STUDENT HANDBOOK

AMENDMENT HISTORY

Version	Date modified	Modified by	Authorised by	Modification Details
1.0	August 2019	ESA Training	Senior Director ESA Training	Creation of the ESA Student Handbook
2.0	July 2024	ESA Training	Senior Director ESA Training	New & updated version of the Student Handbook (3.1.1)

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Page **2** of **16**

1. WELCOME

Welcome to training with the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA). ESA Training provides support for learning and development opportunities you may need to perform your role.

The ACT ESA is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO# 88091) under the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011*. Maintaining RTO registration allows the ESA to offer nationally recognised qualifications and units of competency to staff, volunteers and other external clients. The ESA RTO operates as an enterprise RTO, meaning that training and assessment is developed and delivered primarily for employees and volunteers of the ESA. In some circumstances, ESA delivers training to external clients; however, the key focus is on internal staff and volunteers.

ESA Training is responsible for the day-to-day management of the ESA RTO. This handbook introduces the standard policies and procedures in place to ensure you receive quality training and assessment and make the most of the learning opportunities available to you. There will be additional course specific information provided when you start a new course of learning.

1.1 KEY CONTACTS

If you have questions about the policies outlined in this handbook, please email ESA Training.

If you have questions about your specific course, please email the relevant section and your question will be directed to the most appropriate person.

ACTAS Education:	jacsactaseducation@act.gov.au
ACT Fire & Rescue Training & Development:	actfrtraining@act.gov.au
ACT RFS Learning & Development:	RFSTraining@act.gov.au
ACT SES Learning & Development:	SESTraining@act.gov.au
ESA Training:	ESA_Training@act.gov.au
ESA RTO:	ESA_RTOCompliance@act.gov.au
ESA Online Learning:	ELMS@act.gov.au

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Page **3** of **16**

2. BACKGROUND TO NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING

2.1 NATIONAL VET REGULATION

The *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* (NVR Act) is the principal legislation enacted for the regulation of the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia.

The ESA RTO must comply with the NVR Act to maintain its RTO status. This includes ensuring compliance with the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* under subsection 185(1) and subsection 186(1) of the NVR Act.

2.2 AUSTRALIAN SKILLS QUALITY AUTHORITY (ASQA)

ASQA is the national regulator for Australia's VET sector. ASQA's role is to ensure that RTOs comply with the requirements detailed in the NVR Act. Compliance ensures nationally consistent, high-quality training and assessment services for the clients of Australia's VET system.

2.3 VET QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The VET Quality Framework is a set of nationally agreed quality assurance arrangements for training and assessment services delivered by RTOs. The framework consists of a series of legislative instruments enacted under the NVR Act.

The VET Quality Framework comprises the:

- Standards for Registered Training Organisations;
- Australian Qualifications Framework;
- Fit and Proper Person Requirements;
- Financial Viability Risk Assessment Requirements; and
- Data Provision Requirements.

To become an RTO, and to maintain registration, organisations must comply with every component of the framework.

The Framework is supported and complimented by the following:

- Standards for VET Accredited Courses;
- Standards for Training Packages; and
- Standards for VET Regulators

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **4** of **16**

3. ENROLMENT

3.1 ENROLLING WITH THE ESA RTO

VETenrol is a VETtrak Portal used to promote training courses. It is also used for members to submit electronic course nominations. VETenrol is available from any device that is connected to the internet and removes the need for paper nomination forms. Courses may be scheduled for a specific group of students and in this circumstance, a direct link will be sent to your nominated email address.

Click here for more information.

The ESA RTO is required to collect demographic information as well as details about where and what our students' study. Each ESA course has an RTO Enrolment Form that consists of a set of mandatory questions we are required to ask you.

The ESA RTO is required to collect and report 'Total VET Activity' data in accordance with the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS). AVETMISS is a national data standard which ensures the consistency and accuracy of VET information.

3.2 UNIQUE STUDENT IDENTIFIER (USI)

Each individual student requires a Unique Student Identifier (USI) when studying a nationally recognised training course in Australia.

