National Institute of Construction Skills

Complaints & Appeals Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all complaints and appeals are managed fairly, promptly, transparently, and without disadvantage to students, apprentices, trainees, employers, staff, or other stakeholders.

This policy supports NICS' commitment to:

- Natural justice and procedural fairness
- Student wellbeing and support
- Continuous improvement
- Child-safe and student-centred processes that prioritise student safety, wellbeing, and best interests, consistent with child-safe standards
- Accessibility
- Transparency and accountability
- Compliance with the 2025 RTO Standards, CSQ funding conditions, and User Choice funding requirements

NICS recognises that complaints and appeals provide valuable opportunities to improve training quality, student experience, and organisational practices.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All NICS students, including apprentices and trainees
- Parents, carers, and guardians
- Employers and host employers
- Trainers, assessors, staff, contractors, and third parties
- Complaints or appeals relating to:
    - Training and assessment
    - Assessment outcomes
    - Funding eligibility or administration (CSQ, User Choice, C3G)
    - Fees, refunds, or financial matters
    - Student conduct or staff conduct
    - Workplace training or support services
    - Administrative or procedural decisions

Policy Statement

NICS is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment where students and stakeholders feel confident to raise concerns without fear of victimisation or reprisal.

All complaints and appeals will:

- Be handled confidentially and objectively
- Be assessed by persons independent of the issue where possible

- Be resolved as quickly as practicable
- Be documented and reviewed as part of NICS' continuous improvement system

Students will not be disadvantaged, delayed, or penalised for lodging a complaint or appeal, or having someone else lodge one on their behalf.

A complaint may be made by a student, parent/ carer/ guardian, or anyone else. Parents / carers / guardians can also lodge a complaint on behalf of a child or young person.

Definitions

- Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction about an organisation related to one or more of the following:
  - Its services or dealings with individuals
  - allegations of the conduct of its staff, contractors, volunteers, or other individuals engaged by the organisation.
  - Another child or young person at the organisation, or
  - The handling of a prior concern

  NICS recognises there are two types of complaints:
  - Type 1 - Allegations of inappropriate behaviour and or child protection. These are handled according to NICS_01_061 Reporting Harm Policy (Child Safety).
  - Type 2 – All other complaints (handled according to the below procedure)
- Appeal: A request for a review of a decision, usually relating to assessment outcomes or formal determinations.
- Natural Justice: Fair hearing, unbiased decision-making, and the right to respond.

Complaints Procedure

Students / complainants have the right to a support person (e.g. friend, advocate, community Elder, interpreter, or independent person support) when making a complaint.

Informal Resolution

NICS encourages early and informal resolution where possible.

- Students / complainants should first raise concerns with their Trainer, Assessor, or NICS staff member

  Many issues can be resolved quickly through respectful discussion
- If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the student / complainant may proceed to a formal complaint

Formal Complaints

Formal complaints must:

- Be submitted in writing using the NICS Complaints Form. This can be done with help of a support person (e.g. friend, advocate, community Elder, interpreter, independent person, or NICS worker – where appropriate)

  Clearly outline the nature of the complaint and desired outcome

Upon receipt:

- NICS will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 business days
- The complaint will be reviewed by a senior staff member independent of the matter
- All parties will be given the opportunity to present their version of events
- A written outcome will be provided within 10 business days, where practicable

All formal complaints are recorded in the Complaints Register.

Complaints can be made anonymously. However, we may find it difficult to thoroughly assess or respond to the complaint if the student / complainant can't be contacted to obtain information.

Appeals Procedure

Assessment Appeals

If a student wishes to appeal an assessment decision:

1. The student must first discuss the outcome with the Trainer/Assessor
2. The assessment may be reviewed or re-assessed if appropriate
3. If unresolved, a formal appeal may be lodged in writing within 5 business days

Formal Appeals Review

- Appeals are reviewed by a qualified and independent assessor or panel
- Students may bring a support person
- Decisions are evidence-based and aligned with:
    - Principles of Assessment
    - Rules of Evidence
    - Training Package requirements

A written outcome will be provided, including reasons for the decision.

