

## Appeals Policy

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*.

## Rationale

HEED EDUCATION 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 HEED EDUCATION **Student Handbook**, organisational website, and enrolment materials. During onboarding and orientation sessions for students and personnel, the appeals process is explained to promote understanding. Third party providers are also required to inform students about the appeals process. Ongoing reminders via digital communications and other channels ensure stakeholders have continuous access to this information.

HEED EDUCATION'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.

HEED EDUCATION 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

Heed Education's appeals process reflects the fourteen (14) guiding principles as outlined in ISO 10002:2018 (refer **Complaints Policy**).

HEED EDUCATION 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.

HEED EDUCATION'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 HEED EDUCATION **Student Handbook** and website.

Grievances or issues not pertaining to decisions made by the organisation should be referred to HEED EDUCATION'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.

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

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

HEED EDUCATION maintains a student appellant's enrolment during any appeal process.

HEED EDUCATION'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 HEED EDUCATION 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 HEED EDUCATION Chief Executive Officer.

2. Any stakeholder may submit a formal appeal to HEED EDUCATION about a decision. Appeals information captured includes:
  - Submission date of appeal,
  - Name of appellant,
  - Nature of appeal,
  - 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),
  - The requested remedy,
  - Immediate action taken (if any), and
  - The due date for a response.

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

All appeals are immediately recorded in the HEED EDUCATION **Appeals Register**.

3. HEED EDUCATION commences processing of appeals as soon as practicable and within five (5) business days of an appeal being made and finalises the outcome as soon as practicable.

Appeals are allocated to the HEED EDUCATION Chief Executive Officer, who may allocate alternate or additional resourcing to the investigation and processing of the appeal.
4. HEED EDUCATION 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. HEED EDUCATION 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 HEED EDUCATION 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. HEED EDUCATION 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 HEED EDUCATION.

HEED EDUCATION 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.

For external review/appeal – student bears cost of Independent Third Party where applicable.

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

HEED EDUCATION securely maintains records of all details of the appeals process and retains evidence of all documentation relevant. Each appeal and its outcome is recorded via the **Appeals Register**. This register can be accessed through the Resource Library in the aXcelerate Student Management System and Student Handbook on the website.

## Appeals Processing Delays

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

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

HEED EDUCATION retains records of all appeals for a period of at least ten (10) years, allowing parties to the appeal access to these records.

## Improvement Actions

HEED EDUCATION is committed to take appropriate action in any case where an appeal is upheld. In cases where a appeal is upheld, HEED EDUCATION 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**. HEED EDUCATION maintains a **Continuous Improvement Register** for recording the receipt and management of improvement records.

HEED EDUCATION:

- 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.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

HEED EDUCATION 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.