



GEELONG GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Student Complaints Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This Policy provides the key principles applied by the School in receiving and resolving complaints from Students.
- 1.2 This Policy applies to all Students at the School, whether or not they are over or under the age of 18 years old, however, it is acknowledged that in some cases, external processes or reporting requirements may be varied or may not be required where a Student is aged over 16 years old, or over 18 years.
- 1.3 A complaint may relate to:
 - 1.3.1 the performance of teaching, administrative or services functions of the School;
 - 1.3.2 a third party involved in the delivery of services to the School; or
 - 1.3.3 the behaviour or actions of any School Employee, other Student at the School or a member of the School Community.

2. Complaint Handling Principles

The School uses the following guidelines when a complaint is received:

- 2.1 **Student Focused**
The School adopts a Student focused approach to the resolution of complaints with Students' wellbeing as a high priority.
- 2.2 **Confidentiality And Privacy**
Complaints will be treated with appropriate confidentiality, except where the School is required by law to disclose certain matters to external bodies.
- 2.3 **Good Faith**
The School expect all parties to act in good faith and work with the School to consider reasonable options for resolution.
- 2.4 **Procedural Fairness**
All complaints will be handled fairly and justly.
- 2.5 **Responsiveness**
The complaint will be dealt with as soon as possible, in compliance with internal and external reporting requirements.
- 2.6 **No Disadvantage**
A Student who makes a complaint will not be treated unfairly or unfavourably because they have made a complaint. The School will not tolerate victimisation of any Student exercising a right to lodge a complaint.
- 2.7 **Vexatious And Trivial Complaints**
The School will not tolerate vexatious (meaning a complaint without merit, designed to harass, annoy or cause financial or emotional distress to the School or to another Student) and trivial (meaning a complaint that lacks substance or merit) complaints and reserves the right to consider disciplinary action against a Student who makes such complaints.
- 2.8 **Right To Withdraw**
A Student has the right to withdraw a complaint. There will be some circumstances, however, in which the School has an external obligation to disclose such information and an obligation to investigate the matter even if a complaint has been withdrawn.
- 2.9 **Support**
A Student who makes a complaint has the right to have a support person present at any meetings, investigations or hearings related to the complaint. The Student will be offered access to the School's support services to assist them through the process.
- 2.10 **Review And Appeal**
Students have a right to appeal against a complaint decision made by the School. Overseas Students should refer to the Overseas Students Complaints and Appeals Policy and Flowchart.
- 2.11 **Record Keeping And Reporting**
Accurate records regarding the complaint, investigation and outcome will be securely held by the School and in accordance with the School's Record Management Policy.
- 2.12 **Continual Improvement**
The School takes the opportunity to learn from the complaints process and ensures where possible that risk mitigation strategies are put in place to prevent reoccurrences.

3. How To Make A Complaint

- 3.1 There are three key ways in which a complaint may be resolved:
 - 3.1.1 **Informal Process:** most complaints or concerns can be raised with a School Employee (for example a Mentor or a Head of House) that are of a minor nature, or as a result of a lack of communication or understanding. These types of complaints are usually best resolved through an informal process.
 - 3.1.2 **Conciliation:** it may be appropriate to bring the Student and the other party/s involved together with the Head of Department, Head of House/Unit, or Head of Campus to discuss their perspectives on the issues.



- 3.1.3 **Formal Process:** if a matter cannot be resolved by informal resolution or conciliation, or by its nature is a matter which should be dealt with by way of a formal process, it will be dealt with by way of formal process. There are three steps involved for a formal procedure – investigation, making any findings, and determining appropriate action.

4. Formal Process

4.1 Investigation

4.1.1 The Principal or delegate must use the following guiding principles when investigating a formal complaint:

4.1.1.1 establish the precise nature of the complaint;

4.1.1.2 investigate the complaint for substance (that it is not vexatious or trivial);

4.1.1.3 notify the respondent (and in the event of a Student, their parents or guardians) orally and in writing of the complaint/s against them (if appropriate, and if legal or police advice is not received to the contrary);

4.1.1.4 inform both the complainant and the respondent of their right to have a support person present at all interviews or discussions;

4.1.1.5 interview the complaint and the respondent separately; and

4.1.1.6 keep accurate and contemporaneous records of all interviews and discussions.

4.2 Making a finding or dismissing the complaint

4.2.1 The Principal or delegate will consider all available evidence and make a finding. If it is established that the complaint has no substance, the complaint may be dismissed. The complainant and respondent (and in the event of a Student, their parents or guardians) will receive correspondence outlining the outcome of the investigation.

4.3 Determining appropriate action

4.3.1 If a positive finding has been made, the Principal or delegate will take appropriate action and provide the complainant and respondent (and in the event of a Student, their parents or guardians) with a written response outlining the issues raised, the decision and the outcome of the complaint.

5. Overseas Students

5.1 Overseas Students may refer to the School's Overseas Students Complaints and Appeals Policy (and associated Flowchart) if they have an issue in relation to a complaint, suspension or expulsion from the School.

5.2 If Overseas Students cannot resolve a complaint or dispute with the School, they are able to request that an independent party is available to act as conciliator.

6. Appeals

6.1 In the event that a dispute between a student and the School cannot be resolved, an independent arbiter will be appointed.

6.2 Students also have the right to contact the CEO of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Agency (VRQA) who can investigate the matter and seek resolution in accordance with their legislative responsibilities.

6.3 Students may contact the VRQA on (03) 9637 2806 or via the website: www.vrqa.vic.gov.au.

7. Feedback

The School welcomes feedback regarding this Policy from Students and parents/legal guardians so it may improve practices. Please email the Executive Director | Safeguarding and Legal Services (safeguarding@ggs.vic.edu.au) outlining any concerns.

8. Associated Documents

8.1 Student Complaint Handling Guide

8.2 Overseas Students Complaints and Appeals Policy

8.3 Overseas Students Complaints and Appeals Flowchart

8.4 Records Management Policy

8.5 Reportable Conduct Policy

8.6 Mandatory Reporting Policy

8.7 Obligation to Protect Policy

8.8 Obligation to Disclose Policy

8.9 Template Record of Disclosure or Belief

8.10 Template Mandatory Reporting Record of Report

9. Definitions

CAAW Letter	means Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare letter
Head of House	means the student's appointed head of their day or boarding house
Homestay Provider	means someone who assists the School with provision of accommodation to those overseas students on a student visa when they are not on School grounds
Overseas Student	means a student on a student visa and enrolled at the School pursuant to a CAAW Letter
the School	means Geelong Grammar School and includes its registered boarding premises



School Employee	for the purposes of this Policy includes School Council Members and employees of the School
School Community	means students, School Employees, parent(s) / legal guardians and Homestay Providers
Student	for the purposes of this Policy means any student enrolled at the School, whether or not they are aged 18 years or over

10. Review and Circulation

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