



# COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY (Parents & Students)

<b>Title</b>	3.10-005 Complaints Handling Policy (Parents & Students)
<b>Category</b>	Administration
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Approver</b>	Board of Directors
<b>Related Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017</i></li> <li>• <i>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017</i></li> <li>• <i>Australian Education Regulations 2013</i></li> <li>• <i>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</i></li> <li>• <i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• <i>Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</i></li> <li>• 1.20-008 Mueller College Disability Discrimination Policy</li> <li>• 3.10-009 Mueller College Privacy Policy</li> </ul>
<b>Published Location</b>	<p><u>Internal</u> Dropbox &gt; Policies &amp; Procedures &gt; 3 – Administration &gt; 3.10 Administration</p> <p><u>External</u> Mueller College website</p>

<b>Revision Record</b>					
<b>Version</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Review Cycle</b>	<b>Next Review</b>
2018	2018	Head of College	2018	2-yearly	2020
2020	2020	Head of College	2020	2-yearly	2022
V22.4	April 2022	Board of Directors	April 2022	2-yearly	2024
V22.9	September 2022	Board of Directors	September 2022	Annual	2023
V23.1	January 2023	Board of Directors	January 2023	Annual	2024
V24.3	March 2024	Board of Directors	March 2024	Annual	2025

## 1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, effective and fair way.

## 2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Mueller College views complaints as an important part of a feedback and accountability process.
- 2.2 Mueller College acknowledges the right of students and parents/guardians to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the College and the College encourages constructive criticism and complaints.
- 2.3 Mueller College recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students and parents/guardians.

## 3. Complaints That May Be Resolved Under This Policy

- 3.1 Mueller College encourages students and parents/guardians to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, discrimination and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:
  - the College, its employees or students having done something wrong;
  - the College, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done;
  - the College, 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;
  - issues related to tuition fees and payments;
  - general administrative issues.
- 3.2 Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

## 4. Issues Outside This Policy

- 4.1 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 in accordance with the Mueller College Positive Culture Framework.
  - Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Mueller College Positive Culture Framework.
  - Employee complaints related to their employment should be dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Handling - Staff Policy.
  - Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Head of College who will involve the Police as appropriate.
  - Formal legal proceedings.

## 5. Complaints Handling Principles

5.1 Mueller 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.
- Mueller College will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance.
- 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.
- Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible.
- All parties to the complaints will be appropriately supported.
- Mueller College will give reasonable progress updates.
- Appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented.
- A review pathway for parties to the complaint will be provided 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.

## 6. Responsibilities

6.1 The **College** has the following role and responsibilities:

- Develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policies.
- Appropriately communicate the College's Complaints Handling Policies to students, parents and employees.
- Ensure that the Complaints Handling Policies are readily accessible by staff, students and parents.
- Upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policies.
- 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 on complaints.
- Report to the College's insurer when that is relevant.
- Refer to the College's governing body immediately any claim for legal redress.

6.2 The **complainant and respondent** both have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Apply and comply with the College's Complaints Handling Policies.
- 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.

6.3 **Employees receiving complaints** have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Act in accordance with the College’s Complaints Handling Policies.
- 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.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Keep appropriate records.
- To forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Head of College, as appropriate.
- Not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

## 7. Implementation

- 7.1 Mueller 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.
- 7.2 Mueller 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.
- 7.3 Mueller 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.
- 7.4 Mueller College will act to encourage employees to contribute to a healthy College culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

## 8. Procedure

- 8.1 **Stage 1** - If a student or parent/guardian has a concern, grievance or conflict, it should be communicated to the classroom teacher as soon as possible, either in writing or in person.
- 8.1.1 If a meeting is sought with the classroom teacher, it is recommended that the concern be clearly communicated in writing prior to the meeting. This helps to clarify the concern and allows time for the classroom teacher to consider the concern.
- 8.2 **Stage 2** – If the concern, grievance or conflict remains unresolved, the student or parent/guardian may contact the Head of Department (Secondary) or Year Level Coordinator (Primary and Secondary) to further discuss the concern and seek resolution.

