



Sacred Heart
College
GEELONG

GRIEVANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY - STUDENT VERSION

Rationale

Sacred Heart College Geelong is committed to building a school community that features positive and respectful relationships. Within our school, relationships are founded in the Mercy values of justice, compassion, and respect.

The College understands that from time to time grievances will arise regarding aspects of our College and that at times it is important that all members of the community have the opportunity to be heard.

Definitions

Complaint: See Grievance definition. Both terms may be used interchangeably within this policy.

Complainant: The person raising the grievance.

Grievance: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the College related to one or more of the following:

- Its services or dealings with individuals
- Allegations about the conduct of its workplace participants
- Another child or young person at the College, or the handling of a prior concern

(Complaints Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people)

Subject of the complaint: The individual/s or organisation against which a grievance is made.

Workplace Participants: All College employees, contractors, consultants, students on placement and volunteers (hereafter referred to as Workplace Participants), both inside and outside of the workplace.

Policy Statement

The College acknowledges that in school communities, harmony between individuals and groups is not always possible and at times, some individuals or groups will consider that their rights or responsibilities have been eroded. The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles of grievance management at the College and the procedure for managing grievances.



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Principles

In receiving and responding to grievances, the following guiding principles will inform and direct the College's actions:

- Grievances will be responded to in a prompt, impartial and just manner.
- Grievances will be initially responded to at the lowest possible level i.e. trusted staff member or Mentor Group teacher, depending on the seriousness of the complaint and escalated if a satisfactory resolution is not obtained.
- Both the person raising the grievance and the subject of the grievance will receive appropriate information, support and assistance in resolving the complaint.
- No person will be victimized as a result of the complaint.
- A restorative approach will be taken in resolving complaints and parties will work together with respect and openness to reach a fair and reasonable decision.
- Procedural fairness will be followed throughout the complaints handling procedure. This includes:
 - o The subject of the grievance being fully informed of the allegations made against them, so they can respond and defend themselves
 - o Full, impartial investigation with all parties being heard and treated equally
 - o Irrelevant matters not being taken into account
 - o The person lodging the grievance not being involved in determining the outcome of the grievance handling process
 - o The decision-maker acting fairly and without bias, and
 - o People involved in the grievance are kept informed throughout the process.
- Throughout and after the process, confidentiality is vital. Informing people not involved in the investigation will be considered a breach of confidentiality, which is a serious issue and may result in disciplinary action.
- Should the person lodging the grievance wish to remain anonymous, the College may not be able to fully address the grievance or resolve the matter. Anonymous grievances will be recorded in the same manner that all other grievances are recorded.
- Management of complaints will be handled as outlined below (See [Grievance Management Flowchart](#) for summary)

Procedures for Complaints - Informal Process

- a. Discuss the matter with the person concerned directly. Students are encouraged to respectfully make it clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is inappropriate (eg. name calling, exclusion) and/or their words are hurtful. Sometimes the person concerned will genuinely be unaware that their behaviour has been, or is, inappropriate. Once this has been brought to their attention, the person concerned will usually be prepared to change their behaviour.
- b. Seek information on options available to resolve the matter. In the first instance, a student who has a grievance should explore ways of resolving their grievance by discussing the problem with their Mentor Group teacher, House Leader, or another trusted adult within the College.
- c. Request intervention. In some cases, a student may be unable to resolve a grievance themselves and may request intervention from a trusted adult within the College such as a teacher, their Mentor Group teacher, House Leader, College Psychologist or Social Worker, Principal or other workplace participant.



- d. Interventions may involve individual meetings with each person, or a joint mediation meeting. The aim is to ensure that those involved are aware of the behaviours that have caused the grievance, and to ensure that the behaviour stops or changes.
- e. Resolutions may include acknowledgement of the grief caused by the behaviour, an apology, a commitment to discontinue the behaviour and the monitoring of the situation so each individual feels supported and protected.
- f. If an informal procedure is unsuccessful, a formal grievance may be lodged.

