

Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure



Purpose	This policy outlines the process for submitting, managing and responding to student and parent complaints and disputes, ensuring these are dealt with in an efficient, effective and procedurally fair manner.		
Scope	College students and parents, suppliers and members of the public.		
Status	Approved	Version	1.0
Drafted by	HRC Manager	Supersedes	CompliSpace <i>Complaints Handling Program</i>
Authorised by	Board Chair	Date of Authorisation	31 July 2023
References	Legislation		Other College Policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 • Australian Education Regulations 2013 • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) • Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) • Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the College Enterprise Agreement (2022) • the College Work Health and Safety Policy • the College Anti-Discrimination Policy • the College Sexual Harassment Policy • the College Disability Discrimination Policy • the College Privacy Policy • the College Code of Conduct
Review Date:	Annually	Next Review	June 2024
Policy Owner:	College Board		
Definitions	Student	A student currently or previously enrolled at the College.	
	Parent	A parent, guardian or carer of a student.	
	Public	A member of the public not otherwise attached to the College. This includes a person living in a property near the College, who lives in close proximity to operations of the College.	
	Supplier	A person or professional entity who supplies goods or services to the College	
	Complaint	A statement expressing unhappiness or general discontent about a situation that may or may not require resolution. For the purposes of this policy, the term ‘complaint can also mean grievance, with the complaint is being presented by a	
	Complainant	College employee.	
	Formal complaint	<p>A person making a complaint.</p> <p>A complaint that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> is addressed as such; is not frivolous in nature, or understood to not reasonably be considered as requiring the formality such a complaint can signify, and/or; requires the intervention of the Principal to address. 	

1.0 Policy

Westside Christian College (“the College”) is committed to ensuring that student, parent and supplier complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.

The College views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

The College acknowledges the right of students and parents and to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the College and the College encourages constructive criticism and complaints.

The College recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students and parents.

1.1 Complaints that may be resolved under this Policy

The College encourages students, parents and suppliers to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination and/or privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as when it is felt that:

- the College, its employees or students have not met the service delivery standards set out in the Student Enrolment Agreement, or that could be reasonably expected
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to the relevant Code of Conduct
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication
- issues related to College fees and payments
- general administrative issues.

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

1.2 Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the College’s *Child Protection Policy*
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the *Student Bullying Policy* or *Positive Behaviour Management Policy*
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the *Behaviour Development Policy* or *Code of Behaviour*
- Employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their supervisor and are managed in accordance with the College’s *Grievance Policy and Procedure*
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate
- Formal legal proceedings.

1.3 Complaints Handling Principles

The College is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

- complaints will be resolved with a level of formality in proportion to the nature of the complaint raised
- complaints will be taken seriously
- anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits
- complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner
- the College will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance. Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible

- mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives for resolving complaints
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- the College will give reasonable progress updates
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented
- provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted
- complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaints and they will not suffer any other reprisals
- the College will keep records of complaints
- the College's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

1.4 Responsibilities

1.4.1 The College

The College has the following roles and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- appropriately communicate the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents and suppliers
- ensure that this policy and procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling procedures
- take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them
- appropriately implement remedies
- appropriately train relevant employees
- keep a record of the complaint and actions taken to resolution
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time
- monitor and report to the governing body on complaints, especially regarding any claim for redress
- report to the College's insurer when that is relevant.

1.4.2 All Parties

The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

- apply and comply with the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures and Code of Conduct as applicable
- lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises
- expect that the complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively; in a timely manner; with procedural fairness wherever practicable; that confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- act in a non-threatening manner
- to be appropriately supported
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

1.4.3 Employees Receiving Complaints

Employees receiving complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling policy and procedures
- inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required
- provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to them to assist with lodging the complaint
- maintain confidentiality
- keep appropriate records
- forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal as appropriate, with any additional background known to assist in understanding the complaint and actions already taken to remedy
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

1.5 Implementation

The College is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the College, including by the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.

The College is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related procedures.

The College will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the College Board on complaint handling at the College.

The College will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy College culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

2.0 Procedure

2.1 Complaints may be resolved in any of the following ways:

Level 1	Self-managed	<p>The College encourages complainants to first raise their complaint with the person/s to whom it relates. This can often provide informal resolution to the matter.</p> <p>Strategies at this level might include (but are not limited to) conversations, emails or phone calls.</p>		
Level 2	Supervisor/Management	<p>If resolution has not been successful, or if prior steps are insufficient due to the nature of the complaint, the matter can be raised with a member of the College Senior Leadership or Executive Teams. These staff are:</p>		
		Primary College	Secondary College	Business Office
		Head of Primary Deputy Head of Primary Head of Teaching and Learning	Head of Secondary Deputy Head of Secondary Head of Teaching and Learning	Business Manager Human Resource and Compliance Manager
		<p>Complaints at this level should be made in writing. Letters addressed to staff in these positions can be delivered to either campus Reception, or sent via email.</p>		
Level 3	Principal	<p>If resolution has not been successful, or if prior steps are insufficient or inappropriate due to the nature of the complaint (for example, the complaint is about the supervisor/manager), the matter can be raised with the College Principal.</p> <p>Complaints at this level should be made in writing. Letters addressed to the Principal can be delivered to either campus Reception, or sent via email. It is expected that almost all complaints will be able to be resolved if they reach this level.</p>		
Level 4	College Board	<p>If resolution has not been successful, or if prior steps are insufficient or inappropriate due to the nature of the complaint, the matter can be raised with the College Board, marked attention to the Board Chairman. This is also an appropriate first point of call if the complaint is in relation to the Principal.</p> <p>Complaints at this level should be made in writing. Letters addressed to the Board can be delivered to either campus Reception, or sent via email.</p>		

2.1 Support Person

The complainant may request a support person to assist in the resolution of a complaint, if the complaint is at Level 2 or higher. The complainant can ask a work colleague, friend, family member, industrial representative (union officer), or lawyer to be their employee support person.

The support person should not have a conflict of interest. For example, if someone is required as a witness in the investigation, it would be considered to be a conflict of interest for them to be the support person.

It is important that the complainant provides the name of their support person to the person leading meetings before the meeting takes place, as they may be asked to find a different support person if the College believes there is a conflict of interest. This avoids having to reschedule meetings due to an inappropriate support person attending, and the meeting being terminated.

The role of a support person is to attend meetings regarding the grievance, and outside of meetings, to listen to the discussion and provide advice and act as a sounding board. The support person is generally not permitted to speak at meetings; they should not speak on behalf of the complainant nor provide explanations or submissions. They may take notes, or clarify discussion points that appear to have confused the complainant. The College reserves the right to discontinue a meeting in instances where the support person acts contrary to these instructions.

Complainants may choose to not have a support person.

2.2 Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a pathway for settling disputes during a formal complaint process. There are various types of ADR, including mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. ADR is only possible with the assistance of an impartial third party who assists both parties to reach an agreement and/or satisfactory resolution.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the College may offer (and the complainant can request) a form of ADR. For ADR to be effective, both parties need to be willing to participate in this activity, and agree to follow the process and adhere to the outcomes.