

## PP2.9-Complaints Handling

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| Policy area    | Complainant Support                                                                                |
| Standards      | TAC Outcome Standards — Registration Standards 2025, Standard 2.7 (related: Standards 2.1 and 4.4) |
| Responsibility | Director, Office Manager, Compliance Officer, Admin Staff, Trainer                                 |
| Classification | <b>Public</b>                                                                                      |

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure:

- our complaints management system allows feedback and complaints about Desert to Coast Training and Assessing, and any person employed or contracted by us, and information about how to provide feedback and make complaints is publicly available and easily accessible
- complainants are supported to provide feedback and make complaints
- persons making a complaint are afforded procedural fairness
- we handle complaints within a reasonable timeframe for responding to and resolving complaints
- we provide avenues for further action where complaints are not resolved
- outcomes of complaints are documented and communicated to all parties to the complaint
- feedback and complaints are used to inform continuous improvement to prevent the reoccurrence

### 2. Definitions

**Complainant** means the person making a complaint, this may be a student, employer, trainer or any other person making a complaint. It is not limited to complaints made by students only.

**Complaint** generally means negative feedback about services or people which has not been resolved locally.

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### 3. Policy statement

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#### 3.1 Approach to complaints

Desert to Coast Training and Assessing are open to receiving feedback and complaints. We are committed to providing a fair and transparent complaint handling process. We do this by:

- ensuring there is no detriment to people who complain
- fostering a receptive, blame-free culture that is open to feedback and improvement
- providing a range of avenues through which people may make complaints – e.g. via email or verbally to trainers, the Office Manager, Compliance Officer, or other relevant staff.
- Making information on our complaints handling process publicly available on our website and in our Student Handbook providing transparency regarding how complaints and feedback are handled, what complainants can expect and expected timeframes for resolution of complaints.

#### 3.2 Ensuring procedural fairness

Desert to Coast Training and Assessing implement the following mechanisms to ensure procedural fairness when handling complaints:

- the complaint is handled by an unbiased person
- both the complainant and the subject of the complaint (where this is a person) are given an opportunity to be heard and to provide relevant information
- similar complaints are treated in a consistent manner to ensure fairness and reliability in the resolution process
- a person making a complaint will be informed of any outcome or decision before the decision is implemented and will have the option to respond
- the privacy of complainants is protected, and the information included in a complaint is kept confidential.

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### 3.3 Early Resolution of Complaints

In all cases, issues that arise during training and assessment that are the source of frustration or are in dispute should be resolved at the time they occur between the persons involved. It is often the case that complaints can be avoided by proper communication and respect between persons involved. Where the issue cannot be resolved locally and needs to be formalised as a complaint, the complaint is to be made in accordance with the following section.

### 3.4 Making a Complaint

A complaint may be received by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing in any form and does not need to be formally documented by the complainant in order to be acted on. Complaints may be made by any person, and may be about Desert to Coast Training and Assessing, any third party delivering services on our behalf, or any person employed or contracted by us (Outcome Standard 2.7(2)(a)(i)).

The complaints policy must be publicly available. This means that the complaints policy and procedure will be published on the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing website and will be communicated to complainants within the Student Handbook.

Complaints are to be handled in the strictest confidence. No Desert to Coast Training and Assessing representative is to disclose information to any person without the permission of the DIRECTOR. A decision to release information to third parties can only be made after the complainant has given permission for this to occur. This permission should be given by providing written consent.

Desert to Coast Training and Assessing shall maintain the enrolment of the complainant during the complaint handling process.

The complainant is entitled to be heard with access to all relevant information and with the right of reply ensuring procedural fairness is applied at every stage of the complaint process.

The complainant may be accompanied and/or assisted by a support person at any relevant meeting. Where the complainant is a child or young complainant, they may be accompanied by a family member or carer at any relevant meeting.

### 3.5 Communicating the Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure

The complaints handling policy will be:

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- Publicly available on the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing Website
- Integrated into the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing Student Handbook

Complainants are also encouraged to provide feedback to their Trainer, the Office Manager, Compliance Officer, or any other Desert to Coast Training and Assessing staff member at any time, as outlined in the *Student Handbook* and PP4.7 - *Continuous Improvement*.

### 3.6 Complaint Handling Timeframe

We are committed to resolving complaints in a reasonable timeframe and without unnecessary delay. While we will respond to all complaints in a timely manner, some complaints may require more urgent attention than others, and some complaints may take longer to resolve than others.

