

Student Information Handbook

Issued: 03/2015; 08/2015; 12/2015; 11/2017; 06/2018; 12/2018

TOID: 41254

Equitation Science International

Head Office:

3 Wonderland Avenue
Tuerong, VIC 3915
Australia

ABN: 91 093 459 664

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General Information

Welcome to Equitation Science International!

Equitation Science International is a Recognised Training Organisation (RTO), delivering Nationally Recognised Training under the AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework).

The following information is provided to assist you in ensuring a smooth start to your training and introduction into the Equine Industry. Please take the time to read through it carefully.

Our Vision Statement

Equitation Science International has a vision to modernise horse training with the latest scientific research on the natural behaviour of horses, their learning processes, human and equine biomechanics, handler and rider effects to improve horse welfare in the equestrian sport.

We aim to use the most effective teaching techniques to disperse this information around the world, and in doing so liberate horses and riders from the trappings of tradition, mythology and hearsay.

Our Scope of Registration

Equitation Science International has the following nationally accredited course on its Scope of Registration:

- 10070NAT Diploma of Equitation Science

We acknowledge the importance of adult learning principles in the delivery of effective equine training. We believe that all students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to understand that as learners, they have an active role to play in their training/learning and assessment process.

The purpose of this Student Information Handbook is to ensure - you as a student, have access to all the information you will need.

If at any point throughout your course you require assistance or support, please discuss these needs with Equitation Science International.

Location - How to find us!

Head office & training site: 3 Wonderland Avenue, Tuerong Vic 3915, Australia

**Some workshops are delivered offsite (internationally and interstate). Students will be informed of location when workshop is scheduled.*

Course completion timeframes

On enrolment students have the following time frame to complete each unit:

12 months from unit start date:

- ESIHTP501A Develop a sequential horse training plan
- ESIHTP502A Train horses in-hand using the principles of learning
- ESIHTP503A Train horses under-saddle using the principles of learning
- ESIHTP504A Develop advanced skills for horse training

6 months from unit start date:

- HLTAID003 Provide first aid
- TAEDEL301 Provide work skill instruction
- SISOEQU009 Instruct the advancement of recreational horse riding skills
- SISOEQU008 Instruct fundamental horse riding skills
- SISOEQU010 Identify hazards, assess and control safety risks for horse handling and riding activities
- *BSBWHS401 Implement and monitor WHS policies, procedures and programs to meet legislative requirements (superseded December 2018)*
- *BSBRSK401 Identify risk and apply management processes (superseded December 2018)*
- *SISOEQU0414A Instruct horse riding and handling (superseded December 2018)*

Student Attendance and Behaviour

Students are required to follow all Equitation Science International rules and instructions from staff representing the organisation, act in a non-discriminatory manner at all times, and respect the rights of other students, staff and visitors.

Attendance at scheduled workshops is paramount in ensuring students gain the maximum benefits associated with their training and fulfil the attendance requirements of their course. Students are responsible for notifying Equitation Science International if they are unable to attend a training session for whatever reason.

All courses involve an online theory component, so it is essential that you finish the online training before attending the practical workshop.

Students are also required to adhere to Equitation Science International academic rules and regulations. If a student is found to have acted in a way that ESI deems to be misconduct, they may implement disciplinary action in the form of suspension or cancellation of the student's enrolment.

Students must behave/communicate in a manner appropriate that isn't derogatory, insulting or offensive. Any inappropriate communication will not be tolerated, and your course may be suspended or cancelled.

Access, Equity and Anti-discrimination Commitment

All Equitation Science International staff will adhere to the principles and practices of access and equity in education and training; they will treat every student fairly and without discrimination. Equitation Science International has procedures in place to ensure any student concerns are dealt with immediately and appropriately (refer to the Complaints and Appeals policy).

Equitation Science International acknowledges its legal obligations under State and Federal equal opportunity law, including:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) (Commonwealth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Racial Discrimination Act, 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act, 1984 (Cth)
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 (Cth)
- Work Place Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- The Equal Opportunity Act, 1995 (Victoria)
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986) and Regulations (2008)
- Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses (Revision 1)

All legislation can be accessed at: www.comlaw.gov.au

Equitation Science International fosters equality and access in a training environment that is fair and conducive to learning at all levels. Our training services are available to all participants regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or intellectual impairment or political convictions.

However to complete the 100700NAT Diploma of Equitation Science there is a riding test on application, to ensure that students have sufficient riding skills to complete the practical components of the course.

All ESI staff are required to have an awareness and understanding of access and equity issues and are required to demonstrate access and equity principles in all dealings with students and other staff.

