



COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

The complaints handling procedure in this policy is one in which complaints are investigated by a Complaints Officer (Principal or delegated member of the College Leadership Team). This policy also provides for appeals.

The essential elements of a complaints handling procedure are to:

- explain the meaning of "complaint";
- ensure confidentiality, no victimisation, fairness, timeliness;
- explain in detail what an employee with a complaint can do - state the different options available;
- explain what will happen once a formal complaint is made;
- detail outcomes if complaint substantiated, unsubstantiated;
- explain appeals procedure;
- include names of contact officers, Complaints Officer/s; and
- mention right of employee to go to outside agency if dissatisfied.

Purpose of this Procedure

At Kolbe Catholic College Greenvale Lakes, we are committed to providing a pleasant work environment for all employees and students. We acknowledge, however, that employees and students can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the College, which appears to be discriminatory or to constitute harassment. An employee or student can have a complaint about any decision or the behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the Leadership Team or other staff/students) that he/she feels is discriminatory or constitutes harassment.

The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure by which employees/students can have such complaints addressed.

Key elements of our complaints handling procedure

The following are the key elements of our complaints handling procedure:

Impartiality. If a complaint is recorded, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgments or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

Confidentiality. All concerned parties are assured that the complaint and investigation will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint and the person investigating.

No victimisation. If a complaint is made, no concerned party will not suffer in any way as a consequence of the process. The college authorities will ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimised in any way, nor that consequences are issued without appropriate investigation.

Timeliness. Each complaint will be finalised within as short a period as possible. All complaints should be finalised within one month.

What to do if you have a complaint

1. Approach the person involved.

In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. If it is about a work decision, tell them why you think it is discriminatory or harassment. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.

2. Go to Principal, Deputy Principal, or other delegated person

If you don't feel as if you can approach the person directly, then go and explain the problem to a member of the College Leadership Team. The person will advise you about what your options are and what will happen if you decide to make a formal complaint. Nothing will be done in relation to the complaint without your agreeing to it.

What happens next?

Once you have made the complaint to the Leadership Team, consideration will be given to whether there are any reasons why *he/she* should not proceed to deal with the complaint. For example, the person you complained about may be a personal friend. If there is such a reason which indicates it is inappropriate for the Leadership Team to deal with your complaint, it will, with your consent, be referred to another appropriate person.

The Leadership Team will then interview you. During this interview a number of things will be explained to you, such as what will happen if the complaint is found to be supported by the evidence, or if it is found to be not supported by the evidence. You will also be told where you can go for assistance if you are not happy with the way the College is dealing with the complaint. The Leadership Team will then take a written record of the complaint.

The Leadership Team will then action a process to investigate the matter thoroughly, and this may include talking to the person about whom the complaint is made to hear that side of the story. Any witnesses will also be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be warned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).

The Leadership Team will then tell you what the other people said and discuss what should be done to sort out the problem.

Review

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be reviewed by the Principal who will make a final decision as to the outcome of the complaint.

Possible outcomes

If the complaint is proved, the following are possible outcomes:

- a written apology;
- an official warning;
- counselling;
- disciplinary action; or
- dismissal.

If the complaint is unproved (not enough evidence), possible outcomes are:

- relevant training for all staff; and/or
- monitoring of behaviour of employees.

If the complaint is proved not to have happened at all, the following are possible outcomes :

- counselling for the person who made the complaint;
- a written apology;
- an official warning;
- disciplinary action; or
- dismissal.

The Leadership Team will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually happens. He/she will also assess the effectiveness of the outcome from time to time.

Appeals

Note that the person to whom an appeal is made depends upon who the original complaint was made to. It could be the Principal if the principal is not the person the complaint was first registered with. Other avenues of appeal are

- In the Melbourne Archdiocese – the coordinating Chairperson, Pastoral Care Unit Catholic Education Melbourne

If you feel that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you, you may appeal to the Principal if not involved in the Complaints Procedure itself or otherwise as listed above.

The Principal or other designated person will look at the way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome. If he/she believes it was handled properly and that the outcome was appropriate he/she will take no further action. If he/she thinks that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, he/she will organise for the complaint to be looked at again.

The appeal will be dealt with by someone other than the person who first handled the complaint.

Go to an external agency

If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the College, you may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance. You may take your complaint to the external agency at any stage in the procedure if you are unhappy with progress in dealing with your complaint. eg. VIEU, College Interim Board, Catholic Education Melbourne, VIT.