

Complaints & Appeals Policy

Policy

Vostro Institute of Training Australia ('Vostro') is committed to providing a professional and productive learning environment that is both harmonious and mutually rewarding for all concerned. Nevertheless, issues or concerns do arise from time to time and it is the purpose of this policy is to establish a fair and consistent approach in dealing with complaints or appeals that arise during training delivery.

The following definitions have been provided to assist in the understanding and implementation of this policy.

Complainant	The person lodging the complaint or appeal
Complaint	The informal or formal expression of dissatisfaction or disagreement in regards to some aspect of the conduct of Vostro's operations, services, staff or students
Appeal	The petition against any decision made by Vostro or its authorised representatives, including assessment decisions

It is Vostro's policy to ensure that all complaints and appeals are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, fairly and without bias.

Guidelines

1. All prospective students/trainees will be provided with information about Vostro's Complaints & Appeals Policy, prior to enrolling in a course.
2. Students/trainees or employers who have concerns about the quality of service provided by Vostro are encouraged to follow the Complaints & Appeals Procedure outlined below. This includes concerns about the quality of teaching or materials, student amenities and discrimination or harassment etc.
3. All complaints and appeals will be dealt with in a professional manner and with the utmost of confidentiality. Vostro encourages all parties to approach a complaint or appeal with an open mind and to focus on resolving the issue through discussion and conciliation.
4. At any stage during the complaint or appeal process, the students/trainees are entitled to nominate a person of their choosing to accompany and support them.
5. Complainants will be provided with the details of relevant external authorities they may approach if required.
6. A student's/trainee's enrolment should be maintained during the complaint or appeal process.
7. If the complaint or appeal process reveals a systemic issue within Vostro that requires improvement, the issue will be reported to Executive Management and addressed through Vostro's continuous improvement process.
8. Nothing within this policy or the complaint and appeal process, prohibits the student from pursuing remedies with an external authority.

External Authorities

If a complainant is still dissatisfied or is unsatisfied with the fairness of the process, they have the right to lodge a complaint externally with an appropriate agency or body such as one of those listed below:

Consumer Affairs Victoria
P: 1300 558 181
E: consumer@justice.vic.gov.au
W: www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria
P: 9603 8370 or 1800 658 528
E: dscv@justice.vic.gov.au
W: <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/>

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Level 3, 204 Lygon Street, Carlton, Vic 3053
P: 1300 891 848
E: information@veohrc.vic.gov.au
W: www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)
P: 9651 3291 (Complaints Unit)
P: 1800 000 674 (National Training Complaints Hotline) W:
<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

WorkSafe Victoria

W: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/>

Resolving Complaints

The most appropriate method to deal with an issue or concern will depend on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint. Some complaints can be resolved easily without formality or process. More serious or damaging complaints may be dealt with formally and with investigation methods applied.

Informal Approach	The complainant may approach the relevant Trainer and Assessor to state the nature of their issue or concern, express their feelings and ask for a resolution. The complainant may also approach Vostro Management and request advice/assistance in resolving the issue or concern and take appropriate action.
Formal Approach	The complainant may lodge a formal (written) complaint using Vostro's official <i>Complaints and Appeals Form</i> , requesting resolution. The complainant may also seek external advice and make a complaint directly to an appropriate government agency (eg. VRQA)

If a complaint or appeal can be resolved informally and to the complainant's satisfaction, they are not obliged to escalate the matter to a formal complaint or appeal. It should be noted however, that in the case of serious misconduct by another student/trainee or Vostro representative (such as a Trainer) and at the discretion of Management, Vostro may choose to escalate the complaint of its own accord.

Investigating Complaints & Appeals

Formal Complaints/Appeals usually require an investigation so that all parties have a chance to present their point of view. The investigation may include private interviews with the complainant, witnesses to pertinent incidents, and the person alleged to have been the source of the behaviour or action leading to the complaint. Victimization of any party will not be tolerated. Each situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and with respect to the rights of every employee. At the completion of the investigation, a formal response will be provided to the complainant.

Resolution of Complaints & Appeals

Resolution of complaints and appeals may range from an apology to person(s) affected; counselling or other corrective action as deemed appropriate for the nature of the complaint; or the implementation of new policies and procedures to address systemic issues. In cases involving misconduct by Vostro representatives, disciplinary or legal action may be taken.