ACT ESA will not be able to issue nationally recognised qualifications to anyone without a verified USI. For the ESA RTO to verify your USI at minimum they require your full legal name and date of birth.

Click here for more information.

3.3 COURSE NOMINATION

Submitting a nomination through VETenrol does not guarantee you a place on the course. Students will receive an automated email confirming that the nomination has been received. Students will then receive a second email either confirming a place on the course or advising that you have not been successful and the steps to take to enrol in the next available course.

4. TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT

Delivery strategies used across the ESA are selected to effectively achieve the required competency outcome while considering the principles of adult learning. Training is likely to include combinations of classroom-based training, online learning, and work-based training (either in the field or through simulation) some training may include pre-course work and some training may include post-course work.

In accordance with the principles of adult learning, participants are encouraged to learn at their own pace and assistance is provided where necessary to accommodate specific learner needs. Speak with your trainer or course coordinator to discuss options for learning assistance.

For courses with an online learning component, students are expected to login to ESA Learning Management System (ELMS) within the allocated timeframe prior to any face-to-face training or assessments commence. For example, first aid courses have an online learning component that must

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Page **5** of **16**

be completed prior to attending face-to-face training. If students experience technical issues and cannot access ELMS, they are to contact ELMS@act.gov.au as soon as possible for troubleshooting and remediation.

4.1 STUDENT SUPPORT

During training, you or your trainer might identify areas where you may benefit from additional support or modifications to achieve the required outcome.

Your trainer will work with you to develop a Support Plan to give you the best opportunity for success. This might include modifications to the training materials, changes to the way information is delivered, or reasonable adjustments to assessment tasks.

If you wish to discuss a Support Plan, talk to your trainer in the first instance. If further advice or support is required, please contact the ESA RTO Team. The Support Plan template is available on the ESA Training SharePoint site.

4.2 LANGUAGE, LITERACY & NUMERACY SUPPORT

Assessment of core language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills identify an individual's skill levels which can then be compared with the LLN levels required of a training course (or unit or qualification) or workplace tasks.

To support assessment of LLN needs of ESA students, the ESA RTO has implemented a system called *LLN Robot* to manage assessment and provide support to learners regarding their individual needs.

The *LLN Robot* system consists of two parts:

1. Online LLN testing
2. Generating training profiles and training support courses.

The *LLN Robot* online assessment has been designed to give an indication of a learner's abilities across five core skills being Learning, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication and Numeracy. The assessment uses examples from everyday life to avoid bias relating to specific training or working environments and experience. This approach keeps the assessments fair, valid and accessible to all learners.

At the end of the assessment a learner profile is generated scoring each of the five core skills. These results are stored in a secure database and accessed by the authorised training officer for that learner. The profile can be updated based on other evidence gathered by the training officer e.g. enrolment forms, pre-course work and discussions.

Each course offered by the ESA RTO is analysed by the *LLN Robot* system and a profile of that course is generated against the same five core skills. This allows a comparison of the course requirements and the learner's current skill level to identify any gaps and possible support needs.

Where gaps in a learner's core skills are identified, the *LLN Robot* system provides a training support course which outlines mechanisms that can be used to support the learner's development, as well as a series of self-paced activities that the learner can work through to improve their skills.

The *LLN Robot* system is used to determine learner support needs. It is not a recruitment or screening tool. The course coordinator may suggest it would be beneficial or you may wish to complete the LLN assessment to determine your own LLN needs. In this case, contact ESA Training to get access to the *LLN Robot*.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is athe unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **6** of 16

4.3 EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS IN TRAINING & ASSESSMENT

STUDENTS

The Student Code of Conduct describes acceptable behaviour in the learning environment. It outlines the standard for what is considered appropriate behaviour.

TRAINERS AND ASSESSORS

The Trainer and Assessor Statement of Responsibilities describes the role and responsibilities of Trainers and Assessors including expectations for professional standards in the representation of ESA. The *Trainer and Assessor Statement of Responsibilities* is applicable to everyone conducting training and assessment activities on behalf of the ESA RTO. This includes volunteers and contracted providers.

