



Cooloola Christian College

COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCE POLICY

Policy:	Board	
Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that student, parent and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a Biblical manner that is responsive, efficient, effective, fair and considerate.	
Scope:	Students, parents and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements. This policy covers all complaints about any matter (other than an industrial matter).	
Status:	Adopted: September 2017 Reviewed: October 2021	Supercedes: <i>Complaints and Grievance Policy (2017.09-G-2020.09)</i>
Authorised by:	Board Chair	Date: 25 October 2021
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017</i> • <i>Education (General Provisions) Act 2006</i> • <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</i> • <i>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</i> • <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</i> • <i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</i> • <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</i> • <i>Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</i> • <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i> • <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</i> • <i>CCC Complaints and Grievance Procedures</i> • <i>CCC Complaints Register</i> • <i>CCC Anti-Discrimination Policy</i> • <i>CCC Disabilities Policy</i> • <i>CCC Privacy Policy</i> • <i>CCC Sexual Harassment Policy</i> • <i>CCC Workplace Bullying Prevention Policy</i> • <i>CCC Work Health and Safety Policy</i> • <i>CCC Concerns of Bias or Conflict of Interest Policy</i> • <i>CCC Student Support Services Policy</i> • <i>CCC Student Behaviour Management Policy</i> • <i>CCC Responsible Thinking Process Policy</i> 	
Review Frequency:	Annually	Next Review Date: October 2022

1. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Christians are called to love one another and to live in peace with all men. “We are called to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3)

However, we also recognise that the demands of everyday life and the interactions with others mean that this command is, at times, difficult to fulfil the way that God would have us. Therefore, in the light of the Scriptures, any grievance, dispute or complaint must be handled in such a way as to preserve unity and strive for peace.

The Bible says that Christians are to be reconciled to one another when disputes arise and issues ought to be dealt as soon as is possible with the person involved. Sharing grievances with others who are not directly involved is gossip and is not honouring to God or others. Matthew 18:15-24 gives very specific details about how disputes between Christians ought to be settled and therefore the goal of this policy is to ensure that once the Biblical guidelines are in place and followed, and Christ-like and godly resolution can be achieved for all concerned.

The overarching principle that must be considered at all times during this process is Christ’s command to love God first and our neighbour as ourselves. In other words, any action that is taken must be taken out of love, seeking the good of the other person and the College community as a whole.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Cooloola Christian College is committed to ensuring that student, parent and employee complaints are dealt with in a Biblical manner that is responsive, efficient, effective, fair and considerate.

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

Cooloola Christian College acknowledges the right of students, parents and employees to seek remedy for concerns and problems that they have, which arise from an action, inaction or decision of school staff or parents/students and encourages constructive criticism and complaints.

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

Additional specific College policies are also in place to address and remedy behaviours or concerns. They include, but are not limited to, those policies listed above.

2.1 Principles

This policy and the related *CCC Complaints and Grievance Handling Procedures* will uphold the importance of:

- Scriptural Principles
- Natural Justice
- Procedural Fairness
- Confidentiality

2.2 Definitions

Complaints Manager: The Principal, or in cases involving complaints against the Principal, the Board Chairman.

Formal Complaint: A complaint that has not been satisfactorily resolved through the informal complaint procedure and is then presented in writing to the Complaints Manager.

Natural Justice: the right of a person to be provided a full opportunity, at the earliest time, to provide his/her version of the matters in contention, and to be heard by an unbiased investigator/assessor.

2.3 Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy

Cooloola Christian College encourages students, parents and employees to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, student protection, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- the school, its employees or students having done something wrong
- the school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done
- the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees
- issues related to school 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.

2.4 Issues Outside this Policy

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

- Student protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the school's *Student Protection Policy*.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with according to the *Student Support Services Policy* and the *Responsible Thinking Process Policy*.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the *Student Behaviour Management Policy*.
- Employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their supervisor or taken to the Staff Wellbeing Committee or The Circle.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police where appropriate.
- Formal legal proceedings.

2.5 Complaints Handling Principles

Most complaints should be able to be satisfactorily remedied exercising Biblical principles through communication with staff, Middle or Senior Leadership.

For further details regarding complaints and grievance handling, refer to the Cooloola Christian College *Complaints and Grievance Handling Procedures*.

Cooloola Christian College is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

- complaints will be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible
- 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
- if making a Formal Complaint, it must be submitted in writing to the Principal (even if the Complainant has raised the complaint orally with Senior Staff/Principal) with sufficient details to allow a meaningful response. This should include specific details (not generalized opinions) of examples of the alleged offences and information of: • when, • where, • what, • witnesses, if any, • quotes of what was said by whom, • emails, etc.
- Cooloola Christian College will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance.
- the engagement or delegation by the Principal of a person (internal or external) to conduct the investigation (without bias).
- provision of a fair, timely and consistent response to the Complaint.
- mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard
- recommendation to have a support person for the Complainant in meetings
- interviews will be conducted in a “private setting” within the school
- confidentiality and privacy to all people involved will be maintained as much as possible
- treating all parties respectfully
- all parties to the complaints will be appropriately supported
- Cooloola Christian 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 school will keep records of complaints
- The Executive Assistant will serve as the “liaison officer” to receive and forward communications (from and between the School, Complainant, to the investigator).
- the school's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

2.6 Responsibilities

2.6.1 School

The school has the following role and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the school's *Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy and Procedures*
- appropriately communicate the school's *Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy and Procedures* to students, parents and employees
- ensure that the *Complaints and Grievance Handling Procedures* are readily accessible by staff, students and parents

- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the *Complaints and Grievance Handling Procedures*
- ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint
- 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 records
- conduct a review/audit of the *Complaints Register* from time to time
- monitor and report to the governing body regarding complaints
- report to the school's insurer when that is relevant
- refer to the school's governing body immediately any claim for legal redress.

2.6.2 All Parties to a Dispute

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

- apply and comply with the school's *Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy and Procedures*
- 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
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

2.6.3 Employees Receiving Complaints

Employees receiving complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the school's *Complaints and Grievance 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 assist them in lodging their complaint
- provide the Complainant with a copy of the school's *Complaints and Grievance Policy*
- maintain confidentiality
- keep appropriate records
- to forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, as appropriate
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the Complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

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

Cooloola Christian 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.

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

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

Confidential and impartial information about the school's relevant policies and processes may be obtained from the Student Protection Officers or the Executive Assistant.

4. RELATED PROCEDURES

Refer to the Complaints and Grievances Procedures Document for specific procedures in handling complaints.