- 8.3 **Stage 3** – If the concern, grievance or conflict remains unresolved, the student or parent/guardian may contact the relevant Sub-School Coordinator listed below to discuss the concern and seek resolution.
- Prep Coordinator
  - Early Years Coordinator (Years 1-3)
  - Upper Primary Coordinator (Years 4-6)
  - Middle School Coordinator (Years 7-9)
  - Senior School Coordinator (Years 10-12)
- 8.4 **Stage 4** – If the concern, grievance or conflict remains unresolved, the student or parent/guardian may contact the relevant Head of Sub-School (Head of Primary or Head of Secondary) to discuss the concern and seek resolution.
- 8.4.1 At this stage, the concern may be recorded as a formal complaint.
- 8.4.2 The Head of Sub-School will conduct a review of the complaint and actions already taken.
- 8.4.3 The Head of Sub-School may meet with parties involved to clarify details and obtain additional information.
- 8.4.4 The Head of Sub-School will take appropriate action based on their review.
- 8.4.5 Actions will be documented and communicated to parties involved as appropriate.
- 8.5 **Stage 5** – If the student or parent/guardian is unsatisfied with the outcome, they may contact the Head of College to discuss the complaint and seek resolution.
- 8.5.1 The Head of College will conduct a review of the complaint and actions already taken.
- 8.5.2 Where necessary, the Head of College may meet with parties involved to clarify details and obtain additional information.
- 8.5.3 The Head of College will take appropriate action based on their review.
- 8.5.4 The Head of College’s decision will be documented and communicated to parties involved where appropriate.
- 8.5.5 This stage may require an extended period of time to complete and for the final decision to be communicated.
- 8.6 **Stage 6** - If the student or parent/guardian remains unsatisfied with the outcome, they may request a review of the processes and decisions by the College Executive Committee.
- 8.6.1 The request must be made in writing to the Executive Director.
- 8.6.2 The Executive Committee will ensure that all involved parties are informed of the escalation.
- 8.6.3 The Executive Committee will impartially hear all parties and seek to resolve the complaint in the most appropriate manner.
- 8.6.4 The Executive Committee will provide regular updates to the involved parties and will seek to conclude the matter in a timely manner.
- 8.6.5 The Executive Committee may either uphold the Head of College’s decision, or may overrule it, requiring the Head of College to modify some or all of the decisions.
- 8.6.6 The Executive Committee’s decision will be documented and communicated to parties involved as appropriate.
- 8.6.7 This stage may require an extended period of time to complete and for the final decision to be communicated.
- 8.6.8 The Executive Committee will not investigate any matters that have not followed the complaints process.
- 8.7 **Stage 7** – If the student or parent/guardian is still unsatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they may seek a further review by the Mueller College Board.

- 8.7.1 The Board's position is not to re-open or initiate a further investigation but to make enquiry into the process undertaken and whether due process and natural justice were provided, and in compliance with relevant regulations.
- 8.7.2 The Board will not investigate any matters that have not followed the complaints process.

## 9. Outcomes/Consequences

- 9.1 Outcomes may include any combination of the following:
- counselling;
  - training;
  - disciplinary actions against the person complained about;
  - official warnings that are noted on the personnel or student file;
  - a finding that the complaint was vexatious or malicious;
  - formal apologies; and/or
  - reimbursing any costs associated with the issue of concern.
- 9.2 Outcomes decided upon will depend on factors such as:
- the severity and frequency of the issue causing concern;
  - the weight of the evidence;
  - the wishes of the person who is making the complaint;
  - whether the person causing the problem could have been expected to know that such behaviour was a breach of policy/professional conduct;
  - the level of contrition;
  - whether there has been any prior incidents or warnings; and
  - whether or not there are legislative obligations.
- 9.3 Disciplinary outcomes will apply to anyone who brings a complaint which is considered vexatious or without any basis.
- 9.4 The decision of the Mueller College Board marks the end of the formal complaint process offered by the College.

## Appendix 1 - Summary of Key Changes

Version	Key Changes
V22.9	<i>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017</i> added to Related Documents on the recommendation of NSSAB
V23.1	No major changes