Behaviour in contravention of these documented expectations is required to be reported to the Senior Director, ESA Training who will review the matter and make recommendations to the relevant person.

- Matters related to ESA employees will be referred to the relevant Chief Officer or relevant Executive.
- Matters related to ESA volunteers will be referred to the relevant Chief Officer.
- Matters related to a 3rd party who is an employee of the ACT Government will be referred to that person's Executive Officer.
- Matters related to any other person will be referred to the relevant Executive.

These expected behaviours need to be read in conjunction with: the ACT Public Service Code of Conduct; the ACT Public Service Values & Behaviours; and the ACT ESA Volunteer Charter and any associated codes of conduct and/or guidelines.

They do not replace existing public sector values and obligations or the ACTPS Code of Conduct. Processes for managing code of conduct issues for ACT Public Service employees are contained in the Public Sector Management Act 1994 and its subordinate instruments and relevant enterprise agreements.

4.4 ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a process of collecting evidence against a standard and making a judgement of competency. The assessor is responsible for making a judgement using the evidence collected that a person is competent.

A person is deemed to be competent when able to demonstrate they have the required skills and knowledge and can apply them in a range of situations in the workplace. This definition of competency:

- emphasises outcomes.
- focuses on what is expected of an employee in the workplace.
- highlights the application of skills and knowledge to workplace tasks.
- incorporates the ability to apply and transfer knowledge and skills to new situations and environments.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **7** of **16**

It is important to remember that an assessment outcome of not yet competent is not failure. It simply means that the student needs more training and/or support in some identified areas.

The student can expect all assessment activities to meet the Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence.

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

VALID	FAIR
Assessment is valid when the process assesses what it claims to assess. Validity requires: ➢ assessment against the unit/s of competency and the associated assessment requirements covers the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance. ➢ assessment of knowledge and skills is integrated with their practical application. ➢ assessment to be based on evidence that demonstrates that a learner could demonstrate these skills and knowledge in other similar situations. judgement of competence is based on evidence of learner performance that is aligned to the unit/s of competency and associated assessment requirements.	Fairness in assessment requires: ➢ consideration of the individual student's needs and characteristics and any reasonable adjustments that should be applied. ➢ clarity of communication between the assessor and the student to ensure the student is fully informed, participates in, and consents to the assessment process. ➢ opportunities that allow the person/s being assessed to challenge assessments with provision for reassessment.
RELIABLE Evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and assessment results are comparable irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment.	**FLEXIBLE** To be flexible, assessment: ➢ reflects the student's needs. ➢ provides for recognition of competencies no matter how, where or when they have been acquired. ➢ draws on a range of methods appropriate to the context, competency, and the student. ➢ and supports continuous competency development.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **8** of 16

RULES OF EVIDENCE

There are four rules of evidence that must be considered to ensure the judgement made by an assessor is based on quality evidence. It is important to note that it is almost impossible for a single source of evidence to satisfy each of these rules. Therefore, to ensure reliable judgement of competence, assessors are highly likely to require presentation of multiple sources and forms of evidence over a period to ensure the rules of evidence are met.

VALID	AUTHENTIC
Evidence is valid when it relates directly to the competency being assessed and addresses the Dimensions of Competency.	Authenticity relates to ensuring the evidence is from or of the student and not another person (e.g. the assessor needs to be satisfied that the evidence gathered is the student's own work).
CURRENT	SUFFICIENT
Currency relates to the age of collected evidence. Competency requires demonstration of current performance, therefore the evidence collected establishes the ability of the student to demonstrate competence in the present.	Sufficiency relates to the amount of evidence collected. The collection of sufficient evidence is necessary to ensure all aspects of the competency have been captured and to satisfy the need for repeatable performance.