As part of your training and assessment, you have the right to be treated fairly. If you believe you have been treated unfairly by an ESI Representative, please contact the Business Manager, on +61 477 000 145, or email sophie@esi-education.com.

Occupational Health and Safety

Equitation Science International complies with all relevant Occupational Health and Safety legislation. Trainers will actively take steps to identify hazards that could cause harm to participants in the learning environment including horse related training areas during practical workshops. Where possible, the trainers will take action to remove or control these hazards, and will report the hazard to the appropriate on site personnel.

Where practicable, students must take responsibility for their own health and safety and that of their fellow students, or employees. This means students must follow all safety rules, procedures and the instructions of their trainer while in attendance at a training premises.

Safety Program – Horse Related Activities

Activities involving horses are widely regarded as high risk. How horses react to an activity, to human presence and/or environmental factors can be dangerous. Likewise the ability of a rider or handler to prevent, manage or react to the movements of a horse will have a direct impact on their own safety and that of others in the same learning/teaching environment.

Risks can be reduced by taking the following steps:

- Providing adequate induction training for employees, students and visitors to ESI.
- Ensuring competency of handling through training, qualifications and experience.
- Prior to any practical horse activity commencing, Educators/Trainers are required to undertake a complete pre-activity risk assessment
- Wearing suitable personal protective equipment (safety footwear, protective headwear etc.)
- Following the principles of learning theory to ensure all horses are trained ethically and safely.

Participant Acknowledgement of Risk

Practical Assessments will be conducted at a nominated Horse Training Facility. You will be required to attend the facility with your horse or hire a horse through ESI (fees apply). Please discuss this option available with our staff. Accommodation is also available at the facility (fees apply).

As part of our Safety Program for Horse Related Activities you will be required to complete a “Participant Acknowledgement of Risk” form which is a ‘self-assessment’ of the following areas prior to training.

It will require you to self-assess the following aspects:

- Handling (horses) self-assessment
- Riding assessment (if applicable)
- Health information

You will also be required to sign a declaration to state you are aware of the risks associated to horse activity.

Privacy and Personal Information

In accordance with our Privacy policy, we are committed to protecting the privacy and personal information of our students. Except as required under the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science Research and Tertiary Education and, Government Contracts or by law, information about a participant will not be disclosed to a third party without the consent of the participant.

All personal information collected by the Department of Industry, Innovation (the Department) is protected by the Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act).

The Department helps the Australian Government achieve its overall objective of quality educational, employment and training outcomes for all Australians through:

- efficient national program management;
- effective working relationships with state and territory governments, education departments, non-government education, science and training authorities, Indigenous education service providers, industry, community groups and other stakeholders;
- auditing, research and analysis in order to maintain, protect and improve our services; and
- policy advice and other support to the Minister.

Generally, the Department collects personal information in order to properly and efficiently carry out its functions (including those listed above), and only uses personal information for the purposes for which it was given to the Department and for directly related purposes (unless otherwise required by or authorised under law).

Refer to: Appendix A - Privacy Statement at end of this Student Information Handbook.

Survey Participation

You may be contacted to participate in a survey conducted by the Victorian State Government - Department of Education and Training.

The Victorian Student Satisfaction Survey collects information from all Victorian students who completed or left the training and TAFE system in the previous calendar year.

The survey will ask a range of questions, including:

- how and why you chose the training
- satisfaction with the training
- your employment situation after the training
- what further training, if any, you are currently enrolled in
- if you didn't complete the training, why was this the case.

Key student outcome measures include:

- proportion of students with an improved employment status after training
- proportion of students who would recommend the training provider
- proportion of students who are satisfied with training provided

This survey provides valuable feedback on the delivery of VET programs in Victoria.

Learner Questionnaire - Feedback for Quality Indicators

Equitation Science International collects, analyses, and acts on data for continuous improvement of training and assessment. Part of this process involves the student completing a Learner Questionnaire after the completion of a course. This feedback helps Equitation Science International to continuously improve client services by collecting, analysing and acting on relevant data.

Access to Student Records

Students may access their personal records held by Equitation Science International at any time. Students may contact student administration to discuss a suitable time to view their file and access will only be granted once a student can confirm their identification. Student Access to the file will be granted within 2 days of confirming the student's identification.

You must promptly notify Equitation Science International of any change of name, address or contact details. The accuracy of these details is important as they will be used to issue your statement of attainment if eligible.

