

COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Quality Area 2: VET Student Support
Standard: 2.7

Purpose

This policy outlines Ella Baché College's commitment to providing a fair, transparent and accessible process for students and stakeholders to provide feedback or lodge a formal complaint. It ensures that all complaints are addressed promptly, without prejudice, and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. Feedback and complaint outcomes are used to inform continuous improvement.

Rationale

Ella Baché College values student feedback as a driver of quality improvement and acknowledges that complaints may arise. By establishing a structured, transparent and supportive approach, the College ensures students can express concerns without fear of disadvantage and that responses are fair, proportionate and constructive. All students who have a complaint, grievance or wish to appeal an academic decision should consult this policy and procedure before initiating their actions.

Policy Statement

The policy relates to domestic and international students and applies to both academic and non-academic matters. Ella Baché College is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience and promoting a culture of open feedback. All students, staff, employers, and third parties are encouraged to provide positive and critical feedback and are entitled to have their complaints managed professionally, confidentially, and without fear of reprisal.

Feedback from students regarding the College, courses, staff and other services is always encouraged and this feedback is not considered as a grievance, until and unless this is stated as such and specific actions or outcomes are requested. A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least 5 years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the College Operations Manager.

This policy ensures that:

- A culture of open communication exists where feedback and complaints are welcomed and viewed as opportunities for learning and continuous improvement. No student will be penalised or treated unfairly for raising a concern genuinely and in good faith.
- Feedback and complaints can be made regarding any aspect of the College's operations, including third parties.
- All complaints are managed in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. The person lodging the complaint will not suffer any disadvantage as a result.
- The College responds to all complaints, grievances and appeals in a timely, fair and equitable manner

Definitions

Complaint: A complaint can be a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction from minor inconveniences to more serious concerns

Grievance: a formal documented process with specific steps and procedures

Feedback: means any verbal, written or electronic communication from a student or stakeholder that provides opinions, suggestions, or observations about the College's services, courses, facilities, staff, or systems. It may be positive, negative, or neutral and is typically provided outside of a formal complaints process.

Natural Justice: A legal principle supporting the right to be heard and to an impartial decision.

Procedural Fairness: Ensuring fair and transparent handling of complaints where all parties are given an opportunity to present their case.

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term "student" or "complainant" applies to both current College students and persons seeking to enrol with the College. Students who have ceased to study with the College will be given a further 12 months after they have ceased their enrolment to use this Complaints, Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

The Ella Baché College of Skin and Beauty Therapy will ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity. All complaints, grievances, appeals and outcomes are treated as confidential (unless they involve breaches of the law) and records will be dealt with in accordance with the College Policy and Procedures on Privacy and Access to Information.

The College will ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against nor victimised. Each complaint, grievance or appeal and outcome is recorded in writing. A written explanation for decisions and actions taken during the process will be given to all parties.

Where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, the College will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome in writing.

There is no cost to students in utilising the Complaints, Grievance and Appeals process.

Appeals against an Assessment Decision

Students can appeal against an assessment result. It is important that the appeal is settled as quickly as possible. This may include:

Resubmission or a second assessment

In the first instance, the trainer will consult with the College Operations Manager or delegate and depending on the circumstances, will provide an opportunity to re-sit the exam or resubmit the piece of work. It will then be re-marked. The request and reasons will be recorded in writing.

Marking by a second assessor

The trainer should immediately inform the College Operations Manager if a re-sit or re-submission is recommended or if the student has a grievance, disagreement or dispute about the results. The appeal will be discussed with the student and trainer and recorded in writing, considered by the College Operations Manager and if appropriate, arrangements will be made for re-assessment by another assessor.

A written assessment appeal

If the student is still not satisfied with the re-submission process and second marking the student must put their appeal in writing as per the Complaints, Grievance and Appeal Policy. The Steps under "Stage 2 – Internal Appeal" of the Complaints, Grievance and Appeal Policy will then be followed.

