

Section Four:

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

Number Five:

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

POLICY

Skills Active will deal with all complaints in a professional, fair and understanding manner. Skills Active will ensure all stakeholders have their complaints dealt with fairly, thoroughly and promptly to resolve the grievance as quickly as possible.

The complaints procedure will allow Skills Active to identify the best way to modify systems or processes, where modification will prevent further complaints and/or enhance the service provided. Through this process Skills Active will continually enhance the level of service provided to customers.

Any person may lodge a complaint with Skills Active about any matter over which Skills Active has control and that he or she considers gives grounds for a grievance.

It is not possible to specify all the grounds for complaints but some examples could include:

- Assessor registration and accreditation decisions.
- Training provider accreditation appeals.
- Appeals against outcomes of assessments.
- Moderation appeals.
- Complaints about the conduct of a staff member of Skills Active.
- Complaints about the conduct of a Skills Active registered assessor.

All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Emphasis will be on achieving understanding, resolving as many issues as possible, and preventing future complaints.

All investigations into complaints received will take into account the rights of the complainant and any individual about whom the complaint involves.

Complaints are also an important component of customer feedback. All feedback will be communicated to the appropriate staff member.

It is Skills Active's Policy that all staff actions and systems regarding customer relations will be consistent with the Privacy Act 1993 and subsequent amendments.

PROCEDURES

Informal Complaint Resolution

Where possible, the complainant should endeavor to raise and resolve the issue as close as possible to its point of origin (the source of the grievance) as soon as possible after the event. Formal complaint procedures should generally only be utilised where attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful or would not be in the best interests of the complainant.

Formal Complaints

1. Where an informal approach is not in the best interests of the complainant, or where the complainant does not feel that informal resolution has produced a satisfactory outcome, a formal written complaint should be lodged with the Chief Executive.
2. A formal written complaint must contain a clear statement of the grounds for the complaint and supporting documentation or evidence where appropriate.
3. The Chief Executive will
 - Appoint a co-ordinator for the complaint.
 - Send written acknowledgment of the complaint to the complainant within **three working days** of receiving the complaint, including the name of the co-ordinator.
4. The co-ordinator will begin an investigation into the complaint within **five working days** of the Chief Executive having received the complaint. Where possible, the investigation should be completed and a full answer to the complaint drafted within **one month** of receiving the complaint.
5. Investigation of the complaint may include, where appropriate, interviewing the individual concerned, and obtaining statements from any individuals who may be involved in the matter.
6. The complainant will be offered the opportunity of further information/clarification following the investigation. A letter addressing all elements of the complaint will be sent to the complainant at the conclusion of the investigation. Such a letter may also outline changes in practice Skills Active is instigating to correct and/or improve issues highlighted.
7. Where further investigation is required, the co-ordinator of the complaint will keep the complainant fully informed of progress in writing, and negotiate a revised timeframe if necessary.

Appeals Procedure

1. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation into a complaint, she/he may appeal in the first instance to the Chief Executive. Such an appeal should be made in writing immediately upon receipt of the advice of the decision that the person wishes to contest. The statement must contain a clear outline of the grounds for the appeal, supporting documentation, and copies of any correspondence from the co-ordinator of the complaint.

2. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome following the review by the Chief Executive or if the complaint is against the Chief Executive's actions or behavior, she/he may appeal to the Board through the Chair. This process shall be the final point of appeal within Skills Active.
3. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome following the review by the Board, she/he may lodge a formal complaint with the Tertiary Education Commission.

INTERNAL PROCEDURES for Skills Active Staff only

In co-ordination with the Customer Complaints procedures, the following internal procedures are also applicable:

Formal Complaints

The Chief Executive will also:

- Maintain a hard copy file of customer complaints including receiving and updating the file with updates as they occur.
- If the co-ordinator is not a Team Leader, inform the relevant Team Leader of the complaint and the name of the co-ordinator.

If the co-ordinator is not a Team Leader, the co-ordinator will ensure the relevant Team Leader is kept up-to-date on progress.

Where individual staff members are under investigation, they will be encouraged to seek support and advice. The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring this option is discussed with staff involved in the investigation.

If at any stage it appears likely that legal action may arise, the co-ordinator of the complaint shall advise the Chief Executive immediately, who shall in turn advise the Board, the Skills Active solicitors, and the Professional Liability Insurers as soon as possible.

Reporting/Monitoring of Complaints

1. The Chief Executive will ensure that all customer feedback and complaints are tracked and regularly audited.
2. All formal complaints will be recorded and tracked through to resolution by the complaint co-ordinator on a central file.
3. Anonymous complaints will also be reported upon and recorded in the central file and may be used for the purposes of training and development throughout Skills Active.

Accessibility of Complaints Policy

The Customer Complaints Policy and Procedures, or information regarding the existence of the Policy, as appropriate, shall be included in all Skills Active Trainee Handbooks, Registered Assessor Manuals, Skills Active Internal Policy Guidelines, other relevant Customer related documentation and is to be available on the Skills Active website.

Reference should also be made to the following Policies and Procedures:

Customer Services
Customer Privacy