Procedures for Complaints - Formal Process

- a. Formal grievances must be lodged with the House Leader (for grievances with a student), Principal, or member of the College Leadership Team. The person who receives the grievance will decide, in consultation with the Principal, who is the person (or persons) most appropriate to investigate the grievance.
- b. A formal grievance should be in writing using the College Grievance Form.
- c. The nominated investigator will investigate the grievance, make a finding and present a report to the Principal or member of the College Leadership team who will make the final decision regarding the outcome and implementation of the decision.
- d. The Principal can decline to pursue a grievance if the grievance is more than twelve months old, and there is no valid reason for the delay in lodging the grievance. The complainant has the right to lodge the grievance with the Equal Opportunity or Human Rights Commission, or other appropriate external body.
- e. Formal process, stages to be followed:
 - o Investigating the grievance:
 - interviewing the student who has submitted the Grievance form (a support person for the student may attend the interview)
 - putting the grievance to the respondent
 - interviewing the respondent (a support person for the respondent may attend the interview)
 - o interviewing witnesses, if necessary and gathering other relevant evidence
 - o Making a finding
 - o Preparing a report documenting:
 - all information gathered during the investigation
 - the procedure followed
 - the finding made, and
 - recommendations as to what the outcome should be.
 - o Implement the recommended outcome or decide on an alternative course of action
 - o Monitor the situation.

Possible Outcomes

The outcome of a grievance may take the form of one or more of the following:

- an apology – either verbal or written
- counselling
- disciplinary action against the subject of the complaint such as a formal warning, demotion, transfer, suspension, expulsion or dismissal
- disciplinary action against the person making the complaint where there is strong evidence that the grievance was malicious or an abuse of process



- a behavioural contract
- reimbursement of any costs associated with the grievance
- reassessment of student assessment or assignments
- granting of special consideration or extension for assessment purposes
- review of policies or procedures
- education awareness-raising strategies.

The outcome recommended will depend on:

- the severity and frequency of the action or behaviour leading to the grievance
- the weight of the evidence
- the wishes of the person grieved
- whether the subject of the complaint could have been expected to know that such an action or behaviour was a breach of policy
- whether the behaviour may have been the result of a misunderstanding
- how apologetic the subject of the complaint is
- whether there have been any previous incidents or warnings involving the subject of the complaint
- other factors arising from the circumstances of a case.

Appeals

Appeal may be made to the Principal, a member of the College Leadership Team or Human Resources, if that person was not involved in the original grievance management process.

That person will investigate the way the grievance has been handled, examine the outcome and determine if the outcome was appropriate or if the grievance needs to be reinvestigated.

Recourse to an external agency

Students may take their grievance to the external agency at any stage in the grievance management process if they are unhappy with the progress being made in dealing with their grievance. The College will be able to provide the names and addresses of external agencies.

Related Policies and Documents

Sacred Heart College

- Respectful Workplace Policy
- Social Media Policy for Workplace Participants
- Workplace Aggression Policy
- Workplace Equal Opportunity Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Student Positive Behaviour Policy
- Student Digital Technologies Policy
- Grievance Management [Flowchart](#)

Mercy Education Limited

- 1.06 Complaints Management Policy
- 1.06 Complaints Management Operational Instructions



- 1.06 Whistleblower Policy
- 1.07A Privacy Policy
- 1.10 Codes of Conduct Policy
 - MEL Code of Conduct
 - MEL Parent Code of Conduct

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria

- Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2018 (VCEMEA) or its successors

Document Control

Date Approved: 26 October 2022

Name: Anna Negro, Principal

Signature: 

Sponsor: Deputy Principal – Student Development

Date presented at Advisory Council Meeting:

Reviewed by:

- School Committee: House Leaders
- Sub Committee of the College Council: Wellbeing Subcommittee
- Student Leadership House Focus Team: Community Engagement

Person responsible for implementation: Principal

Location checklist: Staff Handbook Student Space Parent Portal Website

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