Procedures

Ella Baché College applies the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness in all complaints and feedback processes. This means:

- All parties have the right to be heard and respond to information presented;
- Complaints are managed without bias by staff not directly involved in the matter;
- Affected individuals are informed of potential adverse decisions and given an opportunity to respond;
- Students and staff are protected from victimisation for lodging complaints in good faith;
- Internal and external appeal options are available.

Before an Issue becomes a Formal Grievance

Students are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. There are support staff available to assist in the resolution of issues at this level:

- In the first instance the student should contact the class trainer who will endeavour to resolve the problem without the need for a formal complaint.
- If the complaint is of a general nature, the student may fill out the 'Complaints, Grievances and Appeals form' and submit it to the Student Services Manager or seek an appointment with the College Operations Manager for an informal discussion.
- If the problem is of a personal nature that may need professional help, the College Operations Manager will help the student to find an appropriate professional person in their local area.

Stage 1 - Formal Grievance or Complaint

If the grievance, complaint or appeal cannot be resolved through informal discussion with the parties involved, then a formal complaint should be made. The person making the complaint or appeal should follow this process:

1. Students should complete the 'Complaints, Grievances and Appeals form'. The form is available:
 - a. From the 'My Course Information' subject in the <https://my.ellabachecollege.edu.au> learning portal, or
 - b. By contacting Student Support on studentservices@ellabachecollege.edu.au
2. Lodging the complaint or appeal:
 - a. Students should complete the Form and email it to studentservices@ellabachecollege.edu.au
 - b. The Form should be accompanied with all supporting documentation and evidence which supports the claim.

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged upon receipt by the Student Services Manager who will then determine the urgency of the complaint and seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve. The formal grievance handling process will commence, and clarification may involve a face-to-face interview with the complainant and the College Operations Manager.

The College Operations Manager will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within 10 working days. The report will also advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance. At all meetings the minutes are taken and outcomes recorded. All parties will receive a written copy of the minutes.

Stage 2 – Internal Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance or complaint, they may lodge an appeal with the College Operations Manager within 10 working days of receiving notification of the outcome of their formal grievance. The appeal should present relevant information not considered during the original complaint. Appeals must be submitted in writing marked to the attention of the College Operations Manager as follows:

Email: studentservices@ellabachecollege.edu.au

The College Operations Manager will consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within 5 working days of the appeal being lodged. Each case can be heard by the College Operations Manager, CFO, an independent person or a panel, and always with two persons present.

Where possible such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews. The internal appeal process will include the following:

- Ensure the complainant has an opportunity to present their case at no cost, and the ability be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings.
- Conduct the assessment of the complaint or appeal in a professional, fair and transparent manner; and
- Following the consultation, the College Operations Manager will provide a written report within 5 working days to the complainant advising the reasons for the decision, including further steps taken to address the grievance. The report will also advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

Timeframe

Ella Baché College Pty Ltd will attempt to resolve complaints / appeals as soon as possible. A timeframe to resolve a complaint / appeal within twenty (20) days is considered acceptable and in the best interest of Ella Baché College Pty Ltd and the person making a complaint or seeking an appeal. A person making a complaint or seeking an appeal will be provided with regular updates to inform them of the progress of the complaint / appeal handling.

Stage 3 – External Appeal - review by an external and independent person or body with appropriate expertise.

Ella Baché College Pty Ltd provides the opportunity for the person making a complaint or seeking an appeal who is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal complaints grievances and appeals handling process to seek a review by an external and independent person or body with appropriate expertise. To request such a review, the complainant or the person making an appeal should inform the College Operations Manager, who will initiate the process with the Chief Executive Officer.

Where Ella Baché College Pty Ltd appoints or engages an external and independent person or body with appropriate expertise to review a complaint / appeal, Ella Baché College Pty Ltd will meet the full cost to facilitate the independent review.

