

TABOR COLLEGE (VICTORIA) INC.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES: (Higher Education Support Act 2003)

Academic Matters

Preamble:

The College encourages open discussion between students and their teachers, especially in matters of assessment and marking. It aims to affirm both adult learning values, such as self-directedness and creativity, as well as personal values, such as mutual accountability. However, the College recognises that at times a matter related to assessment will not easily be resolved between student and teacher or assessor, requiring further measures to be taken.

The procedures set out in this document 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.

For the purposes of this protocol, **academic matters** relate to student progress, assessment, and curriculum and awards in a course of study.

There shall be no cost levied to the student with respect to the lodgement of an initial notice of grievance or a request for an internal review (Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the process). A request for an external review incurs a cost of \$200.00 to the student. The fee is levied by the External Reviewer, namely the Australian Council for Private Education and Training [ACPET].

Students who complain or lodge a grievance, and the respondent(s) to a complaint or grievance shall not be victimised or discriminated against, irrespective of the nature or severity of the grievance.

Students who complain or lodge a grievance, and the respondent(s) to a complaint or grievance shall have the right to be accompanied and assisted by a third party such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person if they so wish.

Students or applicants have access to a three (3) stage complaints and grievance process which relates to academic matters.

Stage 1 Initial Lodgement and Investigation

Stage 2 Internal Review of decision(s)

Stage 3 External Review of decision(s)

Detailed procedures are described in the following document.

In these guidelines, the following lodgement guidelines apply:-

A formal notice of grievance shall be posted to The Academic Registrar, Tabor College Victoria, PO Box 2223, Ringwood North Vic 3134 or lodged in person with the Receptionist, Tabor College Victoria, 222 Oban Road, Ringwood North Vic 3134.

A formal review of an investigation shall be posted to *Review Officer, For Attention: Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services)*, Tabor College Victoria, PO Box 2223, Ringwood North Vic 3134 or lodged in person with the Receptionist, Tabor College Victoria, 222 Oban Road, Ringwood North Vic 3134.

A request for an external review of a decision shall be emailed to Student.appeals@acpet.edu.au and shall be accompanied by a completed *Application for External Review* and appropriate authorisations to pay the lodgement fee.

In these guidelines:-

victimise means to act or omit to act towards a person in a way which is intended to cause disadvantage to that person because they have made a complaint, or may make a complaint, or may be or are subject of a complaint

Academic Registrar means the person usually occupying that position or, in his/her absence, the person nominated by the Principal to fulfil that role.

Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services) means the person usually occupying that position, or in his/her absence, the person nominated by the Academic Registrar to fulfil that role.

Dean means the person usually occupying that position or, in his/her absence, the person nominated by the Principal to fulfil that role.

Grading Appeals Committee means three members of the College Faculty not already involved in the matter under review.

Course Advisor means the Lecturer nominated to advise students about a particular course of study, e.g. Bachelor of Theology.

College Faculty means the collective of the permanent teaching staff, but excluding any person(s) involved in the matter under review.

Confirmed Module Lecturer means the lecturer who has primary responsibility for teaching a class.

Publication of grievance procedures:

Students and Intending Students

In order to adequately inform students and intending students, the College's Complaints and Grievance Procedures are published on the Tabor College WEB Page at www.tabor.vic.edu.au. The WEB Page is reviewed and updated annually, for the commencement of each academic year.

Training with respect to grievance procedures:

New Faculty or Staff Appointments

All new appointments to the Faculty and administration team of the College shall be formally inducted into all relevant aspects of College life. The College's complaints and grievance procedures and policies shall be included as an induction item in the process for inducting new faculty and staff members. New appointees will be instructed in their operation and will be directed to the Tabor College WEB Page where a full copy of the policy and procedures is maintained.

Faculty and Confirmed Module Lecturers

In order to adequately inform Faculty and confirmed lecturers, the College's Grievance procedures shall be included in the Tabor College Victoria "Lecturer Handbook". This handbook is published on the Tabor College WEB Page at www.tabor.vic.edu.au. and will be reviewed and updated annually for the commencement of each academic year. Faculty and confirmed lecturers shall also be required to attend a professional development day at the commencement of each semester to ensure that all academic procedural and policy matters are fully understood. Policy and procedural matters shall also be included as agenda items at the College's Faculty meetings, generally conducted fortnightly during semesters.

Administration staff

Administration staff shall be required to attend an administration briefing seminar at the commencement of each semester at which aspects of the College's administration procedures and policies shall be discussed. The interface between academic and administration procedures and policies shall also be discussed and particular instruction shall be given with respect to the requirements of the College's grievance procedures. Action shall be taken to ensure that each staff member has access to the grievance procedures and understands them.

