

RSPCA ACADEMY

Student Handbook

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals New South Wales

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RSPCA NSW is a Registered Training Organisation, accredited through the Australian Skills Quality Authority. RTO Code 70238

A welcome note from the RSPCA Academy

Thank you for considering the RSPCA Academy for your vocational education needs. We are dedicated to providing quality vocational education. Please read through this Student Handbook.

RSPCA NSW became a Registered Training Organisation in 2011, and since then has delivered nationally recognised qualifications in the animal industry. We are registered with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), the National VET Regulator, and operate within the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*.

Our Training Manager is a veterinarian with extensive experience in animal welfare. Our trainers have the relevant industry and training/assessment qualifications, and undertake regular professional development so as to provide students with a quality learning experience.

This Student Handbook is reviewed regularly and updated as required. A current version can be found at: rspcansw.org.au/get-involved/education-and-training/rspca-academy/.

Our courses are designed to ensure our students are work-ready, and they provide a strong mix of theory and practical skills training. Your success is paramount to us, and if at any time you require assistance with any part of your training, please feel free to contact our friendly staff.

I wish you all the best with your studies.

Laurie Milner
Training Manager

Community, Education & Training
RSPCA NSW

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1. Students' code of conduct

Students enrolled with the RSPCA Academy have rights and responsibilities and must abide by the appropriate policies and this Code of Conduct. When a student signs the declaration they agree to abide by the following:

1.1 Students' rights

Students have a right to:

- appeal academic decisions or procedural matters
- be given information about assessment procedures at the beginning of a unit
- be treated fairly and with respect
- have access to personal records on request
- have complaints dealt with fairly, promptly, confidentially and without retribution
- have personal records kept private, subject to statutory requirements
- learn in a supportive and safe environment, free of discrimination and harassment
- make a complaint to or about any staff member without fear of victimisation
- receive feedback on his or her academic progress

If the RSPCA Academy closes or ceases to deliver the training product once training has commenced, a pro-rata refund will be offered to students. In addition, statements of attainment may be issued for achieved competencies up until the training ceases.

1.2 Communication

When communicating with RSPCA NSW staff by email, fax, letter, telephone or in person, students have a responsibility to:

- not do anything that could offend, embarrass or threaten others
- not harass or disrupt others in the performance of their duties
- show concern for others by not using profanities, or making obscene or offensive remarks
- treat people with respect and fairness

1.3 Study

Students must:

- achieve satisfactory progress in their studies through attendance or participation as required (see attendance requirements in the relevant course information brochure)
- complete all assessment tasks and examinations honestly, without any form of cheating
- complete all assessment tasks by the due date (where a date is specified) or ask for an extension of time if there are exceptional circumstances
- not submit and claim as their own, work derived from another source or work done by another person
- ensure that their behaviour does not negatively affect the learning experience of other students

1.4 Safety

When on RSPCA NSW premises, students have the additional responsibility to:

- follow any safety practices required and follow directions, both written and spoken, given by RSPCA NSW staff
- not damage or steal property
- not enter RSPCA NSW premises with illegal drugs, alcohol, weapons or under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- not smoke on RSPCA NSW premises
- sign the attendance register

2. Refund policy

Any person requiring a refund of fees paid must do so in writing in accordance with the refund policy outlined below. The \$160 administration fee is non-refundable in every case.

When a student has enrolled in a single course, RSPCA Academy will refund part of a course payment when:

- A student has cancelled more than 14 days prior to the course commencement. In this case, the student will receive 75% of the remaining amount (remaining amount = fees paid minus non-refundable administration fee)
- A student has cancelled less than 14 days prior to the commencement. In this case, the student will receive 50% of the remaining amount (remaining amount = fees paid minus non-refundable administration fee)

RSPCA NSW will not refund course fees once the course has commenced. RSPCA NSW may need to cancel, postpone, or reschedule a course when necessary due to low enrolment numbers or due to extraordinary circumstances. If this occurs, the student will be offered an alternative date or a full refund. Application for a refund can be made by completing the Application for a Refund Form (Appendix A).

3. Student selection, enrolment and induction

Policy: RSPCA NSW employs access and equity principles in its procedures for selecting, enrolling and inducting students. There are no barriers to any specific individuals or groups, inclusive of age, educational or social background, ethnicity, family responsibility, gender, political beliefs, religion, and sexuality. Delivery modes and training and assessment materials have been developed to maximise the opportunities for all students and enhance flexibility.

