

**Good, better, best practice
written agreements, course progress,
attendance and transfers**



ISANA
Best Practice Workshop
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Overseas Students Ombudsman

- We investigate complaints from overseas students about private schools, colleges and universities
- We work with education providers to help them improve their internal complaints and appeals processes
- We report on trends and systemic issues we see through our complaints investigations

Written Agreements

- Best practice:
 - Clear written agreement with course name, study periods, itemised list of fees signed or otherwise accepted by student, parent or legal guardian
 - Refund policy included (not a link or reference to it elsewhere, such as the student handbook)
 - Cancellation fee policy included if charging cancellation fee
 - Clear terms and conditions
 - Fees paid concurrently with or after agreement signed
 - Refunds owed paid within provider obligation period either under the written agreement or s



Course Progress

- Best practice:
 - Having a course progress policy that clearly defines
 - satisfactory and unsatisfactory course progress
 - when the student is deemed to be ‘at risk of not meeting satisfactory course progress’
 - the point at which the student will be determined to have failed to meet satisfactory course progress
 - The course progress policy includes an intervention strategy designed to assist students to improve to satisfactory levels



Course Progress

- Best practice:
 - The intervention strategy is implemented as soon as the student is identified as being 'at risk'
 - If the student still fails to meet satisfactory course progress, the provider sends the notice of intention to report with appeal rights
 - The student has the opportunity to lodge an internal and external appeal, and the provider awaits the outcomes, before reporting the student



Attendance

- Best practice:
 - A clear attendance policy that states the attendance requirements (80% or higher)
 - Policy states the period over which the provider will monitor and report on attendance (one study period, length of course or Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE)?)
 - Policy states when and how the provider will contact the student to warn them if they are at risk of falling below 80% projected attendance or absent for 5 consecutive days



Attendance

- Best practice:
 - Policy states how attendance will be recorded and calculated including how the provider counts absences covered/not covered by a medical certificate; e.g lateness or early departures from class etc.
 - Attendance policy available to students and explained at orientation
 - Provider keeps accurate attendance records and calculations which can be replicated by an external appeal body



Attendance

- Best practice:
 - Provider records attendance over stated reporting period
 - Provider sends warnings/counsels students as soon as identified as being 'at risk' and before below 80%
 - Provider contacts student if absent for 5 consecutive days
 - Parents/legal guardian involved if under 18 years
 - If student never commences at all, reported under s19(1)(c) rather than poor attendance



Attendance

- Best practice:
 - Notice of intention sent at right time to correct address
 - Provider advises student of their internal appeal rights
 - Provider considers at appeal if it has followed its policy and Standard 11 correctly at each step
 - Provider gives written internal appeal outcome with details of reasons for decision and external appeal rights
 - Provider awaits outcome of the external appeal before reporting on the intended grounds



Provider Transfers

- Best practice:
 - Having a transfer policy that clearly defines
 - the circumstances in which a transfer will be granted
 - the circumstances the provider considers provide reasonable grounds for refusing the student's request, including when a transfer can be considered detrimental to the student
 - only includes relevant grounds
 - Preamble to Standard 7 states:

'It is expected that the student's request will be granted where the transfer will not be to the detriment of the student'



Provider Transfers

- Best practice:
 - All transfer requests properly considered and refusal based on detriment/grounds listed in policy
 - Written refusal with reasons why the provider considers the transfer would be to the student's detriment, taking into account the student's individual circumstances
 - Student advised of internal appeal right
 - Internal appeals considers any new information and addresses this in the written outcome with advice of external appeal rights

Internal Appeal & Complaints

- Best practice:
 - Provider's internal complaints and appeals policy readily available e.g. on its website
 - Provider helps students access the appeal process when problems/disagreements arise
 - Provider deals with complaints/appeals objectively based on relevant facts and applicable policy/legislation
 - Provider identifies any errors made and remedies them
 - Internal appeal written outcome details reasons for the decision and external appeal rights

OSO Better Practice Complaint Handling Guide



Better Practice Complaint Handling for Education Providers

February 2011

Complaint Handlers' Checklist

- ☐ Do you have written complaint handling procedures? Are they easy to understand and apply?
- ☐ Do you acknowledge complaints promptly?

ACKNOWLEDGE
all complaints quickly





Publications and resources

- Annual report and quarterly statistical reports
- Issues papers and submissions
- Presentations on a range of topics
- Brochures in English and 21 other languages
- Provider e-newsletter twice a year
- Student e-newsletter twice a year
- Subscribe on our website:

www.oso.gov.au/publications-and-media/



Questions ?