Access to Grievance Procedures:

Tabor College offers subjects in several locations, presently at Ringwood Campus, CityLife Church, Urban Neighbours of Hope [UNOH] and the Northern Annex at Hadfield. Students attending classes, undertaking subjects externally or intending students have a right to access the complaints and grievance procedures for academic and non-academic matters without disadvantage, regardless of the location of the campus or location at which the grievance has arisen, the student's place of residence or the mode in which they study.

The College acknowledges it has an obligation to ensure such students are not disadvantaged by the procedures required in the grievance investigation and resolution process. Therefore, students or intending students may request any, or all, of the following additional services:-

- provision of a complete copy of the grievance procedures, posted by regular mail services or emailed to them, if they are not already in possession of a copy and the WEB address at which the procedures are published;
- reply paid envelope(s) to minimise the cost of lodging notices of grievance, requests for a formal review of an investigation or the submission of information to be considered in the context of the review;
- a personal meeting arranged at the Ringwood campus, or at another mutually agreed location; or
- telephone calls or conference arrangements initiated by the College to facilitate information gathering, in lieu of a personal attendance at a meeting;
- a third party such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person to accompany and/or assist the student if he/she so wishes, except in the case of a request for an external review, which is a paper based process that excludes face-to-face mediation.

The respondent(s) to a complaint or grievance shall also have the right to be accompanied and assisted by a third party such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person in the grievance investigation and resolution process, except in the case of a request for an external review, which is a paper based process that excludes face-to-face mediation..

Records of Grievances- keeping and access:

Records of grievances will be treated as confidential. Therefore:-

- (1) Records of grievances **under investigation** shall be compiled in individual, specially endorsed "Confidential Folders", held in the custody of the Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services) and accessed by him/her only, or issued to the Internal or External Review Officer(s) as required for the purpose of conducting the internal or external review investigation.
- (2) Records of grievances **notified in writing, investigated and finalised** will be placed in a sealed envelope, endorsed "CONFIDENTIAL" and "TO BE OPENED BY ACADEMIC REGISTRAR ONLY". Such sealed records shall be kept for at least five years.

Students who wish to access any records relating to personal grievances, are required to notify the Academic Registrar and arrange an appointment to view them. Students will be provided with access to any records relating to personal grievances, but the following limitations would apply:-

- students' access to their records would be supervised, that is, the Academic Registrar or his/her delegate would generally be present while the record is being viewed;
- students may request, and be supplied with, photocopies of any documents in their personal grievance records;
- students would not be permitted to remove any documents from their personal grievance records; however,
- students may request that incorrect or out of date information in their personal grievance records be removed or updated. The Academic Registrar shall be responsible for taking this action;
- students who are in dispute with the Academic Registrar over a request to remove or update a personal grievance record shall have the right to request an internal review, and shall have the further right to request an external review, if desired.

Explanation of the three stage complaints and grievance procedures

Dispute notification: Stage One

Assessment tasks

Where a dispute relates to a particular assessment task (whether the conduct of the task or mark awarded for the task) within a unit of study, the matter should be raised verbally in the first instance with the lecturer or person coordinating that particular unit as identified on the unit guide. If the issue cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the student immediately, he/she is required to lodge a formal notice of grievance, **in writing**, addressed to the **Academic Registrar**. The basis for the dispute should be clearly stated.

The Academic Registrar will determine whether the grievance involves (a) the conduct of an assessment task, (b) the grading of an assessment task or (c) a curriculum or student progress issue. Each issue will be dealt with according to the process indicated below.

(a) Dispute relating to conduct of an assessment task: Stage One

Where the matter refers to the **conduct of the assessment task**, the Academic Registrar will ask the Course Advisor, lecturer or assessor to provide details of the conditions and conduct of the task. The process of investigation will generally be conducted within twenty eight (28) days.

If after examination, the College protocols are determined to **have been correctly followed**, the Academic Registrar or Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services) will advise the student that:-

- there is no matter to be resolved; and
- the review process is available.

If, after examination, the College protocols are determined to **have not been correctly followed**, the Academic Registrar and Course Advisor will decide on a course of action. Such course of action may include:

- allowing the student to attempt the assessment task again;
- requesting that the task be reassessed (by another marker – see below); or
- removing the task from that student's requirements, provided that the relevant competencies or outcomes can otherwise be demonstrated.

The Academic Registrar will, within the same twenty eight (28) day period, prepare a formal report, place a signed copy of the report in the personal file of the student and write a formal letter to the student advising:-

- the outcome of the investigation;
- a recommendation to resolve the grievance; and
- the internal review process available; and
- that the actions taken to investigate the matter, and the reason(s) and an explanation of the decision taken will be provided in writing, if requested.

