



STELLA COLLEGE

Appeal Policy and Procedure

RTO Code 41290



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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all appeals raised by students, personnel, or other stakeholders regarding decisions made by the organisation are managed fairly, transparently, and consistently. The appeals process is designed to uphold the principles of natural justice and ensure that all parties are treated equitably.

This policy applies to all appeals relating to decisions made by the organisation, including but not limited to:

- Application outcomes.
- Assessment outcomes.
- Disciplinary actions.
- Complaints resolution outcomes.

This policy and processes implemented are aligned to requirements outlined in *ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations*.

Legislative Reference

Outcome 2 – VET Student Support, Division 5 – Feedback, Complaints and appeals, Standard 2.7 and 2.8, National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Outcome Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations) Instrument 2025 (Cth).

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students enrolled with Stella College enrolled in any nationally recognised VET qualification or skill set on Stella College's scope of registration.
- All Stella College personnel, including trainers, assessors, administrative staff, and management.
- Industry partners, third-party contractors, and any other stakeholders who interact with Stella College's services or operations.

This policy covers appeals relating to, but not limited to:

- Assessment decisions, including decisions of Not Yet Competent (NYC) or findings of academic misconduct.
- Application and enrolment outcomes.
- Disciplinary decisions and sanctions.
- Outcomes of formal complaints handled under the Stella College Complaint Policy and Procedure.
- Any other decision made by Stella College that directly and materially affects a student or stakeholder.

This policy does not cover:

- General feedback or expressions of dissatisfaction that do not relate to a specific decision - these are managed under the Stella College Complaint Policy.
- Matters that are the subject of active legal proceedings.

Role and Responsibilities

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Has overall accountability for the appeals policy and its compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. Approves the policy and any significant amendments, Allocates appeals to the appropriate independent personnel. Does not investigate or decide individual appeals - this role is reserved for the designated independent officer or external body.

Training Coordinator

Manages the day-to-day operation of the appeals process. Ensures appeals are acknowledged, processed, and resolved within the required timeframes. Maintains the Appeals Register and Continuous Improvement Register. Reports appeal trends to the CEO and governing body.

Appeals Officer (Independent)

An appropriately senior and independent person (not involved in the original decision) appointed to investigate and determine individual appeals. Ensures natural justice is applied, all relevant evidence is considered, and the appellant is given a fair opportunity to present their case. Documents findings and communicates outcomes in writing.

All Personnel

Understand and comply with this policy. Direct students and stakeholders to the appeals process when appropriate. Cooperate fully with any appeal investigation. Do not take retaliatory action against any person who lodges an appeal.

Students / Appellants

May lodge an appeal in accordance with this policy. Are responsible for providing relevant information and evidence in support of their appeal. Are expected to engage in good faith with the appeals process.

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this policy. Where a term is defined in the *RTO Standards 2025*, that definition applies. The definitions below are provided to support consistent understanding and application by all Stella College personnel.

Term	Definition
Appeal	A formal request by a student or other affected person for Stella College to review a decision that has been made about them. An appeal challenges a specific decision such as an assessment outcome, enrolment refusal, or disciplinary finding rather than expressing general dissatisfaction with a service or experience. An appeal is distinct from a complaint, which is managed under the Stella College Complaint Policy and Procedure.
Appellant	A person who has lodged an appeal under this policy. The appellant may be a current or former student, or any other person directly affected by a decision made by Stella College who has standing to request a review of that decision. An appellant may be supported by a support person or advocate at any stage of the appeals process.
Natural Justice	A fundamental legal principle requiring that decisions affecting a person are made fairly and without bias. In the context of appeals, natural justice requires that: (a) the appellant is informed of the case against them and given a genuine opportunity to respond before a decision is made; (b) the decision-maker is impartial and has no personal or financial interest in the outcome; and (c) the decision is based on relevant evidence, not on irrelevant considerations or undisclosed information.
Procedural Fairness	Often used interchangeably with natural justice, procedural fairness refers to the right of a person to have their appeal heard through a process that is transparent, consistent, and free from bias. It includes: the right to be informed of the appeals procedure and the timeframes that apply; the right to present evidence and make submissions in support of the appeal; the right to receive a written outcome with reasons; and the right to have the decision reviewed by an independent person or body if still dissatisfied.
Substantiated	An appeal is substantiated when the evidence gathered during the review process supports the appellant's grounds for appeal — that is, when the original decision is found to be incorrect, unreasonable, inconsistent with Stella College's policies, or procedurally

