Student Grievance Policy

Commencement Date
1 June 2014

1.0 Purpose
This policy provides a framework for ensuring that student complaints are handled fairly, equitably and in a timely manner, and that is easily accessible to students.

2.0 Scope
This policy applies to all members of the Guild’s higher education community.

3.0 Objectives
The AGME Grievance Procedures are guided by the principles of equity and transparency and students are encouraged to provide feedback on the delivery of training provided by AGME. AGME provides appropriate appeal processes for students who wish to make an appeal against decisions made by AGME. Facilities and resources are available to assist students with grievance/appeal issues.

In both academic and non-academic matters, the complainant and respondent will not be victimized or discriminated against in any of the stages set out in this policy. There are separate procedures for academic and non-academic grievances.

AGME aims to create an environment where complaints are client focused and viewed as an opportunity for improvement.

4.0 Implementation
This policy is communicated to academic staff through the Staff Procedures book. The Dean, Dr Knoop is responsible for the training of academic staff in the application of the policy. The CEO, Bernadette Norton is responsible for the training of support staff in its application.

Students of AGME, or those seeking to enrol in a course of study with AGME, are entitled to access the complaints and appeals procedures set out in this policy, regardless of the location of the campus of AGME at which the grievance has arisen, the student’s place of residence or the mode in which they study.

The complainant and/or respondent have the right to be represented by a third party representative (such as a family member, friend, counsellor or other professional support person) if they so desire for all types of complaints and at all stages during the process.

The Guild will document and implement this policy for dealing with student complaints, grievances and appeals in a constructive and timely manner. The Guild will maintain a register of all complaints/grievances, including any verbal complaints.

Final internal decisions are made by the Academic Board for academic grievances and by the Committee of Management for non-academic grievances.
A student may decide to appeal a decision at any stage of the process if they are not satisfied with the outcome. A number of reasons may be valid grounds for appealing an outcome such as:

- A belief that an irregularity in the procedures has occurred.
- New evidence and facts have emerged that could change the decision.
- The penalty imposed or decision reached could be considered unreasonable.

Typical reasons for a complaint may include the following:

- A student impacted (or perceived to be) in the inappropriate, irregular or incorrect application of AGME policies and procedures.
- A student impacted by bias, prejudice or perceived unfair treatment.
- A penalty that seems excessively harsh being applied to a student.
- A student impacted by negligent, unusual or inappropriate conduct by a person involved.
- A student impacted by a decision which didn't take all the facts and issues into account.

**Academic Grievances/Complaints**

The Guild will ensure that student/s receive accurate information about:

- all information relating to the course
- information about Guild staff
- personal information that the provider holds in relation to the student.
- specific units including assessment procedures and tasks which must be completed successfully for the course to be awarded.
- other academic and administrative information such as policies, fees, resources and supports.

All students will be given reasonable and fair timeframes regarding information on changes in the advertised times, venues, tutors and course content, competencies and assessment procedures. The Guild likes to add a personal touch to their business dealings with students, and therefore students are advised that they may make informal complaints (verbal) at any time. Or if they consider that a verbal complaint will not be enough to resolve any complaint/grievance, they should put their complaint in writing on the Grievance/Complaint form.

**Informal Procedure**

For complaints of an academic nature, the student may speak to the affected lecturer in the first instance. This may, for example, be a query regarding an assessment mark or other matters. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, they may lodge formal complaint following the Formal Procedure outlined below.

**Non Academic Grievances**

The timelines and stages for a non-academic grievance process are the same as for academic grievances, other than that appeals are made to the Committee of Management rather than the Academic Board.

**Informal Procedure**

For complaints of a non-academic nature, the student may speak to the person in the first instance, or speak to the person's supervisor. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, they may lodge formal complaint following the Formal Procedure outlined below.
Formal Procedure for all Complaints

If a student feels the statements have not been achieved or has another reason for a grievance, he/she may lodge a formal complaint.

Step 1.
The student should fill out a Grievance/Complaint Form, available from the office or the web site.

Step 2.
For academic grievances, The Dean, Dr Knoop or his nominated delegate will contact the complainant to arrange an interview within 7 working days to discuss the specific nature and circumstances of the grievance/complaint. For non-academic grievances, the CEO, Bernadette Norton is the nominated person. The outcome should exhibit flexibility and respect for the individuals involved and organisational integrity. The details will be documented. Students that have enrolled in a course via distance education and cannot attend will be contacted via phone. Interviews will be documented and the outcomes forwarded to the student by post or email within 10 working days.

Step 3.
If the grievance cannot be resolved at Step 2, or if the complainant wishes to appeal the outcome, the complainant has the option to request a meeting with the Academic Board (within 14 days of receiving the Dean’s decision). The complainant will have the opportunity to formally present their case to delegates of the Academic Board and will be given a written statement of the outcome within 14 days of the hearing, including reasons for the decision.

For non-academic grievances, the appeal request should be made to the Committee of Management.

Step 4.
If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome from the Academic Board or Committee of Management, the complainant may lodge an external appeal for the matter to be referred to Mr Jack Sullivan (former deputy Dean of the Melbourne University Economics department), the independent external review officer, or the student may take the matter to the Ombudsman.

Step 5.
Mr Jack Sullivan, the external reviews officer, makes recommendations in relation to a grievance he has reviewed, and forwards those recommendations to Dr Knoop, the Guild Dean, within 30 days. The Guild will ensure that the recommendations are implemented within 30 days, and that the outcome is forwarded to the student.

External Appeal Contact Details
- Mr Jack Sullivan, on phone (03) 9740 8315 or mail, 34 Long Drive, Sunbury VIC 3429
- Ombudsman Victoria, Level 9 North Tower 459 Collins Street, Melbourne
  - Tel. 9613 6222, toll free 1800 806 314 (Regional)
  - Reception 9am – 5pm (Mon – Fri)
  - Email: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au

The Ombudsman is an independent and impartial officer.
**Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

At all stages of the process, reasons and a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the procedures will be given, if so requested by the complainant and/or respondent.

Records of all grievances and applications for review of decisions will be kept and be accessible to all interested parties for a period of 5 years. Records of grievances and their outcomes will be kept strictly confidential and filed in a separate file (not kept on the student or staff file), and stored in the office of the Dean, Dr Knoop. Parties to the complaint will be allowed supervised access to their records.

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

All records will be maintained in accordance with AGME’s Information Privacy Policy.

### 5.0 Definitions

**Appeal** - an application made by a student to have a decision reviewed where that decision relates to a matter affecting his or her studies or life as a student.

**Complainant** - the student who has lodged a grievance.

**Grievance** - a problem or concern raised by a student about something affecting his or her studies or life as a student, for which the student is seeking resolution. The term complaint is often used interchangeably with grievance.

**Representative** - another member of staff, a union representative, or another person to provide support, provided that the representative is not a currently practicing solicitor or barrister.

**Respondent(s)** - one or more persons who are alleged to have caused the student’s grievance.

### 6.0 Related policies and procedures

The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:
- Assessment, Moderation, Progression and Misconduct Policy
- Information and Privacy Policy
- Student Support Policy

### 7.0 Review

Three years from commencement.

### 8.0 Accountabilities

The Academic Board is responsible for review and approval of this policy.
The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and the Guild’s community via the website and other publications.

9.0 Revision History

Date Created: 9 May 2014

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<th>Approval Authority</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
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<td>Chair</td>
<td>31/5/2017</td>
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<td>Added further detail for objectives; implementation; definitions; clarified the procedure and defined academic and non-academic grievance steps; transferred to AGME Policy template.</td>
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<td>31/5/2017</td>
<td>16/5/14</td>
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