

# St Mark's National Theological Centre

## STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES (ACADEMIC & NON-ACADEMIC)

### Definitions

For the purposes of this document the following applies:

**The Act** refers to the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*

**Student/s** refers to all persons enrolled or seeking to enrol in a unit of study that meets the course requirements under subclause 45(1) of Schedule 1A of the Act who are, or would, be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act.

**Complainant** refers to Students (as defined above) who have lodged a grievance with St Mark's National Theological Centre.

### 1. Overview

St Mark's National Theological Centre is committed to providing an effective, efficient, timely, fair and confidential grievance handling procedure for all Students. This policy covers both academic and non-academic grievances and appeals.

Academic matters include those matters which relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a VET course of study.

Non-academic matters include those matters which do not relate to student progress, assessment, course content or awards in a course and include grievances in relation to personal information that the provider holds in relation to the student. Non-academic grievances tend to arise from events occurring at a provider or from decisions made by a provider.

Complainants are entitled to access the grievance procedures regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the Complainant's place of residence or mode of study.

### 2. Responsibility

The RTO Manager is responsible for implementation of this policy and procedure and ensuring that all staff are fully trained in its operation and Students and Complainants are made aware of its availability.

### 3. General principles

These principles, which will be adhered to by St Mark's National Theological Centre, apply to all stages of this grievance procedure:

- The Complainant and any respondent will have the opportunity to present their case at each stage of the procedure.
- The Complainant and any respondent have the option of being accompanied/assisted by a third person (such as a family member, friend or counsellor) if they so desire.
- The Complainant and any respondent will not be discriminated against or victimised.
- At all stages of the process, discussions relating to grievances and appeals will be recorded in writing. Reasons and a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of this procedure will be provided to the Complainant and/or any respondent if requested.
- Records of all grievances will be kept for a period of five years. These records will be kept strictly confidential and stored at St Mark's National Theological Centre, 15 Blackall Street, Barton, ACT, 2600.
- A Complainant shall have access to the internal stages of this grievance procedure at no cost. Costs for an external appeal will be shared equally by St Mark's National Theological Centre and the Complainant.

### 4. Informal Grievance Procedure

It is recommended that Complainants should try to resolve a grievance informally by approaching the trainers of their course and where necessary the Regional Coordinator. Where the Complainant is not satisfied with the

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results of this informal approach and wishes to take the matter further, the formal grievance procedures set out below should be followed. Please note that it is not mandatory for complainants to raise a grievance informally.

## **5. Formal Grievance Procedure**

### **5.1 Stage One**

Formal grievances should be submitted in writing to the RTO Manager at St Mark's National Theological Centre, 15 Blackall Street, Barton, ACT, 2600. The Complainant is invited to include suggestions about how the grievance might be resolved.

The RTO Manager will notify the Complainant of receipt of the grievance within 2 business days.

The RTO Manager will then assess the grievance, determine the outcome and advise the Complainant in writing of their decision within 10 working days.

The Complainant will be advised of their right to access Stage Two of this procedure if they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One.

### **5.2 Stage Two**

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One they may lodge an appeal in writing to the Director at St Mark's National Theological Centre, 15 Blackall Street, Barton, ACT, 2600.

The Complainant's appeal will be determined by the Director who will conduct all necessary consultations with the Complainant and other relevant persons and make a determination of the appeal. The Complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome of their appeal, including the reasons for the decision within 10 working days.

The Complainant will be advised of their right to progress to Stage Three of the grievance procedure if they consider the matter unresolved.

### **5.3 Stage Three**

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal then an independent mediator will be sourced by St Mark's National Theological Centre through LEADR, the Association of Dispute Resolvers. Complainants may request that their grievance is referred to the independent mediator by writing to the Director at St Mark's National Theological Centre, 15 Blackall Street, Barton, ACT, 2600.

Costs of such mediation will be shared equally by St Mark's National Theological Centre and the Complainant. As a guide mediator's costs would be \$385 for the first four hours (or part thereof). Subsequent hours would be \$137.50 per hour. It is common for most disputes to be resolved within the initial four hour allocation.

If the Complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of the mediator's decision, then they may contact the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). For contact details and information please see: <http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/making-a-complaint.html>.

St Mark's National Theological Centre will give due consideration to any recommendations arising from the external review of the grievance within 30 days of receipt of the recommendations.

## **6. Publication**

This *Student Grievance Policy and Procedures (Academic and Non-academic)* will be made available to students and those seeking to enrol with St Mark's National Theological Centre through publication on the website ([www.stmarks.edu.au](http://www.stmarks.edu.au)).

## **7. Approval**

This Policy and Procedure was agreed to and ratified by St Marks' National Theological Centre Council on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2013