3.1 Procedure

RSPCA Academy systematically selects its students based on the following procedure:

- 3.1.1** RSPCA Academy welcomes enquiries from all members of the community regarding its courses and qualifications
- 3.1.2** All applicants are considered and final selections are made following a meeting between the Training Manager and the trainers
- 3.1.3** Prior to enrolment, prospective students have access to information regarding the RSPCA Academy in the form of this Student Handbook which outlines the relevant policies and procedures, including:
 - refund policy
 - student selection, enrolment and induction/orientation
 - recognition of qualifications issued by other RTOs
 - complaints, grievances and appeals
 - access and equity
 - competency in delivery and assessment
 - strategies for learning and assessment
 - summary of relevant legislation

3.2 Diversity

The needs of a diverse range of clients are identified and catered for through the following procedure:

- 3.2.1** An enrolment form is completed by each student, where they are asked to state whether or not they believe they have any barriers to learning (e.g., hearing impairment, learning difficulties, physical disabilities, visual impairment)
- 3.2.2** Trainers are provided with this information so that delivery methods may be tailored to suit the individual needs of students (e.g., the use of visual learning aids, ensuring that visual prompts are read out loud during the learning sessions, allowing for the provision of recording devices)
- 3.2.3** learning materials and assessment tools may be customised for individual students to cater for specific circumstances

3.3 Student support

On the enrolment form, students should identify any barriers to learning that may affect their ability to attain competency in any of the units, including Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) needs. If the student does not identify such barriers it is very difficult to maximise their learning experience by customising delivery and assessment methods and tools. Based on this information, along with information provided by the student during the course, RSPCA Academy will identify any individuals or groups with special training needs and will endeavour to provide support to these students.

RSPCA Academy supports the student during the course through:

- 3.3.1** allowing students to record the sessions for further study
- 3.3.2** flexible learning and assessment procedures, which can be modified to cater for each individual student's needs. Reasonable adjustments will be made in compliance with each particular unit of competency
- 3.3.3** if necessary, referring students to external agencies to assist students (e.g., TAFE, community colleges, etc.)
- 3.3.4** incorporating practical, hands-on experiences as part of the activities
- 3.3.5** referring students, who have a self-identified need, to external services and agencies where appropriate
- 3.3.6** the provision of one-on-one training

3.3.7 the provision of handouts, and the provision of PowerPoint presentations online

3.3.8 the use of graphics to support learning materials

In the first instance, if students are experiencing difficulties, they are encouraged to seek support from the trainers. Following this, the trainers may refer the student to external welfare and guidance agencies, such as:

- Department of Human Services: humanservices.gov.au
- Headspace: headspace.org.au
- Lifeline: call 13 1 1 14
- Kids Helpline (for those aged under 25): call 1800 55 1800
- Beyond Blue: beyondblue.org.au, or call 1300 22 4636
- The Australian Counselling Association (to find a registered counsellor): www.theaca.net.au

3.4 Language/Literacy/Numeracy

RSPCA Academy recognises the importance of basic skills in English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN). Language, literacy and numeracy requirements form part of each of the components of the courses offered at the RSPCA Academy. These requirements will develop the learning capacity of the individual and are consistent with the essential requirements for workplace performance. Improving basic skills will assist in breaking down barriers presently facing participants.

To achieve this, the RSPCA Academy will:

- 3.4.1** ensure that all participants enrolled in training courses are given the opportunity to learn based on the individual's current competencies in LLN
- 3.4.2** ensure that the LLN skills required in each of the courses are consistent with the specific workplace demands. Various industry bodies have been consulted in relation to the specific skills associated with each course
- 3.4.3** identify individual levels of competencies in LLN for the purpose of identifying further vocational training or educational needs
- 3.4.4** where possible, tailor training programs to suit individual needs

4. Recognition of qualifications issued by other RTOs

4.1 Policy

RSPCA Academy recognises the AQF Qualifications and Statements of Attainment issued by any other RTO and this information is available to all students in order for appropriate Recognition of Prior Learning/Credit Transfer to be considered.

4.2 Procedure

RSPCA Academy must recognise the AQF Qualifications, Statements of Attainment and related RPL previously achieved by its students.

As such, the Training Manager will ensure that an appropriate designated person:

- accurately checks that the qualification or Statement of Attainment has been issued by a registered RTO
- authenticates prior learning by contacting the issuing body (e.g., college, DET, TAFE, university etc.)
- maintains client records which outline the implementation of RPL
- disseminates this information through the student handbook

5. Complaints and grievances

5.1 Policy

Any complaint or grievance issued against the RSPCA Academy, its trainers or staff, will be dealt with in a constructive and timely manner, following the National Complaints Code. Details of this code can be found here:

<http://www.connect.edu.au/pages/ncc.pdf>

5.2 Procedures

Grievance procedures take account of the principles of procedural fairness which apply to the complainant, the respondent and the Manager of the RSPCA Academy. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process of making and

resolving complaints.

