



Appeals Handling Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

Relevant standard: Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, Clause 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6.

UQ Skills is committed to providing a fair and transparent appeals handling process.

2. Principles and Key Requirements

What is an Appeal?

An appeal is an application by a student for reconsideration of an unfavourable decision or finding during their time with UQ Skills. An appeal must be made in writing and specify the particulars of the decision or finding in dispute. Appeals must be lodged within twenty-eight (28) working days of the decision or finding being informed to the student.

It is important to note that a student may appeal any decision made by UQ Skills or a third-party providing services on UQ Skills's behalf. Contrary to the popular belief that appeal relates only to assessment decisions, appeals can relate to administrative decisions that UQ Skills may make. Examples of this include an appeal of a decision to deny a refund or to deny an application for credit transfer. As the process for handling assessment appeal compared with an appeal of an administrative decision is slightly different, this difference has been catered for within this policy with adjusted processes for both situations.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to and may involve issues concerning the conduct of:

- UQ Skills as an organisation, it's trainers, assessors or other staff;
- Third party services provided on behalf of UQ Skills, its trainers, assessors or other staff; or
- A student of UQ Skills

Throughout this policy we refer to the person making an appeal as simply the appellant.

Early Resolution of Appeals

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 the student's decision to make an appeal can be avoided by proper communication and consultation with students at the time a decision is made.



Relationship to Continuous Improvement

Frequently, the appeals 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 appeals handling is very positive and should be actively applied by all persons involved. It is for this reason that appeals received from stakeholders should be seen in a positive light and as opportunities for improvement.

Making an Appeal

An appeal may be received by UQ Skills in writing using the specified form within twenty-eight (28) working days of the decision or finding being informed to the person.

To appeal a decision, the person is required to complete the UQ Skills – Request for an Appeal of a Decision form. This form is available via our website. The completed Request for an Appeal form is to be submitted to the Student Services Manager either in hard copy or electronically via the following contact details:

UQ Skills
Building 8101a
5391 Warrego Highway
Gatton College QLD 4345
uqskills-complaints@uq.edu.au

If a person seeking an appeal has any difficulty assessing the required form or submitting the appeal to UQ Skills, they are advised to contact UQ Skills immediately at the following phone number:
(07) 5460 1353

A written record of all appeals is to be kept by UQ Skills including all details of lodgement, response and resolution. The appeals register within the student management system is to be used to record the details of the appeal and to maintain a chronological journal of events during the appeal handling process. Records relating to appeal handling must be stored securely to prevent access to unauthorised personnel.

The appeal is referred to the CEO; whereby the CEO reviews the appeal and determines if re-assessment, investigation or consultation is required; or if the matter can be solved internally. Appeals are to be handled in the strictest of confidence. No UQ Skills representative is to disclose information to any person without the permission of UQ Skills CEO. A decision to release information to third parties can only be made after the appellant has given permission for this to occur. This permission should be given using the Information Release Form.

Communicating the Appeals Handling Policy and Procedure

The appeals handling policy and procedure must be:

- Publicly available on the UQ Skills Website
- Integrated into the UQ Skills Student Handbook



- Included in the UQ Skills Policy and Procedure Handbook

Appeals Handling Timeframe

- Written acknowledgement by UQ Skills **no later than 48 hours** from the time the appeal is received. This acknowledgement is intended to provide the appellant assurance that UQ Skills has received the appeal 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.
- The handling of an appeal is to commence within **seven (7) working days** of the lodgement of the appeal and all reasonable measures are taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.
- A written response must be provided to the appellant within **fourteen (14) working days** of the lodgement of the appeal, including details of the reasons for the outcome.
- Where an appellant is not satisfied with the handling of the appeal by UQ Skills, a body or person from an independent third party can be requested to review the appeal. The third-party is required to respond to with their recommendations within **fourteen (14) working days** of their review being request.
- Appeals must be lodged within **twenty-eight (28) working days** of the decision or finding being informed to the person. An appeal must be submitted using the UQ Skills – Request for an Appeal of a Decision form.
- As a benchmark, UQ Skills should attempt to resolve appeals as soon as possible. A timeframe to resolve an appeal within **thirty (30) calendar days** is considered acceptable and in the best interest of UQ Skills and the appellant.
- An appellant should also be provided with regular updates to inform them of the process of the appeal handling. Updates should be provided to the appellant at a minimum of **two (2) weekly intervals**.
- Appeals must be resolved to a final outcome within **sixty (60) calendar days** of the appeal being initially received. Where UQ Skills Chief Executive Officer considers that more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the appeal, the CEO must inform the appellant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required.

Principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

An appellant is to be provided an opportunity to formally present his or her case at no cost. Each appellant may be accompanied and/or assisted by a support person at any relevant meeting. The principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness must be incorporated into every stage of the appeals handling process to ensure that decision-making is fair and reasonable. Natural justice must be observed when it affects the rights, interests or legitimate expectations of individuals. The following principles are to be applied:



- **CEO bias.** Where the Chief Executive Officer of UQ Skills feels that they may have bias or there is a perception of bias process or where the person making the appellant is not satisfied with how the matter has been handled, the appellant is to be referred directly to an independent third-party for consideration and response. This means that the appellant is entitled to have their appeal heard by a person that is without bias and may not be affected by the decision. The decision must be made on logical evidence and the decision-maker must take account of relevant considerations, must act for a proper purpose and must not take into account irrelevant considerations.
- **Third Party Review.** Where the appellant is not satisfied with the handling of the matter by UQ Skills, they have the opportunity for a body or person that is independent of UQ Skills to review his or her appeal following the internal completion of the appeal handling process. Before a person seeks a review by an independent third party, they are requested to first allow UQ Skills to fully consider the nature of the appeal 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 appellant should inform the Student Services Manager of their request who will initiate the process with the Chief Executive Officer.

In these circumstances, the UQ Skills Chief Executive Officer will advise of an appropriate party independent of UQ Skills to review the appeal outcome (and its subsequent handling) and provide advice to UQ Skills in regards 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 UQ Skills as final, advised to the person making an appeal in writing and implemented without prejudice.

Unresolved Appeals

Once the appeals handling process has concluded; where the person seeking an appeal of a decision remains not satisfied with the outcome of the appeals 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 appeal. 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, the person may refer their matter to the **Office of Fair Trading**.
- In relation to the delivery of training and assessment services, the person may refer their matter to the **National Training Complaints Hotline** via the following phone number: 13 38 73 or visit the website at dewr.gov.au/national-training-complaints-hotline.
- In relation to matters relating to privacy, the person may refer their matter to the **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner** via the following details: oaic.gov.au/individuals/how-do-i-make-a-privacy-complaint or call on 1300 363 992.

This guidance is also communicated to students within the Student Handbook and also within the publicly available policies and procedures on UQ Skills website. It is expected that the above agencies will investigate the persons concerns and contact the UQ Skills for information. External agencies will

typically request a copy of any record of how the appeal was handled from the person. UQ Skills is to ensure that the person is provided with a written response that they may use for this purpose. UQ Skills is to cooperate fully with agencies such as the National Training Complaints Service, the Office of Fair Trading or ASQA that may investigate the handling of an appeal. UQ Skills considers that it would be extremely unlikely that an appeal is not able to be resolved quickly within UQ Skills internal arrangements.

Record Management of Appeals Records

Records relating to appeals 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 appellant or generated by UQ Skills. There is also a record of the appeal maintained within the UQ Skills student management system. This includes the details about the appeal and a diary log which records the progress of the appeal handling and closure. This record also records identified opportunities for improvement that result from appeals handling.

All records regardless of their format will be saved in a digital format into a secure folder located on the UQ Skills 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 Chief Executive Officer. Records stored on the student 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.

Period of retention of Appeals Records

UQ Skills is to retain records relating to appeals handling for a minimum of five (5) years.

Destruction of Appeals Records

UQ Skills CEO is the only person who can authorise (in writing) the destruction of appeals handling records. Records are only to be authorised for destruction after the retention period has lapsed. Documents identified for destruction are to be shredded before being recycled.



3. Meta Data for Document Management

Approval Authority	UQ Skills Leadership Committee
Last Approval Date	23 rd of September 2022
Next Review Date	23 rd of September 2025
Audience / Users	All Educational Staff and Management and Students
Notes	