Respondents will also be provided with an explanation of the actions taken, the reasons(s) and the decision taken, in writing, if it is requested.

Internal review process: Stage Two

If, after a formal investigation by the Academic Registrar and Course Advisor a student desires a further review, a formal review of the investigation and recommendation to resolve the grievance may be requested by the student, **in writing**, within twenty eight (28) days of the receipt of the formal recommendation. The request for a review must be addressed to the *Review Officer, For Attention: Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services)* and must specify the reasons for making the request.

A student may also request an internal review if he/she is concerned about the time taken to complete the stage one process.

Upon receipt of a request for an internal investigation of a complaint which remains unresolved, the Review Officer or Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services) shall acknowledge in writing, receipt of the request for an internal investigation and inform the student of the following information:-

- who will be responsible for conducting the investigation;
- that he/she has the right to a personal meeting to present his/her case (verbally and/or in writing) and the name, address and telephone number of the person to contact if a personal meeting is required;
- that he/she has the right to submit additional information in writing, should a personal meeting not be desired; and the name and address of the person to whom the additional information should be submitted;
- that he/she has the right to be accompanied and/or assisted by a third party such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person if he/she so wishes; and
- the timeframe during which the internal investigation will be conducted, generally within twenty eight (28) days of receiving the request for an investigation

The respondent(s) to a complaint or grievance shall also have the right to be accompanied and assisted by a third party such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person in the grievance investigation and resolution process.

The Review Officer may conduct the review personally, or request the **Grading Appeals Committee** to conduct the review. When the Review Officer or the Grading Appeals Committee makes a decision, a formal letter will be sent to the student advising: -

- the outcome of the investigations;
- a recommendation to resolve the grievance;
- the external review process available; and
- that the actions taken to investigate the matter, and the reason(s) and an explanation of the decision taken will be provided in writing, if requested.

Respondents will also be provided with an explanation of the actions taken, the reasons(s) and the decision taken, in writing, if it is requested.

The Review Officer or Grading Appeals Committee may confirm the decision of the Academic Registrar and Course Advisor, vary the decision, or set aside the decision and substitute a new recommendation.

External review process: Stage Three

If the Review Officer or Grading Appeals Committee advises that the original decision has been upheld, varied, or set aside in favour of a new decision, the student must be advised that he/she has the right to request a further external review and the procedure to be adopted. Details of the appeal authority are provided at the end of this document.

(b) Dispute relating to the grading of an assessment task: Stage One

If a student is concerned about the **grading of an assessment task**, the student shall be required to contact the marker within 14 days of the receipt of the original graded mark, to discuss the marking of the task, the reasons why the marker awarded the grade given, and/or to request reconsideration of the grade given. If the marker agrees to reconsider the grade given, a decision must be provided to the student, within seven (7) days of the discussions with the student. If, after consultation with the marker, the student is still concerned about the original grade awarded, or the grade awarded after reconsideration by the original marker, a formal internal review of the marking may be requested (*Stage Two*).

Internal review process: Stage Two

Where the dispute refers to the **grading of the assessment task**, and the student wishes to dispute the original grade awarded to an assessment task (or the grade awarded after reconsideration by the original marker), a formal review of the marking may be requested by the student, **in writing**, within twenty eight (28) days of the receipt of the original graded mark. The request for a review must be addressed to the *Review Officer, For Attention: Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services)* and must specify the reasons for making the request.

A student may also request an internal review if he/she is concerned about the time taken to complete the stage one process.

The Academic Registrar will then advise the Course Advisor that a re-mark is required, and determine, in consultation with the Course Advisor, who should be asked to reassess the task. The process of investigation will generally be conducted within twenty eight (28) days. In appointing a second marker, the following selection conventions are applied:

1. Where the Course Advisor is the initial marker, the Academic Registrar will consult with the Principal, or a Course Advisor from another study discipline) to determine who should be asked to reassess the task.
2. Where the Principal is the initial marker, the Academic Registrar will consult with the relevant Course Advisor, or in his/her absence another Course Advisor or deputy competent to advise in that subject area to determine who should be asked to reassess the task.
3. Where a Senior Lecturer, Lecturer or Sessional Lecturer is the initial marker, the Academic Registrar will consult with the relevant Course Advisor, or in his/her absence another Course Advisor or deputy competent to advise in that subject area to determine who should be asked to reassess the task.

The Academic Registrar will provide the nominated second marker with the unmarked copy of the task, and advise the second marker that **no consultation should occur on this matter with the original marker**. The re-graded mark becomes the recorded grade. When the re-graded mark become available, the Academic Registrar will write a formal letter to the student advising:-

- the outcome of the investigation;
- the re-graded mark;
- any recommendations which may assist in resolving the grievance;
- the external review process available;
- that the actions taken to investigate the matter, and the reason(s) and an explanation of the decision taken as part of the procedures will be provided in writing, if requested.