A variety of assessment instruments can be used in combination to collect evidence, including:

written assessment	practical demonstration	supervisor checklists and reports
group assessment	workplace assessment	simulation exercises and/or role play
oral questioning	portfolio / logbook	self-assessment

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT

Reasonable adjustment means adjustments can be made to the way evidence is collected. While reasonable adjustments can be made in terms of the way evidence is gathered, the criteria for making a judgement of competency cannot be changed in any way. That is, the minimum performance standard is the same regardless of the group and/or individual being assessed.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- Conducting verbal assessments of knowledge components.
- Recording video or audio evidence in place of written evidence.
- Allowing assistance of a support person or interpreter.
- Providing additional time to complete assessment tasks.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **9** of **16**

- Providing an alternative venue or assessment location to suit student's needs.
- Providing pre-course materials.

FEEDBACK FROM YOUR ASSESSOR

Useful and clear feedback is very important to the assessment process. Feedback should include advice and explanation of the elements of competency achieved and elements of competency not yet achieved. Effective feedback is:

- Constructive
- Balanced
- Actionable
- Relevant

As part of the feedback process for students who are deemed 'Not Yet Competent' the assessor will provide guidance and assistance in developing re-training and/or re-assessment activities including clarifying expected performance outcomes.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

In competency-based training, assessment is conducted to determine if the student has demonstrated the required skills and knowledge for each course. Students will undertake different types of assessment to demonstrate the requirements of the competency being assessed. As students complete each task, the assessor will determine whether the task has been completed satisfactorily.

On completion of each assigned assessment task, a student is deemed either:

- **Satisfactory** – student meets all the requirements of the assessment task.

- **Not Satisfactory** – student does not meet all the requirements of the assessment task.

If the student's performance in the assessment does not demonstrate the requirements, rather than fail, the student is marked as 'Not Satisfactory'. This indicates that more training may be required for the student to achieve a 'Satisfactory' result. Students are allowed up to three attempts to satisfactorily complete assessment tasks.

Once all the assessment tasks have been completed, the student's overall result is marked as either:

- **Competent** – the student has successfully completed all the assessment requirements of the course.

- **Not Competent** – the student has not been able to demonstrate competency across all course requirements.

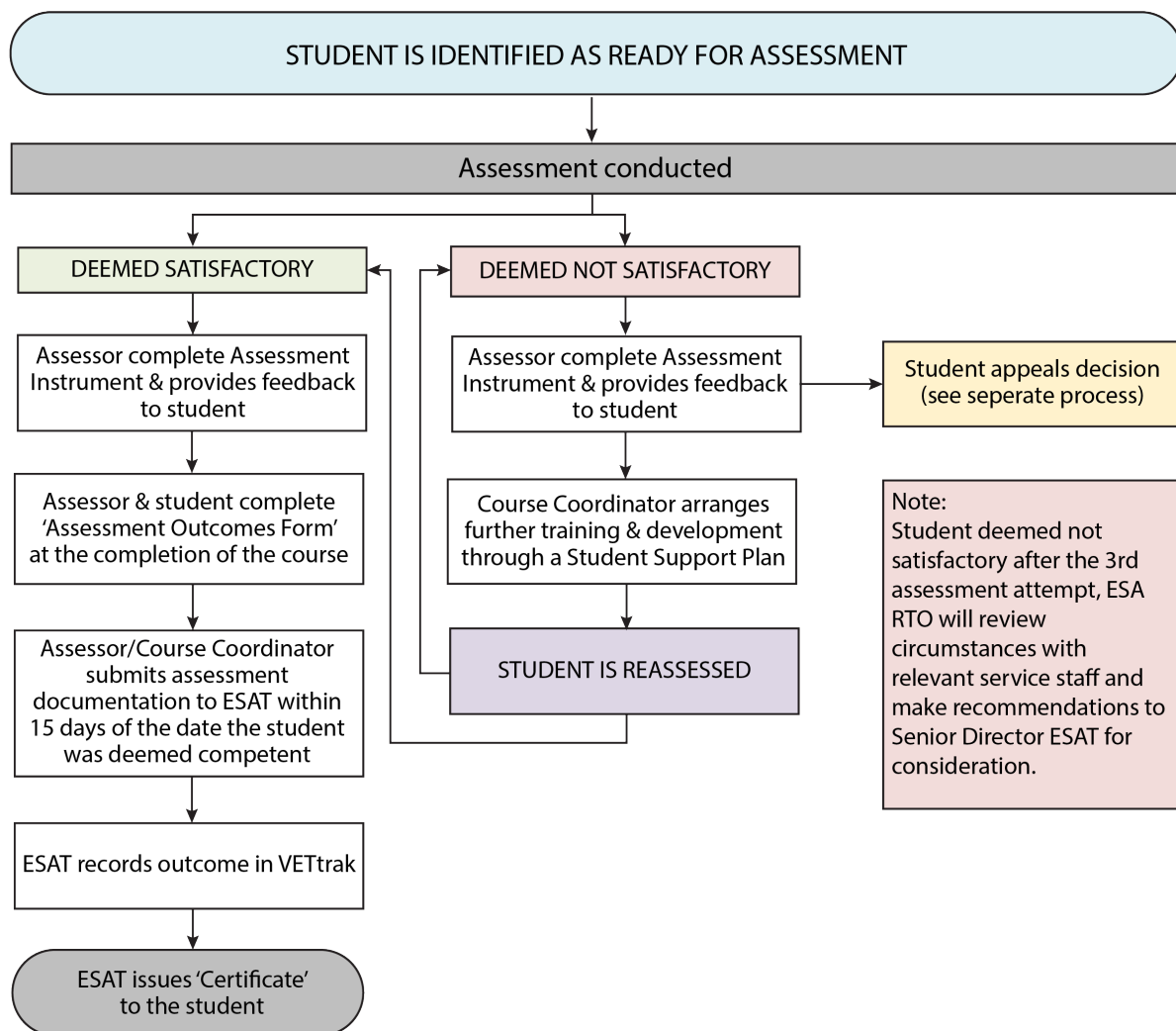**3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK -** is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **10** of **16**