Term	Definition
	flawed. A substantiated appeal results in the original decision being changed, overturned, or referred back to the relevant person or body for reconsideration.
Unsubstantiated	An appeal is unsubstantiated when the evidence gathered during the review process does not support the appellant's grounds for appeal — that is, when the original decision is found to have been made correctly, reasonably, and in accordance with Stella College's policies and procedures. An unsubstantiated finding does not prevent the appellant from pursuing external review.
External Body	An independent organisation or authority that is not part of Stella College and has no personal or financial interest in the outcome of an appeal. The external body provides an independent review pathway for appellants who are not satisfied with the outcome of Stella College's internal appeals process. For domestic students, Stella College's nominated external body is the Resolution Institute (www.resolution.institute 1800 651 650).
Support Person	A person chosen by the appellant to accompany and support them during the appeals process. A support person may be a friend, family member, student advocate, or union representative. A support person is not permitted to act as a legal representative during internal appeals proceedings, unless Stella College agrees otherwise in writing.
Decision-Maker	The person or panel responsible for investigating and determining the outcome of an appeal at each stage of the process. The decision-maker must be independent of the original decision being appealed — that is, they must not have been involved in making the original decision, and must have no personal interest in the outcome.

Where a term used in this policy is not defined above, the meaning given in the RTO Standards 2025 applies.

Rationale

Stella College ensures that students, personnel, and stakeholders are made aware of the appeals process through various accessible and transparent communication channels. Information about the appeals process is prominently featured in the Stella College Student Handbook, organisational website, and enrolment materials. During onboarding and orientation sessions for students and personnel, the appeals process is explained to promote understanding. Ongoing reminders via digital communications and other channels ensure stakeholders have continuous access to this information.

Stella College's appeals management system is designed to uphold fairness, timeliness, and effectiveness through a structured and impartial process. Appeals are handled by unbiased personnel who are independent of the original decision being reviewed. The process ensures that appellants have an opportunity to formally present their case and are supported by clear communication and transparent timelines. Appeals are acknowledged promptly, and stakeholders are regularly updated on the progress of their appeals. Decisions are merit-based, considering all available evidence, and the process adheres to the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. Additionally, all appeals are documented in the Appeals Register to maintain accountability and consistency.

Stella College systematically analyses appeals outcomes to identify trends, root causes, and areas for improvement. Substantiated appeals are documented in the Continuous Improvement Register, and corrective actions are implemented to prevent recurrence. Outcomes of appeals inform policy and procedural updates, ensuring alignment with best practices and stakeholder expectations. Regular audits of the appeals process are conducted to assess its effectiveness and identify further opportunities for refinement. Feedback from appeals also informs resource allocation, risk management, and strategic planning, contributing to the organisation's culture of continuous improvement.

Approach

Stella College is committed to providing a fair and transparent appeals process that allows individuals to seek a review of decisions that directly affect them. All appeals are managed in a timely, impartial, and confidential manner.

Stella College's appeals process reflects the following key expectations:

- Right to appeal. All stakeholders have the right to lodge an appeal if they believe a decision was unfair or incorrect.
- Accessibility. The appeals process is easily accessible and user-friendly.
- Transparency and procedural fairness. Appeals are handled impartially, with a clear process and open communication at all stages.
- Timeliness. Appeals are acknowledged and resolved promptly, with clear timeframes communicated to all parties.
- Continuous improvement. Outcomes of appeals inform continuous improvement within the organisation.

