



Cooloola Christian College

COMPLAINTS and GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

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| Policy: | Board | |
| Purpose: | The purpose of these procedures 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. | |
| Status: | Adopted: September 2017 Reviewed: October 2021 | Supersedes: <i>Complaints & Grievance Procedures (2017.09-G-2020.09)</i> |
| Authorised by: | Board Chair | Date: 25 th October 2021 |
| References: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017</i> • <i>CCC Complaints and Grievance Policy</i> • <i>CCC Student Protection Policy</i> | |
| Review Frequency: | Annually | Next Review Date: October 2022 |

1. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

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).

In any grievance or dispute we seek to preserve this unity by following the guidelines given in the Bible. Christians should be reconciled to one another when disputes of any nature arise between them according to Matthew 5:23, 24 and Matthew 18:15-22.

At all times, all parties must guard against gossip. If the person you are talking to is not a part of the solution or part of the problem, then it is gossiping to share with them.

The goal at all times is reconciliation. This may involve seeking or offering forgiveness, repentance, and/or restitution. An offer of an apology should never be refused and forgiveness should never be refused (Luke 17:3-4).

Always approach other people with whom you have a grievance in a prayerful and loving manner. Every person has value and is created in the image of God. Therefore, when we relate to people we ought to relate in a way that builds them up not tears them down. (Romans 14: 19; Ephesians 4:29-32)

2. PROCEDURES

The processes of handling a complaint (ie. receiving, assessing, investigating) MUST include procedural fairness and natural justice (or the right to be heard).

2.1 GENERAL

All complaints must be dealt with in accordance with Biblical principles including but not limited to those stated above.

2.2 STUDENTS

2.2.1 A minimum of two Student Protection Officers (SPOs) are mandated within the College for students to contact if they have a specific complaint or grievance. (Refer to the *College Officer Register* for the names of the current SPOs.) In addition, any member of staff may be approached for guidance, information or to report a concern.

2.2.2 A SPO or other member of staff receiving a complaint, grievance or concern from a student is to identify the severity of the disclosure and take appropriate action.

2.2.3 Depending on the disclosure, the member of staff should follow the relevant procedures; this may include use of this document, the *Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy* or the student protection protocols in use within the College.

2.2.4 If necessary, the member of staff should seek assistance from the Deputy Principal or Principal.

2.2.5 Nothing in this procedure negates, prevents or discourages the person from meeting any mandatory reporting specified in legislation pertaining at the time.

2.2.6 All students are to be informed of their right to make a complaint or to raise a concern about another student or adult.

2.3 STAFF, PARENTS AND ASSOCIATED OTHER PERSONS

2.3.1 If a problem exists between two parties then the aggrieved/concerned party is encouraged to initially go to the offender/other party confidentially to discuss the issue with them. If this resolves the issue then this ends the complaints procedure in this case.

2.3.2 If the problem is not resolved by the previous step, then the complainant can invite another person to go with them to talk with the offender. If this resolves the issue, then this ends the complaints procedure in this case.

2.3.3 If the problem is still not resolved then the issue should be referred to the Principal who will seek to mediate a resolution.

2.3.4 If the complainant wishes to proceed further a complaint must be made in writing to the Principal (even if they have raised their Complaint orally to Senior Staff/Principal). The written complaint must have 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.

2.3.5 All proceedings in relation to a formal complaint must be documented.

2.3.6 The Complaint and any other documentation should be delivered to the Principal either directly or through the Executive Assistant.

2.3.7 The Principal will inform the other party that an official complaint has been lodged and provide for the other party all relevant details and copies of documents. The Principal will request the other party to respond in writing to these complaints within a specified period. Both parties are invited to have support persons of their choice at all stages of the proceedings.

2.3.8 Following the response by the other party, the Principal and The Chairman of the Board (with external advice, as necessary) will decide on how best to proceed. This may include:

- a. Handling the complaint under a specific College Policy (if applicable)
- b. Mediation. When mediation is required, a trained Restorative Practice staff member will be recommended.
- c. Investigation. The Principal and Board Chairman may recommend that the Board appoint an external investigator to investigate the Complaint and its substance.

2.3.9 The Principal will inform both Complainant and the other party of the management plan decided upon to address the Complaint.

2.3.10 If mediation is agreed upon:

- a. The mediation will take place
- b. Both parties will be requested to support any outcome, and
- c. Sign what was agreed upon
- d. The matter will be monitored at set intervals subsequently.

2.4 Parental Complaints referred to the Board regarding the Suspension/ Exclusion/Expulsion of a Student

2.4.1 Senior staff may decide to exclude/expel/suspend students for very serious (one-off or patterns of) behaviours which, following careful internal investigation processes and application of relevant school policies by delegated Senior Staff, have reasonably led to expulsion, on the grounds of (usually) unacceptable risks to the school and other students.

2.4.2 Should the Board receive a request/demand for a further investigation from a parent/guardian, the Board will confirm with the Principal regarding the process undertaken and whether due process and natural justice were provided under the *CCC Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy* and in compliance with Regulation 7 of the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations*.

2.4.3 If satisfied that processes were properly followed, the Board will respond to the parent/guardian in writing confirming this finding and that it will not re-open or initiate a further investigation and, hence, can take the matter no further.

2.4.4 Should the school receive a complaint AFTER the child has been removed from enrolment, the school is not required to conduct an investigation as the contractual legal relationship no longer exists.

2.5 Other complaints may also be referred to the Board which may/may not require further investigation.

2.6 Investigation of a Complaint

If an investigation takes place:

2.6.1 An investigator will be engaged by the Board

2.6.2 The Principal will inform the Complainant (and Respondent) that to remove bias, he/she as Principal will not conduct the investigation, but rather appoint a separate trained investigator.

2.6.3 The investigator will interview both parties.

2.6.4 All parties interviewed will be required to sign a Confidentiality Protocol for Parties and Witnesses

2.6.5 All statements taken will be signed as a 'true record' of information given

2.6.6 The Investigator will provide a report of the investigation, whether or not the complaint can be substantiated, and recommendations to the Principal.

2.6.7 Upon completion of the Investigation Report, the Board in consultation with the Principal (and Senior Leadership Team) will make a decision as to the most appropriate course of action, according to the report findings and evidence.

2.6.8 The Principal will inform, in writing, the Complainant and the other party of the findings of the investigation, the decision of the Board and actions to be taken.

2.6.9 The Principal will put in place any actions resulting from the decision.

2.6.10 Disciplinary outcomes may apply to anyone who brings a complaint, which is considered vexatious, or without any basis.

2.6.11 There may be time when a Complainant does not want to continue with any process or investigation. If the issues raised are such that the health and wellbeing of staff or students is being adversely affected, the College reserves the right to set up an investigation, irrespective of the wants of the Complainant or other parties.

2.6.12 The decision of the Board following Investigation of the Complaint constitutes the conclusion of the matter in terms of the College *Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy*.

Refer to the *CCC Complaints and Grievance Policy* for further guidelines regarding complaints to the Board.