Student Support Services

Being a student is exciting, but it can also be challenging. All staff can be approached to gain advice on academic and personal issues. Staff at ESI will offer professional and confidential advice in areas where they can help and will ensure that all efforts are taken to ensure a positive learning experience is achieved. If you have specific learning needs or have any difficulties that may be interfering with your studies, you need to inform your allocated trainer/assessor immediately to arrange a suitable training plan.

The Business Manager is able to provide links to external sources of support where the staff at ESI are, either not qualified or it is in the student's best interests to seek professional advice.

Academic Misconduct

Students at Equitation Science International are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. We know that most students conduct themselves with integrity and are disturbed when they observe others cheating. The following information should help you avoid unintentional academic misconduct and clarify the consequences of plagiarism and/or cheating.

Plagiarism & Cheating

Plagiarism:

It is the act of presenting another persons' work as your own, and failing to acknowledge that the thought, ideas or writings are of another person.

Specifically, it occurs when:

- other people's work and/or ideas are paraphrased and presented without a reference;
- other students' work is copied or partly copied;
- phrases and passages are used verbatim without quotation marks and/or without a reference to the author or a web page;

Cheating:

To act dishonestly or unfairly in connection to an assessment conducted by the RTO.

Academic misconduct is considered a serious offence at Equitation Science International. For students who have been deemed to intentionally plagiarize/ cheat, it may result in being suspended, or permanently removed from the course.

To avoid plagiarism and/ or cheating and its penalties, students are advised to note the following:

- You may quote from someone else's work (for example from textbooks, journals or other published materials) but you must always indicate the author and source of the material.
- You should name sources for any graphs, tables or specific data, which you include in your assignment.
- You must not copy someone else's work and present it as your own.

If the student does not agree with the RTO's decision, then they are able access the Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

All students have access to the Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure and a copy can be produced by the Student Administration Department at any time upon request.

Complaints and Appeals

Students have access to Equitation Science Internationals' complaints and appeals process. The complaints and appeals policy and procedure ensures that fair and equitable processes are implemented for any complaints or appeals against Equitation Science International.

Students are able to submit a formal complaint to Equitation Science International relating to any concern they may have (such as academic or attendance record decisions, should they feel a person has acted inappropriately or treated someone unfairly, etc). All complaints are handled with confidence and are reviewed by the CEO.

A student may also appeal a decision made by Equitation Science International with regard to an assessment outcome. Where a student feels they have been unfairly judged and assessed on a specified task, project or assessment they may have the assessment reviewed by submitting an appeal form (Complaints and Appeals Form). Students must provide supporting evidence or explanations as to why they feel the assessment is unfair and why they should be given further opportunity to be assessed.

All students have access to the complaints and appeals policy and procedure and a copy can be produced by the Student Administration Department at any time upon request.

Refer to:

Appendix B – Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedure – at end of Student Information Handbook.

Unique Student Identifier (USI) - What is a USI?

If you're an Australian resident studying nationally recognised training in Australia you are required to have a Unique Student Identifier (USI).

Your USI links to an online account that contains all your training records and results (transcript) that you have completed.

When applying for a job or enrolling in further study, you will often need to provide your training records and results (transcript). One of the main benefits of the USI is the ability to provide students with easy access to their training records and results (transcript) throughout their life.

You can access your USI account online from your computer, tablet or smart phone anytime.

<http://www.usi.gov.au/students/Pages/dESlult.aspx>

Please note: A USI must be supplied to ESI prior to us being able to issue a Nationally Recognised Statement of Attainment

Planning for training

Competency-Based Training and Assessment Process

Competency-based training (CBT) is an approach to vocational education and training that places emphasis on what a person can do in the workplace as a result of completing a training program. The aim of CBT is to ensure that vocational education and training programs better meet the needs of Australia's industries and enterprises.

Outcomes from CBT reflect workplace duties, working environments and performance requirements. This should include performing higher level duties such as planning, problem solving and managing tasks through to completion. CBT programs are often comprised of Units of Competency that contain specific learning outcomes, which are based on standards set by the particular industry. Delivery of training may occur in a variety of forms (classroom, work based, online, distance learning and the horse yard) to ensure an overall understanding of all skills and knowledge is available.

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competency has been achieved. The purpose of assessment is to confirm that an individual can perform the standard expected in the workplace, as expressed in the relevant endorsed industry or enterprise competency standards. Assessments through this course will require students to complete a variety of written work, oral questions, practical demonstrations and assignment/portfolio presentations.