Stakeholders are informed about avenues for appeal with information about how to make an appeal publicly available and easily accessible, including via the Stella College Student Handbook and website.

Grievances or issues not pertaining to decisions made by the organisation should be referred to Stella College's complaints process.

Grounds for an Appeal

Appeals may be considered valid and accepted for review under the following grounds:

- Procedural fairness or irregularity. Where it is believed that the original decision was made without following established procedures or policies, resulting in an unfair or biased outcome.
- New evidence. When new, relevant evidence becomes available that was not considered during the original decision-making process, and this evidence has the potential to affect the outcome.
- Incorrect or unjust application of policies or standards. If it is believed that the policies, procedures, or standards were incorrectly applied or interpreted, leading to an unjust decision.
- Bias or conflict of interest. If there is evidence of bias, discrimination, or a conflict of interest by the person(s) involved in making the original decision.
- Assessment outcome disputes. When a student believes that an assessment decision was unfair, inconsistent with assessment criteria, or not conducted in accordance with the organisation's assessment policies and standards.
- Severity of outcome or penalty. If the appellant believes the outcome or penalty applied was disproportionate, harsh, or unreasonable in relation to the situation.

These grounds ensure that appeals are raised on legitimate and substantive bases, supporting the organisation's commitment to fairness, transparency, and continuous improvement.

Stella College's appeals process is free, easily accessible and facilitates requests for a review of decisions, including assessment decisions, made by Stella College.

The appeals process follows the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness by allowing anyone subject to a decision by, or anyone who has allegations made against them, to tell their side of the story before a decision is made.

Stella College maintains a student appellant's enrolment throughout the entire appeals process - including any internal escalation and any external review - until a final determination has been made and all avenues of appeal have been exhausted. This obligation applies regardless of the nature of the appeal, including assessment appeals and disciplinary appeals.

Right to access external bodies

All students are advised that they may access external dispute resolution bodies at any stage of the appeals process - they are not required to exhaust internal processes first. Domestic students may contact the relevant state or territory training authority or the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

Stella College's process ensures that the decision-maker is independent of the decision being reviewed (for example, an assessor does not consider or decide an appeal against an assessment decision they made).

Appeal and Dispute Resolution Procedure

1. Before making a formal appeal, individuals are encouraged to discuss the matter with the relevant Stella College personnel in an effort to reach a shared understanding of the matter and agreement.

If a stakeholder is still unhappy, they may lodge a formal appeal in writing to Stella College's Training Coordinator.

2. Any stakeholder may submit a formal appeal to Stella College about a decision. Appeals information captured includes:
 - Submission date of appeal,
 - Name of appellant,
 - Date of the event / activity which lead to the appeal,
 - The products and services or related organisation practices relevant,
 - A description of the appeal and relevant supporting data,
 - Any other relevant information or attachments (if applicable)

All stages of the appeals process are documented. Appeals may be lodged via various channels including in-person via Stella College personnel, via telephone and via email.

All appeals are immediately recorded in the Stella College Appeals Register.

3. Stella College commences processing of appeals as soon as practicable and within five (5) working days of an appeal being made and finalises the outcome as soon as practicable.

Appeals are allocated to the independent reviewer by Stella College Chief Executive Officer, who may allocate alternate or additional resourcing to the investigation and processing of the appeal.

4. Stella College acknowledges receipt of appeals in writing immediately, as soon as practical, and:
 - Arranges a suitable time if needed to discuss the appeal,
 - Advises appellants of expected timeframes, and
 - Gives appellants the contact details of the allocated contact person they can speak to about their appeal.

An up-to-date status is made available to the appellant upon request and at regular intervals.

5. Appeal investigations are expected to be resolved, and decisions made on the appeal as soon as practical and within twenty (20) working days of the appeal being received in writing.

Appellants are given an opportunity to formally present their case at no cost and be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings.