- **Written Acknowledgement** - The first step is written acknowledgement by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing **within 1 business day** from the time the complaint is received. This acknowledgement is intended to provide the complainant assurance that Desert to Coast Training and Assessing has received the complaint and will review the relevant issues and provide a response as soon as practical. The acknowledgement must inform the person that they will receive a written response.
- **Initial Assessment and Categorisation** - Desert to Coast Training and Assessing will triage complaints by classifying complaints based on severity, urgency, and nature, and prioritising cases that need immediate attention. An initial assessment and categorisation of the complaint will be conducted **within 2 working days** based on:
  - **Severity:** Determine if the complaint involves safety, harassment, discrimination, or legal concerns, which would necessitate urgent action. Less severe complaints could involve general dissatisfaction or requests for improvement.
  - **Urgency:** Consider how soon the issue needs to be resolved. Complaints that could impact ongoing training sessions or reputation may need to be escalated.
  - **Nature of Complaint:** Identify if it's related to training and assessment, trainer behaviour, administrative issues, or facilities.

#### Prioritisation

Assign a priority level (e.g., critical, high, medium, low) based on the assessment. For instance:

- **Critical:** Complaints with legal or safety implications, or those that could harm complainants' well-being.
  - **High:** Issues with significant impact on training quality or participant experience, such as trainer behaviour or course content.
  - **Medium:** Less urgent issues, like scheduling or minor logistical concerns.
  - **Low:** Minor complaints, often administrative or preference-based, which don't require immediate resolution.
- **Handling the complaint** - Complaints that have been categorised as Severe, with a Critical priority rating, will be acted on immediately. The handling of all complaints will commence within **seven (7) calendar days** of the lodgement of the complaint and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable. A written response must be provided to the complainant within **fourteen (14) calendar days** of the lodgement of the complaint.
  - As a benchmark, Desert to Coast Training and Assessing should attempt to resolve complaints as soon as possible. A timeframe to resolve a complaint within **thirty (30) calendar days** is considered acceptable and in the best interest of Desert to Coast Training and Assessing and the complainant.
  - A complainant should also be provided with regular updates to inform them of the process of the complaint handling. Updates should be provided to the complainant at a minimum of **two (2) weekly intervals**.

Complaints must be resolved to a final outcome within **thirty (30) calendar days** of the complaint being initially received. Where Desert to Coast Training and Assessing Director considers that more than 30 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint, the Director must inform the complainant in writing, including reasons why more than 30 calendar days are required, and maintain regular fortnightly contact with the complainant including to explain any further delays.

### 3.7 Principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

A complainant is to be provided an opportunity to formally present his or her case at no cost. The principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness must be incorporated into the complaint handling process to ensure that decision-making is fair and reasonable. Natural justice must be

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observed when it affects the rights, interests or legitimate expectations of individuals. The following principles are to be applied:

**Director and bias.** Where the Director feels that they may have bias or there is a perception of bias or where the person making the complaint is not satisfied with how the matter has been handled, the complainant is to be referred directly to an independent third-party for consideration and response.

**Responding to Allegations.** Where a complaint involves one person making allegations about another person, it is a requirement for Desert to Coast Training and Assessing to hear both sides of the matter before making any judgements about the complaint should be settled. A person who will be affected by a decision made by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing as a result of a complaint has the right to be fully informed of any allegations and to be provided adequate opportunity to be heard and respond. The person has the right to:

- Put forward arguments in their favour,
- Show cause why a proposed action should not be taken,
- Deny allegations,
- Call for evidence to disprove allegations and claims,
- Explain allegations or present an innocent explanation, and
- Provide mitigating circumstances (information aimed at reducing the severity, seriousness of something).

Desert to Coast Training and Assessing also has an obligation to fully consider the substance of allegations and the response provided by parties before making a decision. Decisions must be communicated in writing to all parties to the complaint — the complainant and any person who is the subject of the allegations (Outcome Standard 2.7(2)(d)). This is to include advising these persons of their right to seek a third-party review of decisions made by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing.

**Referring matters to authorities.** Where an allegation is made that involves alleged criminal or illegal activity and it is considered outside the scope and expertise of Desert to Coast Training and Assessing to investigate the matter, then in these circumstances Desert to Coast Training and Assessing reserves the right to report these allegations to law enforcement authorities.

Persons related to the matter involving alleged criminal or illegal activity will be advised in writing if this course of action is being taken.