Time Frames

Stage	Timeframe
Acknowledgement of complaint/appeal	Within five (5) business days
Investigation and response	Commencement of investigation within ten (10) business days
Extended matters	Student/ Complainant notified in writing if more than 60 days will be required

If a delay occurs of is expected to occur, students / complainant will receive regular written updates explaining the reasons for delay and current progress updates.

NICS may request any additional information or evidence required to support students complaint / appeal and should be provided by the student as a priority.

External Review

If a complaint or appeal cannot be resolved internally, students may escalate the matter externally.

External options include:

- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) – for training and compliance matters

- Queensland Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET) – for User Choice matters
- Construction Skills Queensland (CSQ) – for CSQ funding matters
- Office of Fair Trading – for consumer-related matters

NICS will provide students with relevant contact details upon request.

Funding-Related Complaints (CSQ, C3G & User Choice)

Complaints or appeals relating to CSQ or User Choice funding may include:

- Eligibility determinations
- Evidence requirements
- Attendance or progression impacts on funding
- Employer or contract changes

NICS will:

- Ensure funding complaints are handled in line with program guidelines
- Maintain accurate records to support funding decisions
- Cooperate fully with funding bodies where required

Confidentiality and Student Support

- All complaints and appeals are handled confidentially
- Information is shared only with those directly involved in resolution
- Students may access NICS' Student Wellbeing and Support Program during the process
- Lodging a complaint or appeal does not affect enrolment, funding, or assessment progression

Continuous Improvement

All complaints and appeals are:

- Analysed for trends and systemic issues
- Reviewed at management meetings
- Used to inform improvements to policies, training delivery, assessment, and student support

Actions are recorded in the NICS Continuous Improvement Register.

Compliance Alignment Summary

This policy aligns with:

- 2025 RTO Standards
    - Transparency and fairness
    - Student support and protection
    - Effective assessment systems
- CSQ Funding Program Requirements
- User Choice Funding Program Requirements
- Natural justice and consumer protection principles

Regulatory Framework

This policy supports compliance with:

- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
- Queensland Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET)
- Construction Skills Queensland (CSQ)

Legislative Framework

This policy is underpinned by:

- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011
- Standards for Registered Training Organisations (2025)
- Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Australian Consumer Law)
- Privacy Act 1988
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)
- Relevant State and Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation

Review

This policy will be reviewed by NICS Compliance team in consultation with GM and CEO:

- Annually
- Following:
    - ASQA audits
    - User Choice or CSQ funding audits
    - Data breaches or security incidents
    - Changes to privacy, funding or VET legislation
- Approved by senior management and recorded in the Master Document Register

National Institute of Construction Skills

Document Version Control

Department / Organisation Title	National Institute of Construction Skills
Document Name	NICS_01_005 Complaints and appeals policy V5
Version No.	Five (5)
Effective Date	27/10/2026 (Reviewed)

Relevant Qualification (If applicable)
All Qualifications on scope of Registration

Authorship and Approval

Name	Position	Role	Action Date
Lauree Skene	RTO Compliance Coordinator	Co Author	27/10/2026
Dayne Price	Accredited Mental Health Social Worker	Co Author	27/10/2026

Version History

Version No.	Action Date / Person	Summary of Revisions
Five (5)	27/10/2026	• Amendments made to some terminology based on the Child Safe National Principles.
Four (4)	24/12/2025 L. Skene	• Inclusion of C3G, User choice and CSQ references and specifications as per 2026 contractual requirements
Three (3)	10/12/2025 L. Skene	• Revision of document using compliance recommended template etc. • Merge of previous separate policies into one policy covering same content more efficiently. • Implemented relevant 2025 RTO standards and referencing • Implemented reviewed document naming convention and amendments to document format.
Two (2)	04/04/2024 T. Aitken	• Annual review of document
One (1)	30/06/2023 N. Duncan	• Development of Document inline with RTO Standards 2015. • Implement ASQA terminology

Distribution List

Position	Name	Notes / Area
President	Chris Munday	All relevant Trainers & Assessors and Industry consultation / professionals
General Manager (GM)	Todd Aitken	
RTO Compliance Coordinator	Lauree Skene	
Head Trainer	Ruby Harrison	
Administration Support	Paige Reynolds	
Finance / HR Manager	Christina Osbourne	