ACADEMIC AND NON ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Empower Institute (“EI”) is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system which is easily accessible to all complainants.

EI aims to:

- Develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works
- Set in place a grievance handling system that is client focussed and helps EI to prevent grievances from recurring
- Ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively and with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality
- Ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against nor victimised
- Ensure that there is a consistent response to grievances

2. PURPOSE

A grievance can be defined as a person’s expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of EI’s services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters, such as:

- The enrolment, induction/orientation process
- The quality of education provided
- Academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study
- Handling of personal information and access to personal records
- The way someone has been treated

These grievance procedures are designed to ensure that EI responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

This policy is designed to cover all complainants including:

- Individuals who are, or would be, entitled to Vet Fee-Help assistance (Australian citizens or permanent humanitarian visa holders who are resident in Australia for the duration of a VET unit of study)
- Individuals who are not eligible for Vet Fee-Help assistance (permanent residents who are not permanent humanitarian visa holders and New Zealand citizens)

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term “complainant” applies to both current students of EI and persons seeking to enrol with EI. These grievance procedures will be
made available to complainants regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the mode in which they study or their place of residence.

3. **PROCEDURE**

*Before an issue becomes a formal grievance:* Complainants are encouraged wherever possible to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. There are staff available to assist the resolution of issues at this level. Complainants may raise an informal grievance by contacting EI in person or by phoning 1800 367 393 and asking to speak with staff.

This procedure can be utilised by complainants to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a VET course of study. Grievances of a non academic nature cover all other matters including grievances in relation to personal information that EI holds in relation to an individual.

During all stages of this procedure EI will take all steps to ensure that:

- The complainant or respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against
- The complainant has an opportunity to formally present their case, and, each party to the grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings
- A full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided if so requested by the complainant or a respondent
- Where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, EI will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome
- There is no cost to the complainant to utilise this grievance procedure

3.1 Formal Grievances (Academic and Non Academic)

All formal grievances must be submitted in writing marked to the attention of the Academic Manager as follows:

**Academic Manager**  
Empower Institute  
Level 8, 815 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged in writing. The grievance handling process will commence within ten working days of the receipt of the formal grievance and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable. The Academic Manager, or their nominee, will then, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve.
Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request or by a face-to-face interview with the complainant. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview the complainant or respondent may ask another person to accompany them.

The Academic Manager, or their nominee, will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and will provide a written report to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within ten working days. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the internal appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance.

3.2 Internal Appeal

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance they may lodge an appeal with the Director (who is senior to the original decision maker) within 20 working days of receiving notification of the outcome of their formal grievance. The Director will appoint an appropriate person or committee to consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within ten working days.

Where possible such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to these interviews.

Following the consultation, the Director or their nominee will provide a written report to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, within ten working days. The report will further advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.

3.3 External Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may lodge an external appeal to ASQA within 20 working days of receiving notice of the outcome of their appeal, by completing the on-line complaint form.

The ASQA on-line complaint form can be accessed at the following address:


Once an application is made, ASQA will advise EI of the external review application made by the complainant. Both the complainant and EI will be requested to provide documents in support of the application within 14 days, including student files and records, to ASQA.

ASQA considers the documents and makes a determination. The decision and determination is forwarded to EI. EI will then send the decision to all parties.

EI agrees to be bound by the ASQA’s recommendations and the Director will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report from ASQA.
4. **FURTHER ACTION**

If a grievance still remains unresolved after the external appeal, the complainant may decide to refer the matter to the National Training Complaints Hotline on 13 38 73.

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law.

Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under Australia’s Consumer Protection laws. Also, these procedures do not override an individual’s rights to pursue other legal remedies.

5. **ENROLMENT STATUS**

Where a current student chooses to access this policy and procedure, EI will maintain that person’s enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

6. **RECORD KEEPING & CONFIDENTIALITY**

An electronic record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the Academic Manager. These records will be maintained at Level 8, 815 George Street Sydney NSW 2000.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by EI’s Privacy and Personal Information Procedures.

7. **PUBLICATION**

This Academic and Non Academic grievance handling Policy will be made available to students and persons seeking to enrol with EI through the Student Handbook and publication on the EI website [http://www.empower.edu.au/policy-and-procedure/](http://www.empower.edu.au/policy-and-procedure/).