**Third Party Review.** Where the person making a complaint is not satisfied with the handling of the matter by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing, they have the opportunity for a body or person that is independent of Desert to Coast Training and Assessing to review his or her complaint following the internal completion of complaint handling process. Before a person seeks a review by an independent third party, they are requested to first allow Desert to Coast Training and Assessing to fully consider the nature of the complaint and to respond to the person in writing. If after this has occurred, the person is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right then seek a review by an independent third party. To request a review by an independent third party, the complainant should inform the Office Manager of their request who will initiate the process with the Director.

In these circumstances, the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing Director will advise of an appropriate party independent of Desert to Coast Training and Assessing to review the complaint outcome (and its subsequent handling) and provide advice to Desert to Coast Training and Assessing in regard to the recommended outcomes. The independent third-party is required to respond with their recommendations within **fourteen (14) working days** of their review being requested. This advice is to be accepted by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing as final, advised to the person making a complaint in writing and implemented without prejudice.

Where the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing appoints or engages an appropriate independent person to review a complaint, the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing will meet the full cost to facilitate the independent review.

### 3.8 Unresolved Complaints

Once the complaint handling process has concluded; where the person making a complaint remains not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint handling procedure, the person is to be advised that they have the right to refer the matter to any external authority/agency that may be relevant to their complaint.

The following external agencies are nominated in the first instance as relevant points of referral the person may consider:

- In relation to consumer related issues (for example fees, refunds or contract terms), the person may contact Consumer Protection WA (Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 1300 30 40 54 or at <https://www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au>.

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- <https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-training-complaints-hotline><https://TACportal.TAC.gov.au/Make-a-Report//?from=tip-off> In relation to the quality of training and assessment, or Desert to Coast Training and Assessing's compliance with the Registration Standards 2025, the person may lodge a complaint with the Training Accreditation Council (TAC), the registering body for Desert to Coast Training and Assessing, using the online form at <https://rtoportal.tac.wa.gov.au/eform-complaint/>, by phone on (08) 9224 6510 or by email to [tac@dtwd.wa.gov.au](mailto:tac@dtwd.wa.gov.au). TAC will ask for evidence that the person first tried to resolve the matter through Desert to Coast Training and Assessing's own process, and TAC investigates compliance matters — it does not resolve individual disputes or refunds. The person may also contact the National Training Complaints Hotline on 13 38 73 (<https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-training-complaints-hotline>), which refers complaints to the appropriate authority.
- In relation to 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

This guidance is also communicated to complainants within the Student Handbook and also within the publicly available policies and procedures on Desert to Coast Training and Assessing website. It is expected that the above agencies will investigate the persons concerns and contact the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing for information. External agencies will typically request a copy of any record of how the complaint was handled from the person. Desert to Coast Training and Assessing is to ensure that the person is provided with a written response that they may use for this purpose.

Desert to Coast Training and Assessing is to cooperate fully with agencies such as the Training Accreditation Council, Consumer Protection WA and the National Training Complaints Hotline that may investigate the handling of a complaint. Desert to Coast Training and Assessing considers that it would be extremely unlikely that a complaint is not able to be resolved quickly within Desert to Coast Training and Assessing internal arrangements.

### 3.9 Record Management of Complaint Records

Records relating to complaints will present in two formats. There will be electronic records in the form of email correspondence and other documents which are communicated electronically and hard copy records which are submitted by the complainant or generated by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing. There is also a record of the complaint maintained within the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing complainant management system. This includes the details about the complaint and

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a diary log which records the progress of the complaint handling and closure. This record also records identified opportunities for improvement that result from complaints handling.

All records regardless of their format will be saved in a digital format into a secure folder located on the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing file storage. Each file is to be clearly labelled with the document title or subject and the date of which the document was received or generated. This folder must only be accessible to persons authorised by the Director. Records stored on the complainant management system are to be accessible only to administrators and managers.

To ensure records are maintained in a safe and suitable condition, the following is to apply:

- Records must be kept securely to prevent them being accessed by any non-authorised personnel.
- Records must be kept confidential to safeguard information and to protect the privacy of complainants.
- Records must be kept to avoid damage by fire, flood, termites or any other pests.
- Electronic data storage must be safe from destruction by fire or flood and should take account of the risk of component failure of a single storage device. Electronic data is also to be backed up off site.

A correspondence record must be made for each complainant making a complaint. All email and letter communication should be retained with the complainant correspondence record within the complaint handling file.

### **3.10 Period of retention of Complaints Records**

Desert to Coast Training and Assessing is to retain records relating to complaints handling for a minimum of five (5) years.

