

Appeals Policy

1. Purpose

Smartskill is committed to providing quality training and assessment in accordance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (SRTOs) 2025. As such, Smartskill is required to have a policy and processes in place to manage requests from students to review assessment decisions, including decisions made by third party training and assessment providers who provide services on behalf of Smartskill.

This policy is based on providing and maintaining training and assessment services that are fair and reasonable and afford a forum where issues or inadequacies regarding assessment can be raised and resolved. The Appeals policy provides opportunity for appeals to be recorded, acknowledged and dealt with in a timely manner.

The object of this policy is to ensure that Smartskill staff and third party partners, act in a professional manner at all times. This policy provides students with a clear process to register an appeal. It ensures all parties involved are kept informed of the resulting actions and outcomes.

2. Policy Statement

Smartskill acknowledges that students have the right to appeal an assessment decision, based on valid grounds for appeal.

Smartskill has provision for students to appeal against assessment decisions, including those made by a third party partner. Students will be provided access to a fair and equitable process for lodging an appeal against an assessment decision.

In doing so, Smartskill:

- has written processes in place for collecting and dealing with appeals in a constructive and timely manner;
- ensures that these procedures are communicated to all staff, contractors, third party partners and students;
- ensures that each appeal and its outcome are recorded in writing;
- ensures that each appeal is heard by an independent person or panel;
- ensures that each appellant has the opportunity to formally present his or her case;
- ensures that each appellant is given a written statement of the appeal outcomes, including reasons for the decision;
- takes appropriate action upon the subject of any appeal that is found to be substantiated; and
- utilises outcomes of appeals to review current practices which may potentially lead to continuous improvement.

3. Definitions

3.1 The following words and expressions have the following specific meaning, as in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (SRTOs) 2025.

Assessment means the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved, to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard required in the workplace, as specified in a training package or VET accredited course.

4. Policy Principles

4.1 Underpinning Principles

- a) Students have the right to lodge an appeal against an assessment decision if they feel they were unfairly treated during an assessment, and/or where they feel the assessment decision is incorrect and they have grounds for an appeal.
- b) The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the appeal process.
- c) The appeals policy is publicly available, via the Smartskill website www.smartskill.com.au.
- d) The appellant can provide detail of their appeal either verbally and/or in writing.
- e) All appeals must be lodged within seven (7) calendar days of the date of the assessment result notification to the student.
- f) If the appeals process fails to resolve the appeal or the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, the matter will be referred to an independent adjudicator for review, at the request of the appellant. All costs incurred for the external review will be advised to the appellant.
- g) Every appeal is heard by a suitably qualified independent assessor or panel, who will be asked to make an independent assessment of the application.
- h) All appeals are acknowledged in writing and finalised as soon as practicable.
- i) Smartskill may charge a fee for the appeals process where an external adjudicator or assessor is engaged. Should this be the case, all costs incurred will be advised to the appellant.
- j) If the appeal will take in excess of sixty (60) calendar days to finalise, Smartskill will inform the appellant in writing providing the reasons for the time period required. The appellant will also be provided with regular updates on the progress of the appeal.
- k) Smartskill strives to deal with appeal issues as soon as they emerge, in order to avoid further disruption or the need for a formal complaint process.
- l) All appeals will be handled 'In-Confidence' and will not affect or bias the progress of the student in any current or future training.

4.2 Grounds for Appeal

Valid grounds for an appeal against an assessment decision (where the student feels the assessment decision is incorrect) could include the following:

- a) The judgement as to whether competency has been achieved and demonstrated was made incorrectly;
- b) The judgement was not made in accordance with the benchmark answers;

- c) Alleged bias of the assessor;
- d) Alleged lack of competence of the assessor;
- e) Alleged wrong information from the assessor regarding the assessment process;
- f) Alleged inappropriate assessment process for the particular competency;
- g) Faulty or inappropriate equipment; and/or
- h) Inappropriate conditions.

4.3 Appeal Outcomes

An investigation into an appeal may result in one (1) of the following outcomes:

- a) Appeal is upheld; in this event the following actions will be taken:
 - i. The original assessment will be re-assessed by another assessor.
 - ii. The second assessor will make judgement and provide grading/result
 - iii. Grading/result will be recorded for the student.
- b) Appeal is rejected/ not upheld; in accordance with Smartskill assessment policy the student will be required to:
 - i. undertake further training or experience prior to further assessment; or
 - ii. re-submit further evidence; or
 - iii. submit/undertake a new assessment.

5. Smartskill Responsibilities

The Director of Smartskill is the Appeals Resolution Officer. The Director may delegate responsibility for the resolution of the appeal if necessary.

Details concerning the scope of the Appeals Policy are to be clearly displayed throughout the organisation and contained within the Staff, Contractor and Third party provider induction process, Student/Trainee Handbook and Smartskill website.

6. Appeals

6.1 Appeals Process

All appeals shall follow the below process:

- a) Appeal to be made in writing within seven (7) calendar days of notification of the assessment decision using the Appeals form.
- b) A submitted 'Appeals form' will constitute a formal appeal from the appellant. Further detail may be provided by the appellant verbally.
- c) The Director of Smartskill shall be informed of receipt of any appeal.
- d) The Director of Smartskill may delegate responsibility for the resolution of the appeal, as appropriate.
- e) Appeals will be processed in accordance with the Appeals flowchart – Annex A.
- f) Appeals, where possible, are to be resolved within twenty-eight (28) days of the initial application.
- g) In all cases, the final conclusion will be endorsed by the Director of Smartskill.

- h) The appellant will be advised in writing of the outcome of their appeal, within seven (7) days of the resolution.
- i) If the outcome is not to the satisfactory of the appellant, they may seek an appointment with the Director of Smartskill.
- j) If the appellant is not satisfied with the decision they have the option to seek outside assistance to pursue the appeal.

7. Access & Equity

All students are free to participate in the learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and vilification. In this instance, the Smartskill Access and Equity Policy applies.

8. Records Management

Records of all appeals and their outcomes are maintained securely. Documentation of all appeals will include:

- a) How the appeal was dealt with;
- b) The outcome of the appeal;
- c) The timeframes for resolution of the appeal;
- d) The potential causes of the appeal; and
- e) The steps taken to resolve the appeal.

9. Monitoring and Improvement

All appeals practices are monitored by the Director of Smartskill and will be discussed at Management Review Meetings with areas for improvement identified and acted upon. (See Continuous Improvement Policy).

ANNEX A: Appeals Process