REASSESSMENT

All students assessed as 'Not Satisfactory' are entitled to undertake further training and reassessment. The assessor and/or service are to ensure that students are given adequate training time and resources. Feedback must be provided to students about the 'Not Satisfactory' assessment decision and advised of the retraining and reassessment times and dates which is also outlined in their Support Plan.

The reassessment must replicate the standards and conditions of the original assessment but may be a different assessment task from that originally attempted. The reassessment may address that part where the student was deemed 'Not Satisfactory' or require a full reassessment as determined by the assessor.

An overview of the assessment process is provided below.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **11** of **16**

RECOGNITION (RPL) / ASSESSMENT ONLY

Recognition of prior learning is an assessment process which assesses the competency/s of an individual regardless of where those skills were acquired. To ensure currency of competency, the process may require a challenge test.

ELIGIBILITY FOR RECOGNITION (RPL)

As an enterprise RTO, the ESA RTO offers recognition services only where:

- the student is enrolled with the ESA RTO in the unit of competency/qualification for which RPL is requested.
- the unit of competency/qualification is linked to the specific job role or progression requirements of the applicant.

ESA volunteers and staff who believe they possess, and can substantiate relevant competencies, may apply for recognition. Applications will be processed on the basis that it is the applicants' responsibility to provide the evidence required to support their claim for recognition.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR STUDIES / CREDIT TRANSFER

The VET Quality Framework requires RTOs to recognise qualifications issued under the AQF (i.e. endorsed competency standards or accredited courses) by another RTO or AQF authorised issuing organisation. For credit to be granted, the individual must supply:

- AQF certification documentation with the exact unit of competency codes being claimed; or
- Authenticated VET transcripts issued by the Registrar (USI transcript).

The ESA RTO will review and may seek external verification of the validity of documentation presented.

Credit transfer applies when the documentation provided contains the same national competency code/s as those which form part of the application for Recognition.

Whilst a student may have previously achieved a competency, there may be differences in organisational policies and procedures, other contexts (e.g. industry application) and variables (e.g. currency) which may require a person to further demonstrate their skills and knowledge before being granted credit and/or an operational role. Students may be asked to participate in local induction or to undergo a challenge test to assess competency against ACT operational policy and familiarisation with equipment. The relevant service training officer will review each application for Recognition and make recommendations to the Senior Director, ESA Training regarding service induction/challenge test requirements.

APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION (RPL)

The first step in having existing skills and knowledge recognised is to apply to ESA Training. The application must include details of the Training Package or unit of competency applied for (national code and name of competency).

The Assistant Director, RTO Quality & Compliance will review the application for recognition in consultation with the Senior Director, ESA Training. If approved, the Assistant Director RTO Quality & Compliance will assign an assessor to provide guidance to the student about how to collect the appropriate evidence. The Assistant Director, RTO Quality & Compliance will consult with the relevant service in making the assignment.

Where identified workgroups are identified, ESA RTO will work with service representatives to establish and maintain RPL toolkits for defined roles and or units of competency. The RPL toolkit will provide guidance to an applicant on specific evidence required and include observation of performance in work based and/or simulated

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **12** of **16**

environments, challenge examinations/assessments and other evidence as outlined in Collecting Evidence. In these instances, a student is not required to provide a written application for RPL to The Senior Director, ESA Training as the approval for RPL for a defined group has already been provided.

If the application for recognition is not approved, the applicant will be given written advice as to the reasons for declining the application. The applicant may appeal this decision in line with the appeals process detailed in the RTO Operating Policy and in this Student Handbook.

COLLECTING EVIDENCE

Evidence required for recognition must meet all the requirements for quality evidence.

Evidence may include, but is not limited to:

- mapping of learning outcomes from prior formal or non-formal learning to the relevant qualification components.
- questioning (oral or written).
- observation of performance in work based and/or simulated environments.
- challenge examinations/assessments.
- consideration of third-party reports and/or other documentation such as articles, reports, project material, papers, testimonials or other products prepared by the RPL applicant that relate to the learning outcomes of the relevant qualification component.
- consideration of a portfolio and review of contents, and
- participation in structured assessment activities that individuals normally would be required to undertake if they were enrolled in the qualification components.

All evidence provided is to be in the form of an Evidence Portfolio where evidence is linked to the relevant unit(s) of competency including all assessment requirements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to gather all evidence and collate it in an appropriate format for assessment.

RECOGNITION (RPL) ASSESSMENT DECISION

Once the portfolio of evidence is received, an appropriate Authorised Trainer/Assessor will review the evidence against the requirements of the relevant units of competency/qualification utilising course assessment tools as required. The participant's application for recognition may result in a number of outcomes:

- The participant may be deemed 'Competent' based on the original evidence portfolio.
- The participant may need to provide additional evidence. This may include attending an interview with the Assessor; providing examples of industry experience; providing supervisor statements; providing examples of work records/ documentation, work diary; and/or providing records of previous study.
- The participant may be deemed 'Not Yet Competent' and offered a pathway to achieve competence through further training.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **13** of **16**

5. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

5.1 APPEALS

You can lodge an appeal against an assessment outcome or process at any time if you feel you have been disadvantaged or discriminated against. The appeals procedures apply to:

- assessments conducted within a course.
- assessments or decision within a recognition (RPL) process.

These procedures must be applied in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness and in a manner which promotes the values and general principles of the ACT Public Service.

LODGING AN APPEAL

The student should first discuss concerns with the relevant assessor with a view to resolving the matter. If this is inappropriate, the student may initiate a review under this procedure by making an application to the Senior Director, ESA Training that:

- is in writing; and
- identifies the action/decision the student seeks to be reviewed, and
- describes the outcome sought.

Applications for a review must be submitted by the appellant within 14 days of the assessment outcome. This period can be extended at the discretion of the Senior Director, ESA Training.

Where the subject of the appeal is an act or omission of the Senior Director, ESA Training the appeal should be submitted to the Assistant Commissioner Corporate.

The Assistant Commissioner Corporate will follow the established appeal process.