### **3.11 Destruction of Complaints Records**

The Director is the only person who can authorise (in writing) the destruction of complaint handling records. Records are only to be authorised for destruction after the retention period has lapsed.

### 4. Considerations

#### 4.1 Relationship to Continuous Improvement

Frequently, the complaints handling process will expose weakness in the training and assessment or administrative system that can flow into the continuous improvement system as opportunities for improvement. This outcome of complaints handling is very positive and should be actively applied by all persons involved. It is for this reason that complaints received from stakeholders should be seen in a positive light and as opportunities for improvement. At the end of the complaint handling process, consideration is to be given to opportunities for improvement that can be applied to prevent the recurrence of the complaint.

### 5. Procedure

| Steps                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Person/s responsible                               |
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| <b>5.1 Complaints Handling</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                    |
| i.                             | <b>Inform complainants of Complaints Handling process</b><br><br>Upload Complaints Handling policy and procedure on our website and provide to complainant in their <i>Student Handbook</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Director<br><br>Compliance Officer                 |
| ii.                            | <b>Receive Complaint</b><br><br>A complaint may be received in any form (written or verbal) although persons seeking to make a complaint are recommended to complete the <i>Complaint Form</i> which is available to them on the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing website or can be obtained from the Desert to Coast Training and Assessing office.<br><br>There is no time limitation on a person who is seeking to make a complaint. | Office Manager,<br>Compliance Officer, Admin staff |

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|      | <p>The completed complaint form is to be submitted to the Office Manager either in hard copy or electronically via the following contact details:</p> <p>39 Bradford Street, Wonthella WA 6530</p> <p>geraldton@deserttocoast.com.au</p> <p>If a complainant has any difficulty accessing the required form or submitting the complaint to Desert to Coast Training and Assessing, they are advised to contact Desert to Coast Training and Assessing immediately at the following phone number:</p> <p>(08) 9923 1088</p> <p>If the complainant is a child or young person, they may enlist the support of a family member or carer, or the Office Manager, Compliance Officer, Admin staff, in explaining the complaint process and helping them to complete the Complaint Form.</p> |                                                          |
| iii. | <p><b>Acknowledge receipt of complaint</b></p> <p>The complainant must be provided a written acknowledgement as soon as possible and within 1 business day from the time the complaint is received. The acknowledgement must inform the complainant that they will receive a written response within 14 days and explain the complaints handling process and the person's rights and obligations.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Office Manager,<br>Compliance<br>Officer, Admin<br>staff |
| iv.  | <p><b>Determine complaint handling priority.</b></p> <p><b>Initial Assessment and Categorisation</b> - Triage complaints by classifying complaints based on severity, urgency, and nature, and prioritising cases that need immediate attention. An initial assessment and categorisation of the complaint will be conducted <b>within 2 working days</b> based on:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                          |

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|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Severity:</b> Determine if the complaint involves safety, harassment, discrimination, or legal concerns, which would necessitate urgent action. Less severe complaints could involve general dissatisfaction or requests for improvement.</li> <li>• <b>Urgency:</b> Consider how soon the issue needs to be resolved. Complaints that could impact ongoing training sessions or reputation may need to be escalated.</li> <li>• <b>Nature of Complaint:</b> Identify if it's related to training and assessment, trainer behaviour, administrative issues, or facilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Prioritisation</b><br/>Assign a priority level (e.g., critical, high, medium, low) based on the assessment. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Critical:</b> Complaints with legal or safety implications, or those that could harm complainants' well-being.</li> <li>• <b>High:</b> Issues with significant impact on training quality or participant experience, such as trainer behaviour or course content.</li> <li>• <b>Medium:</b> Less urgent issues, like scheduling or minor logistical concerns.</li> <li>• <b>Low:</b> Minor complaints, often administrative or preference-based, which don't require immediate resolution.</li> </ul> |                                                 |
| v. | <p><b>Record Complaint</b></p> <p>The complaint must be entered into the <i>Complaints and Appeals Register</i>. The Complaints and Appeals Register identifies the complainant, relation with Desert to Coast Training and Assessing, nature of complaint, findings/outcomes, any links with the Continuous Improvement report and the dates received and closed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Office Manager, Compliance Officer, Admin staff |