Procedure - Informal Complaint/Appeal

Note: Issues or complaints dealt with informally do not become part of the formal complaint process and will not be documented, recorded or reported on in most cases, however informal diary notes should be kept by all parties involved. Exceptions to this include where the Vostro representative investigating the complaint determines that the issue or complaint is relevant to the wider operation of the organisation; in such instances, the matter may be recorded and reported on.

1. Students/trainees, employers or the parent/guardian of students/trainees under 18 years of age who have a complaint or wish to voice an appeal, should raise the issue with a trainer or a member of the administrative team as soon as possible.
2. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be informed of the complaint/appeal and will:
 - a. investigate the matter; or
 - b. assign the investigation to a suitable and unbiased delegate.
3. All parties to the complaint are encouraged to resolve the complaint through open discussion with the person who is the subject of the complaint, or is responsible for acting on the issues/concerns raised in the complaint.
4. Parties to the complaint may have a person of their choosing assist and support them during discussions.
5. The parties to the complaint may choose to prepare and sign off on an agreed outcome.
6. If the complaint/appeal is not satisfactorily resolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of this informal process, or finds it difficult to approach others informally, they may submit the issue in writing by completing and lodging a *Complaints and Appeals Form* to the CEO.
7. Where a formal complaint is lodged as a result of the parties not reaching an agreeable and satisfactory outcome through the informal process, the formal complaint should be lodged within 20 days. The *Complaints and Appeals Form* can be downloaded from the Vostro website, or is available upon request from student services staff.

Submission of a *Complaints and Appeals Form* changes the status of the complaint/appeal from informal to formal.

Procedure - Formal Complaint/Appeal

1. All formal complaints are to be lodged using the Vostro's *Complaints and Appeals Form* which can be downloaded from the website, or is available upon request from student services staff.
2. Upon receipt of a formal complaint or appeal, the complaint/appeal is to be recorded on the *Complaints & Appeals Register* and issued with a number.
3. The CEO is to be advised of the complaint/appeal within the same working day when the complaint was lodged.
4. The CEO will provide a written acknowledgment of receipt to the complainant within five (5) working days via an email. This email will include the Complaints & Appeals Register Number.
5. A confidential file will be opened and maintained until resolution of the complaint is achieved.
6. The CEO will:
 - a. investigate the matter within seven (7) working days of receiving the complaint; or
 - b. if required, assign a suitable and unbiased representative who will investigate the matter within seven (7) working days of the complaint being received by Vostro.
7. Any parties to a complaint may have a person of their choosing assist and support them during discussions.
8. Where relevant, any person nominated in the complaint will be provided with written details of the allegation against him/her and will have the opportunity to respond before resolution is attempted.
9. A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any stage or, choose to have the complaint resolved informally. Withdrawal of the complaint must be made in writing.
10. Complainants may at any time obtain advice from external organisations or authorities, including legal advice, union advice etc.
11. Relevant parties will be interviewed by the CEO or designated representative investigating the complaint; confidentiality will be maintained at all time.
12. The CEO or designated representative investigating the complaint will recommend action for resolution to any parties to the complaint.
13. Agreement on resolution of the complaint will be documented as part of the investigation process.
14. A formal *response* will be sent to the complainant within seven (7) working days of the conclusion of the investigation and resolution process.

15. Where the outcome is in favour of the complainant, Vostro immediately implements any decision or corrective/preventive actions required and commences continuous improvement process. The CEO keeps a record of the complaint.
16. Where the outcome is not in favour of the complainant, the complainant will choose to either withdraw the complaint or proceed further. If the complainant proceeds, he/she must request within five (5) working days of the written outcome to refer the complaint to Vostro's Board of Directors.
17. The representative of Vostro's Board of Directors will seek a resolution of the complaint with the complainant and finalises outcome within twenty (20) working days of the receipt of the complaint. Once the outcome has been finalised by the representative, CEO informs the student through a written communication including details of the reasons for the outcome.
18. Where the outcome is in favour of the complainant, Vostro immediately implements any decision or corrective/preventive actions required and commences continuous improvement process. The CEO keeps a record of the complaint.
19. Where the outcome is not in favour of the complainant, the complainant will choose to either withdraw the complaint or access an independent external appeal process conducted by external authorities.

Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

Complaints and Appeals Form

Complaints & Appeals Register

Disciplinary Action Policy

Disciplinary Action Procedure

Workplace Harassment, Discrimination & Bullying Policy

Trainer and Assessor Induction Receipt Form