

SYDNEY FILM SCHOOL

## Grievance Resolution

### *Introduction*

The Sydney Film School aims to provide an amenable and pleasant environment in which to work. As a part of this aim, the School takes the resolution of any student issues seriously.

The School approaches student grievance resolution processes according to the following guiding principles:

- the resolution of student grievances will be handled informally where possible;
- student grievances will be addressed as close as possible to the source of student dissatisfaction;
- grievances will be resolved expeditiously and with due regard for confidentiality as endorsed in the School's Privacy Policy;
- Students should feel secure in the knowledge that they will not suffer any form of disadvantage as a result of making a complaint;
- student grievance processes will promote the principles of natural justice and students will be treated equitably;
- grievances will be regarded by staff as valuable input to the continuous improvement of programs, policies, procedures and services, and monitored and acted upon accordingly; and
- grievance procedures and the support available to students will be widely publicised to facilitate access to the grievance resolution process.

### *What is a Student Grievance/Complaint?*

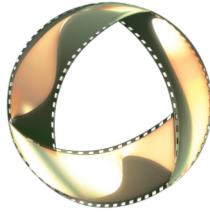
A Student grievance/complaint may flow from any aspect of a student's educational experience at the School, which they believe to be unfair, unjust or unreasonable. For example, grievances may arise out of academic decision-making in a course or program or the administration of enrolment in a course or program.

In the sphere of education, grievances/complaints may arise between Students and Staff in a number of areas including academic, administrative, cultural and social. The sensitivity required to resolve such grievances might be heightened by the imbalance of power present in the relationship between staff and students.

### *Types of Student Grievance/Complaint*

There are two fundamental types of student grievance/complaint. They are:

1. Behaviour which is not illegal, such as interpersonal conflict, inappropriate behaviour, or the inconsistent application of policy and procedures;
2. Unlawful behaviour, which includes discrimination, vilification or harassment on grounds prohibited by anti-discrimination legislation, corruption or maladministration.



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Academic failure does not, in itself, constitute a grievance/complaint.

Academic failure will only be considered as a grievance/complaint issue if it is the direct and demonstrable result of interpersonal conflict, a prejudicial relationship, inconsistent application of policy or unlawful behaviour.

#### Principles for Handling a Student Grievance/Complaint

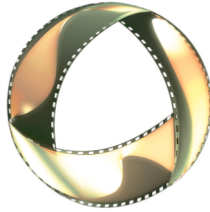
- All students are entitled to equal access to grievance procedures.
- The existence of the Student Grievance/Complaint Procedure does not remove the School's obligation to take all reasonable steps to identify and address practices which may lead to a grievance.
- The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness apply to the resolution of grievances/complaints and the grievance/complaint process.
- Parties are encouraged to resolve grievances/complaints at their source or at the lowest level of management/intervention necessary. If possible, self-resolution of grievances/complaints is generally the best option.
- Confidentiality will be respected.
- The preferred way in which the student raising the grievance/complaint wishes to resolve it will be taken into account.
- Students raising a grievance are responsible for participating in the process in good faith.
- The School has a responsibility to protect a student who raises a grievance/complaint in good faith from detrimental action, including victimization or unfair treatment.
- Grievances/complaints will be dealt with promptly, and commence within 10 working days of formal lodgement of the grievance/complaint.
- The student will receive written confirmation of grievance/complaint outcomes which will include all details and reasons for the outcome.

The Grievance/Complaint Process is aimed at producing an on-going, constructive response to Student needs; the emphasis is on positive outcomes and a focus on the future, while ensuring that the principles of natural justice are recognised. There should exist willingness from both parties to be heard, to examine the issue and reach a pleasant resolution. Suggestions will be attended to with a minimum of delay, with confidentiality, and viewed impartially.

#### **Procedure**

Student grievance resolution processes seek to facilitate the informal resolution of grievances as close as possible to the source of student dissatisfaction.

