



GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Reviewed June 2016

1. PURPOSE OF THESE PROCEDURES

At Catholic Regional College St Albans we are committed to providing a pleasant work and learning environment for all employees, students and their families. We acknowledge, however, that employees, students and families can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the College. An employee, student or parent / guardian can have a complaint about any decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, staff, students or members of the broader College community) that he/she feels is **discriminatory, constitutes harassment or is of concern for another reason**.

The purpose of this document is to provide an accessible and simple process for the resolution of concerns and complaints by all members of the CRC St Albans community.

The procedures aim to foster positive relationships by ensuring complaints and concerns are resolved in a fair and timely manner, and that relationships are restored.

If you feel that you are being harassed discriminated against or have a concern, this complaints handling procedure is available to you so your concerns can be addressed.

2. KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

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

Impartiality:

If you raised a concern or make a complaint, 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 concern is raised or a complaint made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

Confidentiality.

You can feel secure that if you do raise a concern or make a complaint under this policy, it will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the concern or complaint will be the person raising the concern or making the complaint, the person investigating, the person against whom the complaint is made and any witnesses interviewed as part of the process.

No victimization:

The College will ensure that a person who raises the concern or makes a complaint is not victimised in any way.

Timeliness:

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

3. WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN OR A COMPLAINT.

3.1 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 concern or complaint how you feel. If the concern or 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. If it is about your work or learning, tell them what is impacting you. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.

3.2. Speak with a member of the College Leadership Team

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. He or she 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.

3.3 What happens next?

Once you have made the formal complaint, the member of the College Leadership Team with whom you have raised the issue, will then consider whether there are any reasons why she / he 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 this person to deal with your complaint, it will, with your consent, be referred to another appropriate person.

The person investigating the complaint 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. He / she will then take a written record of the complaint.

The person investigating the complaint will then talk 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 person investigating your complaint will then tell you what the other people said and discuss what should be done to sort out the problem. You should tell him / her what action you would like taken, (eg a written apology from the person, a written warning, etc.)

The person investigating this issue will then make a decision as to the outcome of the complaint.

Review

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

4. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

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

- mediation
- a written apology
- concern is addressed
- an official warning
- counselling
- disciplinary action; or
- dismissal

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

- relevant training for all staff / students; and/or families
- monitoring of behaviour of employees / students / family member

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

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

The person investigating the concern or complaint 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.

5. APPEALS

If you feel that the concerns and complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you, you may appeal to the Principal. He / she 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.

If the Principal handled the initial complaint you may wish to appeal to the Project Officer, Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigations at Catholic Education Melbourne.

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

6. ASSISTANCE FROM 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 you

complaint to the external agency at any stage in the procedure if you are unhappy with progress in dealing with your complaint. Refer to the appendices at the end of this policy for names and addresses of external agencies

APPENDICES TO THESE PROCEDURES:

1. Support for students wishing to put forward a complaint.

Students may wish to speak with their Pastoral Care teacher, Year Level Leader, the Deputy Principal (Pastoral Care) or the School Counsellor where they feel they have a concern or complaint. This person will advise them of their options, both formal and informal. In special circumstances the student may invite this chosen adult to act as advocate and / or adviser in this process.

It is crucial that any staff member approached to support a student at any stage in this process clearly allows the student to remain in control of the decisions and steps in the process.

2. Support for staff wishing to raise a complaint.

Prior to embarking on the formal procedures outlined in this document staff who feel that they have been discriminated against, harassed or who wish to raise a concern might like to discuss their options informally with a member of the College Leadership Team. Impartiality and confidentiality would still be binding on both parties.

However, the College strongly suggests that staff who feel that they have experienced discrimination, harassment or who have a concern or complaint in the workplace seek support and advice from ACCESS, the Employee Assistance Program provided by the College. Not only would this organization bring a valuable and removed perspective, it would also guarantee an impartiality and confidentiality that may be impossible in the complex relationships within a school community.

3. External Agencies

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

ACCESS Employee Assistance Program 1300 66 77 00

(To be reviewed in 2020)



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