The complainant has the right to:

- be treated with dignity and respect
- be provided with a response within an adequate timeframe
- call witnesses
- have his or her complaint taken seriously
- have the complaint heard confidentially by an external staff member

The respondent has the right to:

- be presumed innocent unless proven otherwise
- be treated with dignity and respect

A client may make a complaint against the RSPCA Academy, its trainers or staff members through one of the procedural methods outlined below:

- 5.2.1** Personal Resolution: The client may wish to personally and informally resolve the grievance by informing the person that their behaviour is causing problems and asking them to stop. Alternatively, the complainant may express their concerns in writing.
- 5.2.2** Formal Complaint: A client may complete the Complaint/Grievance Form (see Appendix C) to initiate further action. The form can be acquired from the trainers or by contacting the Training Manager directly. The form can be lodged in full confidentiality. The form will be forwarded to the RSPCA Academy Training Manager. A conference will be organised, involving the client, the staff member and an impartial mediator. An outcome will be reached which satisfies all parties involved.
- 5.2.3** Formal complaint to external agencies: If a client is unsatisfied with the manner in which the RSPCA Academy has managed a grievance or complaint, the client may then approach the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) (asqa.gov.au).

If the RSPCA Academy believes that it will take longer than 60 days to process and finalise the complaint, the student will be informed in writing of the reason why, and will receive updates on the progress of the matter.

6. Access and equity

6.1 Policy

The RSPCA Academy applies the NSW Principles for Equity in Education and Training:

- Everyone is entitled to high quality education and training programs that provide recognised credentials and clear pathways to employment and lifelong learning. The outcomes of education and training should not depend on factors beyond the learner's control or influence.
- In the allocation of public resources, priority is given to narrowing those gaps in education and training outcomes that reflect need and prevailing social inequalities.
- The diversity of the population is recognised and valued by inclusive approaches to the development, conduct and evaluation of programs.
- A demonstrated commitment to these equity principles and practices is a core responsibility for all those involved in education and training.

To ensure a coherent linkage between resources, access, delivery, participation and outcomes to achieve equity, these principles will be applied in three main ways:

- Equity principles will be built into all services provided by the RSPCA Academy
- Available resources will be clearly linked to the achievement of better and more equitable participation and outcomes
- Specific measures will continue to be provided to assist all learners and groups to maximise their outcomes from education and training

This charter will be reflected in all RSPCA Academy policies and activities. The RSPCA Academy will monitor and report on progress towards more equitable outcomes from training.

6.2 Procedure

The RSPCA Academy's access and equity principles are enforced through:

- course information

- implementing the Complaints and Grievances Policy
- recognising prior learning completed by each student (RPL/Credit Transfer)
- student selection, enrolment and induction (see section 3)
- student support employed by the RSPCA Academy (see section 3.3)
- the inclusion of workplace policies upon enrolment in the course
- the provision of support for clients with identified learning needs in the planning, delivery and assessment of training the RSPCA Academy Refund Policy

7. Competency and strategies in delivery, learning and assessment

The RSPCA Academy's training and assessment strategies and practices are responsive to industry and learner needs, and meet the requirements of the relevant training packages. All training and assessment is delivered by appropriately qualified trainers and assessors.

The RSPCA Academy assessment system ensures that assessment is conducted in accordance with the Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence as outlined in the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* (legislation.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377)

8. Feedback to students regarding assessments

The RSPCA Academy assessors provide feedback to students regarding their assessments. The assessor may provide feedback to the student regarding:

- areas for improvement
- gaps in evidence
- how to demonstrate competence
- positive aspects of the assessment tasks
- advice on future options

9. Student access to records

Every student that studies with the RSPCA Academy will have access to his or her enrolment and assessment records. A student can request access to his or her records in writing:

- academy@rspcansw.org.au, or
- RSPCA Academy, PO Box 34, Yagoona, NSW, 2199

Once received, the student will be sent his or her records within 10 working days. Should this not be possible, the RSPCA Academy will inform the student of any delay at the first available opportunity.

Please note, email is the preferred method of correspondence.

10. Appeals

The RSPCA Academy provides an opportunity for all students to appeal assessment decisions. All students should be given the provision of appeal if they believe they have been unjustly or unfairly deemed 'Not Yet Competent'. The RSPCA Academy respects this right and has developed the following procedure to ensure students' rights are met.