Where a student has undertaken an assessment and it has been marked as NYC (Not Yet Competent), they will be allowed to re-sit the test/or have a re-assessment. If they are deemed NYC for a second and third time they are to re-enrol into that unit/ subject. This will include re-training and therefore a re-enrolment fee for the unit in question.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer (CT)

Competency-based training places emphasis on the workplace application of attained knowledge and skills - not how long spent in training or the amount of knowledge acquired in a formal learning environment. Australian Qualifications and Statements of Attainments that have been issued by any other Registered Training Organisation (RTO) will be recognised by Equitation Science International.

To apply for a Credit Transfer, students must be able to present their original Qualification or Statement of Attainment with National codes and titles that match the current course in which they are enrolled.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the acknowledgment of skills and knowledge obtained through formal training, work experience and/or life experience. The purpose of this process is to identify and assess previously acquired skills and knowledge against the required competency standards.

Course participants applying for RPL must provide evidence to the satisfaction of ESI. This evidence must clearly indicate that the applicant is able to demonstrate all of the required skills and knowledge for the unit in question. Information and documentation regarding the application procedure for RPL and/or Credit Transfers will be made available to all participants upon request.

Training Evaluation

Equitation Science International fully appreciates and acts accordingly to any feedback that you give us. A feedback form may be forwarded to you on completion of your training course, or you can request one at any time. Please be assured that feedback forms remain confidential and are only used for the purpose of improving the quality of our service to students.

Enrolment extensions and re-enrolments

Students are required to complete the units in the timeframe requires (see *course completion timeframes* - Page 4). If students are unable to complete the unit within the required time, they may be eligible for an extension, or they may need to apply for re-enrolment.

Extensions

If students have not completed the unit within the timeframe, students may apply for an **extension**.

1. Students must apply within 1 month of the expiry date by emailing ESI.
2. The application must include reasons why the unit wasn't completed in the allocated time.
3. If an extension is granted a fee of 10% of the unit fee is payable.
4. Extensions provide an extra 6 months for ESIHTP501A-504A, and 3 months for the remaining units.
5. Only one extension per student will be granted per unit.

Re-enrolment

If students have not completed the unit within the timeframe and have not applied for an extension within the time limit may **re-enrol**.

1. Students must re-enrol within 12 months of becoming un-enrolled by emailing ESI.
2. The application must include reasons why the unit wasn't completed in the allocated time.
3. If re-enrolment is granted a fee of 25% of the unit fee is payable.
4. Re-enrolled students will have 12 months for ESIHTP501A-504A, and 6 months for the remaining units.
5. Only one re-enrolment per student will be granted per unit.

ESI will hold student progress for a maximum of 12 months after unit expiry so that students can continue on with the unit from where they left when re-enrolled. If more than 12 months has elapsed since un-enrolment, the student will pay the complete unit fee and be required to complete all assessments again.

Extenuating circumstances

Students may have extenuating circumstances that prevent them from completing units within the allocated timeframe. These circumstances may include (but are not limited to):

- Illness
- Family or personal matters
- Other extraordinary reasons

Where evidence can be successfully provided to support the Student's circumstances, course extension fees may be waived or discounted. This decision of assessing the extenuating circumstances rests with the CEO and shall be assessed on a case by case situation.

Deferrals

Students may defer from their studies at any time for **up to 6 months**. In this period, students will not have access to the online learning material, and the required timeframe for completion of the unit remains but is paused for the deferral period. For example; if a student has 3 months remaining in their timeframe to complete the current unit, they will still have 3 months remaining to complete the unit after the deferral period is finished.

Students must request a course deferral application form from ESI head office to apply.

Refunds

Refunds due to non-delivery of course by RTO

Tuition fees to be refunded in full if:

- The course stops being provided after it starts and before it is completed

Refunds under the below conditions will be paid in full to the student within 14 days.

The RTO may arrange for another course, or part of a course, to be provided to students at no (extra) cost to the student as an alternative to refunding course money. Where the student agrees to this arrangement, the RTO will not be liable to refund the money owed for the original enrolment.

Refunds based upon student application

All applications for refund must be made in writing by way of the 'Application for Refund Form' and submitted to the Business Manager.

Refer: VCID.SMS.06 - Application for Refund Form

Please note - where the student breaches the Equitation Science International's Policies and Procedures no refund is payable. Where a student withdraws from the course without extenuating circumstances only a partial refund is payable.

- Applications for refunds are to be processed by the Business Manager within 14 days from the date of application.
- The assessment of refund applications shall be granted as indicated below:

Outline of Refunds	
Withdrawal prior to agreed start date	Full refund
Withdrawal within 2 weeks of enrolment	50% refund of unused tuition fees
Withdrawal 2 weeks or after enrolment	No refund
Course withdrawn by RTO	Full refund
The RTO is unable to provide the course for which the original enrolment and payment has been made	Full refund

Withdrawal after course commencement

All Refunds made by Equitation Science International will incur an administration fee of \$50.00.