However, there will be instances when a student will formally appeal a decision, or a grievance needs to go to a higher authority for resolution. In the event that a Student feels their concerns have not been adequately addressed, they may request an independent adviser. The Sydney Film School is a member of ACPET (Australian Council for Private Education and Training). The Student will be referred to expert mediators at the ACPET State Office in Sydney, where the appeal can be heard by an independent person or panel. All costs associated will be the Student's sole responsibility.



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A student's initial communication with the School may be directed to any member of staff at any level. For example, rather than consulting the relevant lecturer about an assessment issue, a student may contact another staff member.

When this occurs, the staff member will use their discretion in relation to dealing personally with the grievance, or redirecting it to the staff member who might more appropriately and effectively deal with the matter.

The School encourages students to seek advice on grievance mechanisms from School staff. Staff can provide students with documentation attesting to circumstances that should be taken into account by the School.

Where students initiate meetings to resolve grievances informally with School staff, or are invited to attend meetings for this purpose, students may request the presence of an impartial person to attend with them. The role played by this person should be as a neutral witness to the discussion.

## **1. Assessment Appeal**

Academic failure does not, in itself, constitute a grievance/complaint.

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Any Student dissatisfied with an adverse academic assessment decision should be able to apply to have the decision reconsidered and, if appropriate, reviewed.

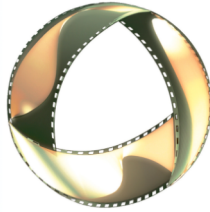
### *Assessment Appeals Procedure*

Students should first seek advice; often resolutions of a personal nature are achievable. If you then find you need further assistance to reach a resolution, lodge the Grievance/Complaint Form.

If there is any doubt that the matter has been dealt with fairly, the matter can then be presented before an independent party outside the Sydney Film School.

If a student wishes to make an appeal against a course result, the procedure is as follows:

- Students should consult their teacher first to ascertain the reason for the result. If this outcome is unsatisfactory, students should follow the procedure below.
- Write a formal appeal addressed to the Head of Studies, mentioning the task result you wish to appeal and the tutor.
- Speak to the Head of Studies in person at the time you hand in your written appeal.



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- The Head of Studies will then approach the tutor with the written appeal to discuss your case and ask for a written response from the tutor.
- The Head of Studies will, in consultation with the Operations Manager, weigh up both considerations and inform the student in writing of a decision.

If an appeal is successful the student must undertake the assessment task again, with no additional fee.

## 2. Complaints

Complaints are dealt with in the following fashion:

- A complaint is received and registered by the person to whom the complaint is directed.
- The Head of Studies and / or Sydney Film School CEO is informed of the complaint.
- The receipt of the complaint is acknowledged by Sydney Film School staff either verbally (or in writing) and the acknowledgment is noted.
- The nature of the complaint is evaluated (eg. Is the complaint about content, teaching, physical conditions of the learning environment? etc.)
- The Sydney Film School CEO, Operations Manager or Head of Studies discusses it with the relevant member of staff.

If the nature of the complaint is corroborated by the tutor (eg. If the tutor has diverged from the prescribed course content), then steps are taken to ensure that the nature of the complaint is remedied (eg. the content is covered).

If the tutor does not believe that the complaint is justified then the following steps are taken;

- Sydney Film School approaches other students in the class to see if they corroborate the point of view of the original person making the complaint.
- In the event that the complaint relates to teaching or conditions, further investigation takes place to determine if these have deviated from the standard required. This may involve a senior member of staff sitting in on a class to look at teaching practices.
- The Sydney Film School CEO, Operations Manager and/or Head of Studies then determine an appropriate resolution for the complaint. That resolution must conform to appropriate VETAB standards. It may involve the refund of fees if the participant feels that he / she has not received what they paid for. It may result in a change of venue if the venue is not appropriate or of a high enough quality. It may result in further work with the teacher. Should a student feel that their complaint has not been dealt with in an appropriate manner, and disputes the outcome, they should contact VETAB. This government body has the authority to audit any Registered Training Organisation.
- In the event that the complaint relates to teaching or conditions, further investigation takes place to determine if these have deviated from the standard required. This may involve a senior member of staff sitting in on a class to look at teaching practices.