In these circumstances the Ella Baché College CEO will advise of an appropriate party independent of Ella Baché College Pty Ltd to review the complaint, and its subsequent handling, and to provide advice to Ella Baché College PTY Ltd regarding the recommended outcomes. The independent third party is required to respond in writing with their recommendations within ten (10) working days of the review being requested.

Advice received from the independent person/body will be accepted by Ella Baché College Pty Ltd as final and will be implemented promptly and without prejudice. The person making a complaint or seeking an appeal will receive written notice of the decision including reasons for the decision. The written notice will also include information on other agencies the person may contact if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the independent review.

Where a complaint is received by Ella Baché College Pty Ltd and the CEO feels that they may be biased or there is a perception of bias, then the complaint will be referred directly to an independent third-party for consideration and response as outlined above.

Opportunity for review by an external agency

Where the person making a complaint or seeking an appeal is not satisfied with the handling of the matter by Ella Baché College Pty Ltd, they have the opportunity for an agency that is external to Ella Baché College Pty Ltd to review his or her complaint or appeal following the completion of the complaint, grievance and appeal process.

Students who are not satisfied with the process applied by Ella Baché College Pty Ltd may refer their grievance to the following external agencies:

In relation to the delivery of training and assessment services, the person may refer their complaint to the **National Training Complaints Service** via the following phone number: 13 38 73 or visit the website at <https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-training-complaints-hotline>

For complaints about non-compliance or regulatory breaches by the College. **Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)** at the following website <https://asqaportal.asqa.gov.au/Make-a-Report/?from=tip-off>

For matters relating to privacy, the person may refer their complaint to the **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner** via the following details: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/individuals/how-do-i-make-a-privacy-complaint> or call on 1300 363 992

For matters relating to students receiving a VET Student Loan students can appeal to the VSL Ombudsman <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au>

NB: Complaints to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

Students must first follow the Ella Baché College of Skin and Beauty Therapy College appeals process prior to lodging a complaint with ASQA. If after the completion of the College's complaint, grievance and appeal process, a complainant still believes the College is breaching or has breached its legal requirements, they can submit a complaint to ASQA by completing the Complaint about a

training organisation operating under ASQA's jurisdiction form. A student can lodge a complaint about the RTO at: <https://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/complaints-about-training-providers>.

Except in exceptional circumstances, students must attach evidence to the complaint form showing:

- They have followed Ella Baché College's formal grievance procedure; and
- Ella Baché College's response.

ASQA's processes require students to identify themselves as a complainant and ASQA is bound by the provisions of the Privacy Act 1988, including the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). The personal information will be handled in accordance with ASQA's obligations under this Act. If however a student wants to request to keep their identity confidential throughout the investigation, if the student needs help with the Complaints, Grievances and Appeals process or if they are unsure whether ASQA can help with the complaint, they can call the ASQA Info line on 1300 701 801 or email complaintsteam@asqa.gov.au for further information.

The College will act accordingly when an outcome is reached and will ensure that all parties are treated fairly and without bias. While the complaint, grievance and appeal process is in motion, the College will maintain the student's enrolment throughout the ongoing matter until it is resolved.

Complaints Records Management

All complaint records are maintained securely in the Complaint Management Register.

- Records include complaint details, communications, decisions, actions taken, and outcomes.
- Documents are stored in a secure, access-restricted system for a minimum of five years, in accordance with regulatory and privacy requirements.
- Only authorised personnel (e.g. College Operations Manager) may access these records

The root cause of complaints is identified where applicable, and necessary improvements are made to policies, procedures, training or services. Where appropriate, follow-up contact is made with the complainant to confirm satisfaction with the outcome and to ensure the matter is fully resolved.

Complaints are reviewed quarterly as part of the College's Continuous Improvement Plan.

Document Control

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Approved By	CEO
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Version Control

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1.0	Initial version	Head of Education	28/02/2020
2.0	Upgrade to Standards for RTOs 2025	CEO	06/06/2025