Our Refunds policy is subject to the following conditions:

- If you (the Student) advise Equitation Science International in writing no less than 2 working days prior to the commencement of your course we will provide a full refund minus the above administration fee.

Claiming a Refund

- The student must provide their notice of withdrawal or cancellation on a signed and dated 'Application for Refund Form'. The claim for a refund must include a reason and must include supporting official documentation of the student's circumstances for withdrawal/cancellation plus a contact name, email address and telephone/mobile number to enable Equitation Science International to validate this claim.
- Date of Cancellation / Withdrawal is the date the written request is received by Equitation Science International's Administration staff.
- A student should apply for a refund as soon as possible after notice of cancellation / withdrawal is submitted.
- All refunds will be paid as soon as possible and no later than 5 working days from an approved cancellation / withdrawal notification only if the supporting documentation has been validated during this timeframe.

Appealing Refund decisions

- All students have the right to appeal a refund decision made by the RTO. Student wishing to access the Complaints and Appeals Procedure from the RTO should contact Student Administrations Department.
- This policy and the availability of complaints and appeals processes, does not remove your right to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws.
- The RTO's dispute resolution processes do not remove the student's right to pursue other legal remedies where they feel necessary.

Completing your Course

Qualifications

If you are enrolled in a Nationally Recognised Qualification, you will be issued with a Certificate and a Record of Results (which lists the associated units of competency) upon successful completion of your course.

If you withdraw from your course, you will be issued with a Statement of Attainment for any units that you have successfully completed.

How you will receive your certificate or Statement of Attainment

Your Statement of Attainment will be available for download via the LMS upon completion of a single unit. Upon completion of an entire course, your certificate and record of results transcript will be emailed to you.

Thank you for reading our Student Information Handbook

– we hope you enjoy your training!

Appendix A:

Equitation Science International Privacy & Personal Information Statement

Equitation Science International is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. This statement explains how we handle your personal information.

This statement only applies to our databases and files and does not cover any State, Territory or Commonwealth Government database or file. You are advised to contact the relevant government agency for a copy of their privacy policy.

Where we use the words 'we' and 'us' in this document, it means Equitation Science International.

Your Personal Information

In order to provide you with training, employment and associated services, we may need to collect personal information such as your name, address, work history, qualifications, job seeker identification number, government benefit card, etc.

If you're studying nationally recognised training in Australia from 1 January 2015, you will be required to have a Unique Student Identifier (USI). There are laws that protect a student's USI and USI's must not be collected, used or disclosed by anyone except as allowed by the laws. The student's privacy is further protected by laws requiring that any personal information collected by a training organisation solely for the purpose of creating a USI on their behalf is to be destroyed after the USI is created.

The personal details of individuals held by the Student Identifiers Registrar will be protected by the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

If you decline to provide your personal information, Equitation Science International may not be able to:

- provide the product or service you requested, or
- enter into a business relationship with you.

Collection of personal information

Where practicable, we will endeavour to collect personal information directly from you.

Where services are provided on behalf of a Commonwealth and/or State Government Department, we may collect personal information from such government departments and agencies.

We may also need to collect personal information from other third parties with or without your direct involvement or consent, such as an employer. However, this will not include sensitive information.

Collection of personal information for the Unique Student Identifier (USI).

The personal information that you provide to the Student Identifiers Registrar is collected, used, and may be disclosed, in accordance with the provisions of the Student Identifiers Act 2014 and the Privacy Act 1988. The Student Identifiers Registrar's Privacy Policy provides information about the protection of your information, including how you can access and seek correction of your personal information held by the Student Identifiers Registrar and how to make a complaint about a breach of your privacy and how such complaints are handled.

Use and disclosure

We will use our best efforts to ensure that the information you provide to us remains private and is used only for the purposes you agree to.

We will only disclose personal information to a third party where one or more of the following apply:

- you have given consent (verbal or written)
- it is authorised or required by law, or necessary for enforcement of law
- it will protect the rights, property or personal safety of another person
- the assets and operations of the RTO business are transferred

Access to personal information

You can access the personal information we hold on you, except when government legislation requires or authorises the refusal of access.

To access your personal information, you will need to contact the Student Administration department in writing and specify the type/s of information you wish to view. You will be required to provide proof of identification.