Respondents will also be provided with an explanation of the actions taken, the reasons(s) and the decision taken, in writing, if it is requested.

The Academic Registrar or Grading Appeals Committee may confirm the decision of the original marker, vary the decision, or set aside the decision and substitute a new recommendation.

External review process: Stage Three

If the Academic Registrar or Grading Appeals Committee advises that the original decision has been upheld, varied, or set aside in favour of a new decision, the student shall be advised that a further external review may be requested and the procedure to be adopted. Details of the appeal authority are provided at the end of this document.

(c) Dispute notification: curriculum and/or student progress: Stage One

Where a dispute relates to a curriculum and/or student progress the matter should be raised verbally in the first instance with the Academic Registrar.

If the issue cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the student immediately, he/she is required to lodge a formal notice of grievance **in writing**, addressed to the Academic Registrar. The basis for the dispute should be clearly stated. The Academic Registrar will immediately refer the matter to the **Course Advisor** for investigation and a decision. The process of investigation will generally be conducted within twenty eight (28) days.

When the Course Advisor makes a decision, a formal letter will be sent to the student advising:-

- the outcome of the investigations;

- a recommendation to resolve the grievance;
- the external review process available; and
- that the actions taken to investigate the matter, and the reason(s) and an explanation of the decision taken as part of the procedures will be provided in writing, if requested.

Respondents will also be provided with an explanation of the actions taken, the reasons(s) and the decision taken, in writing, if it is requested.

Internal review process: Stage Two

If, after a formal investigation by the Course Advisor a student desires a further review, a formal review of the investigation and recommendation to resolve the grievance may be requested by the student, in **writing**, within twenty eight days of the receipt of the formal recommendation. The request for a review must be addressed to the *Review Officer, For Attention: Deputy Registrar (Advisory Services)* and must specify the reasons for making the request.

A student may also request an internal review if he/she is concerned about the time taken to complete the stage one process.

Upon receipt of a request for an internal investigation of a complaint which remains unresolved, the Review Officer shall acknowledge in writing, receipt of the request for an internal investigation and inform the student of the following information:-

- who will be responsible for conducting the investigation;
- that he/she has the right to a personal meeting to present his/her case (verbally and/or in writing) and the name, address and telephone number of the person to contact if a personal meeting is required;
- that he/she has the right to submit additional information in writing, should a personal meeting not be desired; and the name and address of the person to whom the additional information should be submitted;
- that he/she has the right to be accompanied and/or assisted by a third party such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person if he/she so wishes; and
- the timeframe during which the internal investigation will be conducted, generally within twenty eight (28) days of receiving the request for an investigation

The respondent(s) to a complaint or grievance shall also have the right to be accompanied and assisted by a third party such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person in the grievance investigation and resolution process.

The Review Officer will refer the matter to the **College Faculty** (excluding any faculty member directly involved in the matter under review) for investigation and a decision. When the College Faculty makes a decision, a formal letter will be sent to the student advising:-

- the outcome of the investigations;
- a recommendation to resolve the grievance;
- the external review process available; and
- that the actions taken to investigate the matter, and the reason(s) and an explanation of the decision taken as part of the procedures will be provided in writing, if requested.

Respondents will also be provided with an explanation of the actions taken, the reasons(s) and the decision taken, in writing, if it is requested.

The College Faculty may confirm the decision of the Course Coordinator, vary the decision, or set aside the decision and substitute a new recommendation.

External review process: Stage Three

In all cases of disputes relating to academic matters, a student may request further assistance from the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) , after the internal review process has been conducted. This appeals process is paper-based only and no face-to-face mediation is conducted.

Students who seek an External Review must lodge appeals via email at Student.appeals@acpet.edu.au and must also complete and provide an *Application for External Review*. The student who seeks an External Review is also required to pay a fee of \$200.00 up front, inclusive of GST to the external reviewer. The College is required to pay the balance of the fee (\$200.00 inclusive of GST).

The external review agency (ACPET) will generally undertake the external review within 28 days.

A request for an external review must also contain the following sentence:-

Please forward a copy of the review result and/or recommendations to the Academic Registrar, Tabor College (Victoria) Inc. at PO Box 2223, Ringwood North, Victoria 3134 within twenty eight (28) days of the completion of the review.

Implementation of recommendations arising from external review

If the Executive Officer, Australian Council for Private Education and Training, or the delegate of the Executive Officer makes recommendations in relation to a grievance that has been reviewed, *the Academic Registrar will ensure that the recommendations are addressed within twenty eight (28) days.*

Respondents will also be provided with an explanation of the actions taken, the reasons(s) and the decision taken, in writing, if it is requested.