Students have the following avenues of appeal:

- They can approach the assessor informally
- If the student is unsatisfied with the assessor's decision, they have a further right to formally appeal to the Training Manager and present their case. This appeal must be in writing, with the record of interactions attached (see Appeals Form Appendix D)
- If the student is unsatisfied with the decision of the Training Manager, following the presentation of their formal appeal, they have a further right to resubmit the Appeals Form to the Executive Manager, Community, Education and Training
- Following consideration of the appeal, the student will be provided with a written statement of the appeals outcomes,

including reasons for the decision

- Should the student decide to appeal their final notice of assessment, they will need to retain all assessments and return them to the RSPCA Academy within the appeal period (28 days from the completion of the course). At the request of the student appealing, an independent party may review the appeal.
- If a student is unsatisfied with the manner in which the RSPCA Academy has managed a grievance or complaint, the student may then approach the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) (asqa.gov.au).

If the RSPCA Academy believes that it will take longer than 60 days to process and finalise the appeal, the student will be informed in writing of the reason why, and will receive updates on the progress of the matter.

11. Disciplinary procedures

RSPCA Academy has disciplinary procedures to ensure consistent standards of behaviour and effective responses to misconduct.

Student disciplinary procedures will be employed only after all other good teaching techniques and strategies have been exhausted (e.g., supporting students towards positive behaviour, following up concerns with students immediately, etc.). Additionally, whenever possible and appropriate, informal resolution and or mediation will be used to resolve issues of individual behaviour before recourse to formal disciplinary procedures.

All misconduct matters will be referred to the RSPCA Academy management team for appropriate action, which may include suspension from training sessions, suspension of the student's course, or in certain circumstances include cancellation of the student's enrolment. Students will be notified in writing of any action to be taken.

Behavioural misconduct includes but is not limited to:

- failure to comply with any RSPCA Academy policy or the Student Code of Conduct
- refusing or failing to identify oneself truthfully
- any act or omission that endangers the safety or health of any person or animal
- acting in a way that causes students or staff to fear for their personal safety, or the safety of the animals
- being under the influence of prohibited drugs and/or substances including alcohol while on RSPCA NSW premises
- possession of a weapon on RSPCA NSW premises
- any action deemed unlawful under State or Commonwealth laws

Where State or Commonwealth laws appear to have been breached, the matter will be referred to the police or other appropriate authority.

12. Compliance with legislation

The RSPCA Academy will meet all legislative requirements of the State and Federal Government. Details of State legislation can be found at legislation.nsw.gov.au. Details of Federal legislation can be found at legislation.gov.au.

13. Student enquiries, learning and support

For all student enquiries, or information about courses and careers, please contact:

Jacqui Ross

RSPCA Academy Administrator

jross@rspcansw.org.au or (02) 9782 4478

If students are experiencing difficulties, external support agencies that may be of assistance include:

- Headspace: headspace.org.au
- Lifeline: call 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline (for those aged under 25): call 1800 55 1800
- Beyond Blue: beyondblue.org.au, or call 1300 22 4636
- The Australian Counselling Association (to find a registered counsellor): theaca.net.au

RSPCA Academy Application for Refund

Payment of a refund is subject to the RSPCA Academy Refund Policy

Date:

Applicant's name:

Applicant's address:

Applicant's phone number:

Applicant's email:

Name of course applicant was enrolled in:

Date of course commencement:

Proof of payment attached: YES / NO

Total amount paid:

Reason for withdrawal from the course:

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date received:

Proof of payment produced: YES / NO

Application for refund accepted: YES / NO

Administration fees payable:

Total refund payable (if applicable):

RSPCA Academy Complaints/Grievance Form

All complaints using this form will be forwarded to the RSPCA Academy Training Manager.

Your name:

Your address:

Your phone number:

Your email:

Name of the course in which you are currently enrolled:

Date of course commencement:

Name of person involved in this complaint:

Date of incident:

Time of incident:

Complaint (please be specific with all details):

Was any action taken to correct the problem at the time of the incident?
If so, what action was taken?

OFFICE USE ONLY

Name of RSPCA Academy staff member this complain was given to:

Action taken:

Follow-up requirements:

Recommendations:

RSPCA Academy Appeals Form

Student's name:

Student's phone number:

Student's email address:

Course code and name:

Assessor's name:

Unit code and name:

Name of assessment item:

Date submitted:

Date feedback received:

Details to support appeal:

Student's signature:

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date appeal received:

Date of resolution:

Outcome of appeal:

Signed:

Assessor's name:

AQF Policies

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) provides the standards for Australian qualifications. To review the AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy, please see aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AQF_pathways_jan2013.pdf

For other policy requirements, please see aqf.edu.au/aqf/in-detail/aqf-policies