Storage & Security

We will take reasonable steps to maintain the privacy and security of personal information. We ensure this by having such security measures as:

- storing electronic information on a secure server with restricted access
- storing paper-based documents securely on our premises

We will take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify personal information when it is no longer required for any purpose.

The students USI will be stored by the USI Registry System, along with some personal information about the student, such as their name, date of birth and a way of contacting them such as an email address. The USI will also be held by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in a separate database along with their training records.

Where is my USI stored?

For safety and security your personal details are held in a different location to your training records and results but your USI is held in both locations.

Your USI will be stored by the USI system, along with some personal information about you, such as your name, date of birth and a way of contacting you such as an email address. The USI will also be held by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in a separate database along with your training records.

Then each time you login into your USI account the two systems will talk to each other and your personal information and training records and results will both appear in your account even though the information comes from two different locations, as required by law. This happens because the protection of your USI and the information it stores is paramount so these safeguards are in place.

Resolving privacy concerns

If you wish to raise a concern about a privacy matter should contact the Student Administrations Department.

For further information:

- **USI's**
<http://www.usi.gov.au/Students/Pages/student-privacy.aspx>
- **Privacy Act 1988 – Office of the Australian Information Commissioner**
<http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-act/the-privacy-act>

Appendix B:

Equitation Science International

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Policy

This policy/procedure supports the Standards for Registered Training Organisation's (RTO's) 2015 in providing a process for complaints and appeals to be heard and actioned. All complaints and appeals received by Equitation Science International will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement.

Despite all efforts of Equitation Science International to provide satisfactory services to its students, complaints may occasionally arise that require formal resolution. The following procedures provide students the opportunity to have any issues relating to a substantiated complaint or appeal resolved and resolutions reached that attempt to satisfy all parties involved. This complaints and appeals process will be at no cost to the student.

Standards for Registered Training Organisation's (RTO's) 2015

Standard Six - Complaints and appeals are recorded, acknowledged and dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.

Context

RTOs must implement a transparent complaints and appeals policy that enables learners and clients to be informed of and to understand their rights and the RTO's responsibilities under the Standards.

Enterprise RTOs and volunteer associations that do not charge fees for the training and/or assessment and only provide training to employees or members are not required to maintain a separate complaints and appeals policy in relation to their training and assessment. These organisations must ensure, however, that their organisation's complaints policy is sufficiently broad to cover the activities as an RTO.

Clauses 6.1 – 6.6 - Manage complaints and appeals

Clause 6.1

The RTO has a complaints policy to manage and respond to allegations involving the conduct of:

- a) the RTO, its trainers, assessors or other staff
- b) a third party providing services on the RTO's behalf, its trainers, assessors or other staff or
- c) a learner of the RTO.

Clause 6.2

The RTO has an appeals policy to manage requests for a review of decisions, including assessment decisions, made by the RTO or a third party providing services on the RTO's behalf.

Clause 6.3

The RTO's complaints policy and appeals policy:

- a) Ensure the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaint and appeal process
- b) Are publicly available
- c) Set out the procedure for making a complaint or requesting an appeal
- d) Ensure complaints and requests for an appeal are acknowledged in writing and finalised as soon as practicable, and

e) Provide for review by an appropriate party independent of the RTO and the complainant or appellant, at the request of the individual making the complaint or appeal, if the processes fail to resolve the complaint or appeal.

Clause 6.4

Where the RTO considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, the RTO

- a) informs the complainant or appellant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required, and
- b) regularly updates the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.

Clause 6.5

The RTO:

- a) securely maintains records of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes, and
- b) identifies potential causes of complaints and appeals and takes appropriate corrective action to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.

Clause 6.6

Where the RTO is an employer or a volunteer organisation whose learners solely consist of its employees or members, does not charge fees for the training or assessment, and does not have in place a specific complaints and appeals policy in accordance with Clauses 6.1 & 6.2, the organisation has a complaints and appeals policy which is sufficiently broad to cover the services provided by the RTO.

What this Standard means for our RTO

Our RTO must have a policy for dealing with complaints about our organisation, third parties, staff or other learners. We must also have an appeals policy, in case our RTO is requested to review or reconsider a decision it has made (e.g. an assessment decision).

We must make these policies publicly available, for example, by including them on our RTO’s website or displaying them in common areas for staff and learners.

Make the process for lodging a complaint or appeal clear and explain what will happen as a result. Ensure people are not disadvantaged. Specifically, do not:

- require them to complete overly complex forms, which can be a barrier to learners expressing their concerns, or
- require learners to provide extensive written information as part of the complaints process.