Decisions and outcomes of all appeals are merit-based decisions that consider all available evidence. Stella College ensures appeals are considered with an open mind and without bias arising from any past issues with the appellant.

Issues raised in appeals are analysed to determine cause(s) and the root cause evident.

6. Appellants are advised of the outcome of the appeal in writing, including detailed reasons for the outcome. With this notification, appellants also receive information on how they can progress their appeal if still unhappy.
7. If an appellant, on receiving written advice on the initial appeal, is still unhappy they may escalate the appeal to the Stella College Chief Executive Officer for independent external review. Escalated appeals are to include the following information:
 - Submission date of appeal,
 - Name of appellant,
 - Nature of appeal,
 - Reasons why the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome of the original appeal, and
 - Any other relevant information or attachments (if applicable).
8. Stella College Chief Executive Officer acknowledges receipt of escalated appeals in writing as soon as possible and within five (5) working days of receipt of the appeal.

The Chief Executive Officer refers the matter to an external dispute resolution process by a body appointed for this purpose by Stella College.

Student Rights When Accessing External Review

Students have the right to:

- Access an external review at no cost
- Be supported by a representative or advocate
- Receive written outcomes
- Have their privacy and confidentiality protected

RTO Responsibilities

Stella College will:

- Provide students with clear information about external review options
- Cooperate fully with any investigation
- Maintain all records of complaints, appeals, and external review outcomes
- Ensure no student is disadvantaged for lodging a complaint or appeal

Stella College gives due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review within ten (10) working days of the receipt of the recommendations, including implementing the decision(s) or recommendation(s) and/or taking the preventive or corrective action(s) required by the decision and advises the appellant of that action in writing.

Investigations are expected to be resolved, and decisions made on the appeal as soon as practical and within twenty (20) working days of the escalated appeal being received in writing.

Appellants are advised on the outcome of appeals in writing, including detailed reason(s) for the outcome, explanations for decisions and remedies where appropriate.

Stella College securely maintains records of all details of the appeals process and retains evidence of all documentation relevant. Each appeal and its outcome are recorded via the Appeals Register. This register is located at Stella College Drive.

Appeals Processing Delays

If at any stage Stella College considers more than twenty (20) working days are required to process and finalise an appeal, Stella College:

- Informs the appellant in writing, including reasons why more time is required, and
- Regularly updates the appellant on the progress of the matter.

Stella College retains records of all appeals for a period of seven (7) years, allowing parties to the appeal access to these records.

Improvement Actions

Stella College is committed to take appropriate action in any case where an appeal is upheld. In cases where an appeal is upheld, Stella College endeavours to identify the root cause of the matter that was appealed and takes appropriate action to prevent the situation happening again.

All improvement actions arising from appeals are raised via an Improvement Record. Stella College maintains a Continuous Improvement Register for recording the receipt and management of improvement records.

Stella College:

- Regularly analyses appeals to identify trends and any further improvements needed,
- Audits the appeals process on an annual basis to assess its effectiveness and improve the appeals process as needed.

Please refer to the Quality Policy for further information on the continuous improvement process.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Stella College monitors and evaluates the appeals process to ensure appeals are handled objectively.

A process of performance monitoring, evaluation, and reporting has been established and implemented.

The organisation continually improves the effectiveness and efficiency of processes. Process performance and outcomes are regularly audited to identify and remove causes of existing and potential problems, as well as to uncover any opportunities for improvement.

Please refer to the Quality Policy for further information on the monitoring and evaluation process.

Document Control

Document Name		Appeal Policy and Procedure
Approved By	CEO	
Version No.	Reviewed Date	Changes/ Revisions
Version 1.0	July 2025	Revised after the revision of 2025 RTO Standards came in force
Version 1.5	September 2025	Revised to incorporate rebranding from TPSC to Stella College.
Version 2.0	April 2026	Revised to incorporate more information as part of continuous improvement.