RIGHT FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW

If the appellant or other parties are dissatisfied with the outcome, they may seek a review of a decision of the Senior Director, ESA Training through:

- The Assistant Commissioner (Corporate) or
- The ESA Commissioner; or
- ASQA.

CERTIFICATION FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL APPEAL

Following a successful appeal, the ESA RTO will issue the relevant certificate according to this policy.

An overview of the appeals process is in the RTO Operating Policy.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **14** of **16**

5.2 COMPLAINTS

A complaint is a real or perceived grievance that is expressed either verbally or in writing by a complainant. Information produced during the complaints resolution process is kept in trust and divulged only to those with a need to know, with due regard to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2016 (ACT) and the Information Privacy Act 2014.

Where there is a complaint in relation to training, ESA is committed to observing the following principles:

- Employees/members are informed of their rights and responsibilities in the complaint resolution process.
- the process is based on a proper consideration of the facts and circumstances prevailing at the time of the complaint.
- decisions are impartial, transparent, and capable of review.
- documentation about complaint resolution decisions describes clearly and concisely the grounds upon which decisions were made.

Further information on resolving workplace issues can be found here.

COMPLAINTS PRINCIPLES

For employees in cases involving, for example, the recruitment, selection and appointment process, the breach of standard review procedures as detailed in the Public Sector Management Act 1994 and/or relevant enterprise agreement may apply.

The ESA observes the following principles and standards in relation to a complaint:

- recognise the difference between and apply either the complaint resolution procedure or other relevant process.
- wherever possible the parties directly affected will resolve disputes.
- at any stage of the complaint resolution procedure, the complainant may elect to be accompanied by another representative for support.
- where in any case a dispute cannot be resolved by the affected parties, it is to be processed according to the following procedures.

Note: There are some slight variances across different awards and agreements for employees. For further information please contact JACS.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Step 1: The complainant should, if they feel comfortable in doing so, attempt to resolve the complaint by approaching the person(s) who is/are the cause of the complaint.

Step 2: If not settled at Step 1, the matter is to be discussed between the complainant, respondent and the relevant operational supervisors or Senior Director, ESA Training.

Step 3: If not settled at Step 2, the matter is to be discussed further involving a representative from the relevant Chief Officer and Senior Director, ESA Training.

Step 4: If not settled at Step 3,

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **15** of **16**

- for volunteers, the matter is to be referred to the relevant Chief Officer and Senior Director ESA Training who will seek an investigation via a delegated complaints officer and a reply is to be provided within seven working days.
- for staff, the matter is to be referred through the relevant enterprise agreement grievance procedures.

If after taking up a complaint with the RTO about training, a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaints process, the student may contact the national VET regulator:

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

Infoline: 1300 701 801

Web: www.asqa.gov.au

or call the National Training Complaints Hotline on 13 38 73.

6. CERTIFICATION

All assessment results are recorded in VETtrak. You may request a copy of your Official Training Transcript by emailing ESA_Training@act.gov.au.

6.1 ISSUING CERTIFICATES

The ESA RTO issues certificates (qualification or Statement of Attainment) on presentation of completed assessment documentation where the Authorised Trainer/Assessor has deemed the student competent. All nationally recognised certificates must be issued in accordance with the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy.

All awards must be issued within 30 calendar days of the student being assessed as meeting the requirements of the training. Note: the 30-day period to issue the certificate does not commence until the date that all required assessment items have been verified as present and complete.

6.2 CERTIFICATE REPLACEMENT

If a student loses or misplaces the original certificate, a replacement certificate may be issued upon request. All requests must be made in writing to ESA_RTOCompliance@act.gov.au outlining the reason for issuing a replacement certificate. To protect privacy, a replacement certificate will only be provided to the named person.

6.3 CERTIFICATION OF NON-ACCREDITED TRAINING

A Certificate of Attendance may be issued for non-accredited courses and will depend on service requirements. Mandatory non-accredited training will be recorded in VETtrak.

3.1.1 STUDENT HANDBOOK - is the unique identifier of this document. It is the responsibility of the user to verify that this is the current and complete version of the document, available on the Directorate's intranet site.

Page **16** of **16**