Allowing learners to easily engage with the staff of our RTO about any concerns they have can stop minor issues becoming larger.

Our RTO’s process must follow the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness by allowing anyone subject to a decision by our RTO, or anyone who has allegations made against them, to tell their side of the story before a decision is made.

Ensure that the decision maker is independent of the decision being reviewed (e.g. an assessor should not consider or decide an appeal against an assessment decision they made).

If the person making the complaint or appeal is not happy with the outcome, make arrangements for an independent third party to review the complaint or appeal. Disclose any costs associated with a third party review in our policy, so all parties are aware of any costs they may need to pay. Note that ASQA is not able to act as the independent third party for reviewing complaints.

Deal with complaints and appeals promptly. Identify the timeframes that will apply to resolution of complaints and appeals, so that complainants know how long it should take to get a response from your RTO at all stages of the process. This will minimise the chance of complainants referring their complaint to ASQA, which can incur additional costs to our RTO. If a complaint or appeal (including any review process) will take more than 60 days to finalise, write to the people involved explaining the delay.

Record all complaints and appeals received, and document outcomes. Use this information to review your RTO’s processes and practices to ensure the issue doesn’t happen again.

Procedure

Informal process

Where possible all non-formal attempts shall be made to resolve the complaint. This may include advice, discussions, and general mediation in relation to the issue. Any staff can be involved in this informal process to resolve issues but once a student has placed a formal complaint / appeal the following procedures must be followed.

General Complaints

- Any student, potential student, or third party may submit a formal complaint to Equitation Science International with the reasonable expectation that all complaints will be treated with integrity and privacy. There is no cost for the complaints process unless it is referred to a third party.
- A student wishing to submit a formal complaint or appeal can do so by completing the 'Complaints or Appeals Form' and state their case providing as many details as possible. This application form can be gained by contacting Student Administration at Equitation Science International.
Refer: VCID.SMS.05 – Complaints or Appeals Form
- Equitation Science International will maintain a fair and equitable complaints and appeals process in response to allegations involving:
 - The RTO
 - It's Trainers, assessors and other staff
 - A third party providing services on behalf of the RTO, its trainers or assessor or other staff
 - A participant (learner) of the RTO
- All formally submitted complaints or appeals are submitted to the Business Manager. It is their responsibility to deal with the complaint in the first instance. Complaints are to include the following information:
 - Submission date of complaint
 - Name of complainant;
 - Nature of complaint;
 - Date of the event which lead to the complaint
 - Attachments (if applicable);
- Once a formal complaint is received it is to be entered into the 'Complaints Log Register' which is monitored by the Business Manager regularly. The information to be contained and updated within the register is as follows:
 - Submission date of complaint
 - Name of complainant;
 - Description of complaint / appeal
 - Determined Resolution; and
 - Date of Resolution.
- A student may be assisted or accompanied by a support person regardless of the nature of the complaint throughout the process at all times. Students are able to present their case in person.
- Once a complaint has been filed and logged in the 'Complaints Log Register' the Business Manager shall notify the Director/Compliance of the complaint and provide any further documentation related to the matter.

Refer: VCID.QMSR.09 – Complaints Log Register

- The Director/Compliance shall then refer the matter to the appropriate staff to resolve, or make a decision on the complaint within 10 working days and keep the complainant informed of any decisions or outcomes concluded, or processes in place to deal with the complaint.
- Once a decision has been reached the Director/Compliance shall be required to inform all parties involved of any decisions or outcomes that are concluded in writing. Within the notification of the outcome of the formal complaint the students shall also be notified that they have the right of appeal. To appeal a decision the RTO must receive, in writing, grounds of the appeal. Students are referred to the appeals procedure.
- The Director/Compliance shall ensure that the RTO will act immediately on any substantiated complaint. If the internal or any external complaint handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the student, the registered provider must immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action that is required, and advise the student of the outcome.
- Copies of all documentation, outcomes and further action required will be placed into the 'Complaints Register' by the Compliance Officer and a copy sent to the Director/Business Manager to place on the students file.
- ESI will ensure that it follows the principles of fairness and natural justice in dealing with all complaints.
- The Complaints and Appeals Log Register will be monitored via the Management Meetings held every month.
- Where the Business Manager considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal the RTO will:
 - Inform the complainant or appellant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 days are required and;
 - Regularly update the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.
- All Complaints and Appeals will be securely stored within a locked filing cabinet, or electronically protected as per the Records Management Policy and Procedure.