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|       | <p>Prior to entering the complaint form into the register, check if the person has not already submitted a complaint, if it is accurately recorded or if it has been recorded as a subsequent contact.</p> <p>The complaints register within the complainant management system is to be used to record the details of the complaint and to maintain a chronological journal of events during the complaint handling process. Records relating to complaints handling must be stored securely to prevent access to unauthorised personnel.</p> |                                                                                    |
| vi.   | <p><b>Review and investigate complaint</b></p> <p>The complaint is forwarded to the Director for review. The Director will determine if the complaint requires further investigation or consultation or if the matter can be solved internally.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Office Manager,<br/>Compliance<br/>Officer, Admin<br/>staff</p> <p>Director</p> |
| vii.  | <p><b>Keep the complainant up to date</b></p> <p>As the complaint handling is progressing, the complainant is to be provided regular updates not less than every two weeks advising them of the status of the complaint and how it is progressing.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Office Manager,<br/>Compliance<br/>Officer, Admin<br/>staff</p> <p>Director</p> |
| viii. | <p><b>Give opportunity to respond (if applicable)</b></p> <p>Where a complaint is made about or involves allegations about another person, Desert to Coast Training and Assessing is obliged to inform this person about this complaint or allegation and provide them the opportunity to respond and present information in response to the issues raised.</p>                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>Director</p> <p>Office Manager,<br/>Compliance<br/>Officer, Admin<br/>staff</p> |
| ix.   | <p><b>Refer to Police (if applicable)</b></p> <p>Where a complaint is received by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing which involve allegations about alleged criminal conduct, Desert to Coast Training and Assessing are to recommend the person</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Director</p>                                                                    |

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|       | making the complaint refer the matter to the relevant State or Territory Police Service.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                     |
| x.    | <p><b>Determine response and communicate to the complainant</b></p> <p>The Director reviews the outcomes of the investigation/consultation and determines the complaint response within 30 days.</p> <p>Communicate the findings and outcomes in writing to the complainant and to any person who is the subject of the complaint (all parties to the complaint).</p>                                                                                                                              | Director                                                            |
| xi.   | <p><b>Review by an independent third party, where required</b></p> <p>Where a complainant is not satisfied with the handling of the complaint by Desert to Coast Training and Assessing, a body or person from an independent third party can be requested to review the complaint. The third-party is required to respond to with their recommendations within <b>fourteen (14) calendar days</b> of their review being request. The complainant is to be advised of review by a third party.</p> | Director<br>Independent<br>Third Party                              |
| xii.  | <p><b>Implement response and Advise Complainant</b></p> <p>Decisions or outcomes of the complaint handling process shall be implemented immediately. The complainant shall be advised of the complaint outcome in writing.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Office Manager,<br>Compliance<br>Officer, Admin<br>staff            |
| xiii. | <p><b>Obtain written acknowledgement from the complainant</b></p> <p>Desert to Coast Training and Assessing must request written acknowledgement from the complainant once the complaint has been resolved.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Office Manager,<br>Compliance<br>Officer, Admin<br>staff            |
| xiv.  | <p><b>Consider any Opportunities for Improvement to this process</b></p> <p>Consider the opportunities for improvement that may have emerged during the process and record these within a Continuous Improvement Report for consideration at a future management</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Office Manager,<br>Compliance<br>Officer, Admin<br>staff<br>Trainer |

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|     | meeting. Refer to: PP4.7 - Continuous Improvement and PP4.3 - Management Meeting.                                                                                                                                                     | DIRECTOR                                                 |
| xv. | <b>Document Response</b><br><br>The complaint must be updated and recorded in the <i>Complaints Register</i> . All associated documents relevant to the complaint should be retained including any records of continuous improvement. | Office Manager,<br>Compliance<br>Officer, Admin<br>staff |

## 6. Reference(s)

TAC Outcome Standards — Registration Standards 2025, Standard 2.7 — Outcome Standard (1): Feedback and complaints management addresses concerns and informs continuous improvement of the WA registered provider.

Performance Indicators (2): A WA registered provider demonstrates:

- (a) it operates a complaints management system that:
  - (i) allows feedback and complaints about the provider, any third parties, and any person employed or contracted by the provider;
  - (ii) ensures all parties are afforded procedural fairness;
  - (iii) identifies reasonable timeframes for responding to and resolving complaints; and
  - (iv) provides avenues for further action where complaints are not resolved;
- (b) information about how to provide feedback and make complaints through the complaints management system is publicly available and easily accessible by VET students;
- (c) VET students are supported to provide feedback and make complaints;
- (d) outcomes of complaints are documented by the provider and communicated to all parties to the complaint; and
- (e) feedback and complaints are used by the provider to inform continuous improvement.