recognition
- structure of academic programs, nature of teaching, or assessment
- issues relating to authorship and intellectual property.

Process for prospective and current students

Step 1. The prospective or current student is encouraged to seek informal resolution to the grievance by discussing the nature of the grievance directly with the person with whom the grievance is held.

Step 2. If unsatisfied with the response to the grievance he/she may either speak with or submit a written description of the grievance to their relevant Program Coordinator who will endeavour to resolve the issue amicably and with respect to the rights and responsibilities of both parties. If the student feels unwilling or unable to approach either the person with whom the grievance is held or the Program Coordinator, the student may seek the support of another person in authority such as the Academic Coordinator or the Senior Education Officer.

Step 3. If the Program Coordinator is unable to resolve the matter informally, he/she will establish a meeting within 10 working days between the student, the person with whom the grievance is held and any other relevant authorities or persons.

Step 4. If the matter remains unresolved then a written grievance with full supporting documentation shall be submitted to the Chair of the Academic Committee or their delegate. The Chair of the Academic Committee or their delegate will within 30 working days interview all parties individually, and set up a meeting between all parties where arguments and/or witnesses in support of either party can be presented. The Chair of the Academic Committee, in consultation with the Academic Committee will make a final determination on the matter within 10 working days of receiving the written submission, and communicate the outcome to all parties. In communicating this outcome the Chair of the Academic Committee will give reasons and full-explanation in writing for the decision and actions taken as part of the procedures, if requested, by the complainant and/or respondent.

Step 5. If the matter remains unresolved there is provision for external review of decisions by an independent person or body established or nominated by the Whitehouse Institute. The independent person or body will be the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET). ACPET will undertake the following actions within 30 working days to mediate a resolution:

- Meet with the complainant to hear their grievance or appeal
- Meet with the respondent to hear their response
- Provide a written account of the review process and a recommended solution
- Convene a meeting of both parties and attempt to obtain their agreement to a resolution.

If ACPET makes recommendations in relation to a grievance they have reviewed, ACPET will forward those recommendations to the Chair of the Academic Committee within 10 working days of commencing the external review. The Chair of the Academic Committee or their delegate will ensure that the recommendations are implemented within 10 working days of receiving the recommendations.

Step 6. This Grievance and Appeal process does not preclude a student from seeking redress in other forums outside the Whitehouse Institute process. For example, the student may wish to take the matter further by selecting the appropriate body from among such bodies as:

- the Office of Fair Trading (13 3220);
- the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW (02-9268 5544) ; or
- the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1-300-656-419).

Students should note that:

The Student Administration Managers Office will keep appropriate records of grievances for at least five years, and allow parties to the complaint appropriate access to these records;

- in the case of an appeal against a grade the result may be that the final grade is either retained, raised or lowered; and
- in a dispute relating to instructions which have been given to students on assessment procedures within a subject, the written guidelines which lecturers have provided to students will be taken as definitive.

PART B

Resolving grievances and appeals on non academic matters

All students of Whitehouse Institute can use these procedures to submit a grievance about a non academic matter. Non-academic matters include, but are not limited to;

- administration of Whitehouse Institute policies and procedures by administrative groups and departments
- a decision by an administrative staff member that affects an individual or group/s of students
- access to resources and facilities
- payment of fees
- student charges
- enrolment
- scholarships
- course transfer
- time limits for completing rationalised/discontinued/modified courses
- interaction with Institute staff.

Process for prospective and current students

Step 1. The prospective or current student is encouraged to seek informal resolution to the grievance by discussing the nature of the grievance directly with the person with whom the grievance is held.

Step 2. If unsatisfied with the response to the grievance he/she may either speak with or submit a written description of the grievance to the Student Administration Manager who will endeavour to resolve the issue amicably and with respect to the rights and responsibilities of both parties. If the prospective or current student feels unwilling or unable to approach either the person with whom the grievance is held or the Student Administration Manager, the student may seek the support of another person in authority such as the Senior Education Officer.

Step 3. If the Student Administration Manager is unable to resolve the matter informally, he/she will establish a meeting within 10 working days between the student, the person with whom the grievance is held and any other relevant authorities or persons.

Step 4. If the matter remains unresolved then a written grievance with full supporting documentation shall be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will within 10 working days interview all parties individually, and set up a meeting between all parties where arguments and/or witnesses in support of either party can be presented. The Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Board of Governors of the Whitehouse Institute of Design, Australia will make a final determination on the matter

within 30 working days of receiving the written submission, and communicate the outcome to all parties. In communicating this outcome the Chief Executive Officer will give reasons and full-explanation in writing for the decision and actions taken as part of the procedures, if requested, by the complainant and/or respondent.

Step 5. If the matter remains unresolved there is provision for external review of decisions by an independent person or body established or nominated by the Whitehouse Institute. The independent person or body will be the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET). ACPET will undertake the following actions within 30 working days to mediate a resolution:

- Meet with the complainant to hear their grievance or appeal
- Meet with the respondent to hear their response
- Provide a written account of the review process and a recommended solution
- Convene a meeting of both parties and attempt to obtain their agreement to a resolution.

If ACPET makes recommendations in relation to a grievance they have reviewed, ACPET will forward those recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer within 10 working days of commencing the external review. The Chief Executive Officer will ensure that the recommendations are implemented within 10 working days of receiving the recommendations.

Step 6. This Grievance and Appeal process does not preclude a student from seeking redress in other forums outside the Whitehouse Institute process. For example, the student may wish to take the matter further by selecting the appropriate body from among such bodies as:

- the Office of Fair Trading (13 3220);
- the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW (02-9268 5544) ; or
- the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1-300-656-419).

Students should note that:

- appropriate records of grievances will be kept for at least five years, and that relevant parties are allowed access to their complaint records
- the Student Administration Managers Office will ensure that all records are treated as confidential
- this is a generic policy for the resolution of Grievances and Appeals and in the case of harassment it may be more appropriate to follow the grievance process outlined in the Harassment Policy
- in relation to grievances of a financial nature, the student should discuss the matter with the Accounts Office in the first instance prior to discussing the matter with the Financial Manager
- students will not be disadvantaged, bullied, harassed or victimised for submitting a grievance or appeal for consideration and as outlined in this policy
- incoming staff to the Whitehouse Institute are inducted to the location of this policy and in its correct use
- this policy will be altered without notice where any conflict arises with relevant legislation and in such cases the requirements of the legislation will take precedence
- a nominee of the student may be included in the grievance handling processes if the student so chooses.

PART C

Students should note that:

This is a generic policy for the resolution of Grievances and Appeals and in the case of

- Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender, race or disability
- Sexual harassment
- Student discipline

It may be more appropriate to follow the grievance process outlined in the Harassment and/or Discipline Policy.

This policy was approved by the Academic Board on 13 August 2007 and is set out in the Student Handbook, Staff Handbook, Policy and Procedures Manual and published on the Whitehouse Institute web site www.whitehouse-design.edu.au