*Refer to: VCID.QMS.16 – Complaints and Appeals Verification Report
Policy & Procedure 2.1 Records Management*

Appealing a Decision

All students have the right to appeal decisions made by Equitation Science International where reasonable grounds can be established. The areas in which a student may appeal a decision made by Equitation Science International may include:

- Assessments conducted
- Deferral, suspension, or cancellation decisions made in relation to the student's enrolment
- Or any other conclusion / decision that is made after a complaint has been dealt with by Equitation Science International in the first instance.
- To activate the appeals process the student is to complete a 'Complaints or Appeals Form' which is to include a summary of the grounds the appeal is based upon. The reason the student feels the decision is unfair is to be clearly explained and help and support with this process can be gained from student administrations department.
- The Business Manager shall then determine the validity of the appeal and organise a meeting with all parties involved in the matter and attempt to seek resolution where appropriate.
- The process for all formally lodged appeals will begin within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.

- The Business Manager shall ensure that Equitation Science International acts on any substantiated appeal.
- Where an appeal has been lodged it will be defined into one of the following categories and the appropriate procedures followed.

General appeals

- Where a student has appealed a decision or outcome of a formal complaint they are required to notify Equitation Science International in writing within 20 working days of the grounds of their appeal. Any supporting documentation should also be attached to the appeal.
- The appeal shall be lodged through student administrations and the student administration manager shall ensure the details of the appeal are added to the 'Complaints Log Register'.
- The Business Manager shall be notified and shall seek details regarding the initial documentation of the complaint and shall make a decision based on the grounds of the appeal
- The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome with reasons for the decisions, and the 'Complaints Log Register' updated. The student shall also be provided the option of activating the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The student is required to notify Equitation Science International if they wish to proceed with the external appeals process.

Assessment appeals

- Where a student wishes to appeal an assessment they are required to notify their assessor in the first instance. Where appropriate the assessor may decide to re-assess the student to ensure a fair and equitable decision is gained. The assessor shall complete a written report regarding the re-assessment outlining the reasons why assessment was or was not granted.
- If this is still not to the student's satisfaction the student shall formally lodge an appeal by submitting a written letter outlining their reasons for the appeal. They shall lodge this with student administrations department and the appeal shall be entered into the 'Complaints Log Register'.
- The Business Manager shall be notified and shall seek details from the assessor involved and any other relevant parties. A decision shall be made regarding the appeal either indicating the assessment decision stands or details of a possible re-assessment by a 'third party'. The third party shall be another assessor appointed by Equitation Science International.
- The student shall be notified in writing of the outcome with reasons for the decision, and the 'Complaints Log Register' updated. The student shall also be provided the option of activating the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The student is required to notify Equitation Science International if they wish to proceed with the external appeals process.

External Appeals

- If a student is still dissatisfied with the decision of Equitation Science International, a student may wish to refer the matter to an external independent / third party mediator.
 - Equitation Science International acknowledges the need for an appropriate independent party to be appointed to review a matter where this is requested by the complainant and the internal processes have failed to resolve the matter.
 - The independent party recommended is Melbourne Commercial Arbitration and Mediation Centre.

Appeals can relate to assessment decisions but they can also relate to other decisions, such as a decision to exclude a learner from a program. Clients should be encouraged to resolve complaints and appeals through your complaint mechanisms. If they are not satisfied with the outcomes of these processes they should be referred to the National Training Complaints Hotline.

Where a decision or outcome is in favour of the student the RTO shall follow the required action and recommendation from the third party mediator to satisfy the student's appeal as soon as practicable.

National Registering Body – Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

Important information about ASQA’s complaint-handling role:

Before you submit a complaint to ASQA, please be aware that:

- ASQA takes a risk-assessment approach to complaints—their resources are limited so must focus on the most serious complaints.
- ASQA’s role is not to act as a student advocate for individual students. Rather, ASQA uses the information reported through complaints to inform how it regulates training providers.
- ASQA has specific confidentiality obligations in relation to registered providers. ASQA respects both privacy and natural justice considerations in handling complaints. This means that complainants will be advised how their information was used in the regulatory process although in some instances the advice will not be detailed and the process can be lengthy if audit activity is involved.

As per ASQA’s website

National Training Complaints Hotline

Anyone with a complaint or query about the VET training sector can call the National Training Hotline. The hotline directs complaints to the appropriate Commonwealth, state or territory organisation for help. The hotline also allows the Department of Education and Training to analyse complaint trends in order to quickly identify what further action and improvements are needed.

The National Training Complaints Hotline is accessible on 13 38 73 and is available Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm.

You can also send complaints via email to skilling@education.gov.au.