



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Padua College aims to be a positive, creative learning community where Catholic values and spirit are shared and nurtured.

Every member of the Padua community has a right to raise a concern or complaint and expect that the issue be addressed appropriately and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. The Code of Canon Law requires that justice and reconciliation are at the heart of grievance procedure (Code of Canon Law, 1983 Canon 173 (1)). Effective and timely communication between members of the College community and Padua is a critical factor in the prevention and resolution of disputes. This policy does not apply to reports of suspected child abuse (which is subject to the **Protocol for Responding to Maltreatment of Children**), OHS issues (which are subject to the **OHS Issue Resolution Policy**) or issues related to workplace equal opportunity (**Workplace Equal Opportunity Policy**).

The College approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our Mission and Vision statements and in relation to these this policy has at its core the following:

- Padua aims to provide a safe and supportive learning environment
- Padua aims to build positive relationships between students, parents and staff
- Padua aims to provide a safe working environment for staff

A grievance procedure helps build a safe and supportive culture as it:

- Encourages early intervention on issues before they damage sound relationships
- Ensures that behaviours destructive to positive relationships are identified as being unacceptable and are appropriately managed
- Ensures that concerns and complaints are dealt with consistently
- Enables school community to identify patterns of unacceptable conduct enabling prevention strategies to be developed and implemented
- Encourages individuals, with support, to resolve issues directly without third party intervention

The guiding principles of this policy are:

- All matters will be addressed in a timely manner
- All parties shall be treated in accordance with the principles of natural justice
- All proceedings shall remain confidential to the parties involved and the College Executive if deemed necessary (except when the College must, by law, inform external authorities)
- All parties will be treated with respect and dignity
- A person is presumed innocent until proven otherwise
- The respondent will be informed of the nature of the allegations made against him/her
- College staff responsible for the application of this policy will treat all parties in a non-judgemental and non-adversarial manner
- The College will provide support and protection for all parties
- All parties will have the right to a fair hearing

- Only matters relevant to the particular concern or complaint will be considered
- Where appropriate, all parties will be given a written record of proceedings and be asked to attest to its authenticity. Where a party cannot attend to authenticity they will be provided a chance to record (in addition) their version of facts/events

Policy Statement

Padua College respects the right of all members of the community to have access to a process, which will give full and fair consideration to any complaint that may arise. The process endeavours to hear in a timely and equitable manner any complaint raised to ensure that the principles of natural justice are followed.

Definitions

Complaint is any written complaint made by:

- a) a member of the college community or;
- b) any member of the public or;
- c) any legal identity against a member of the college community, or college in respect to any action, policy, process or situation relevant to the operation of the college.

Issues may take a variety of forms including matters relating to:

- Fellow staff, students or parents;
- School resources of property;
- Occupational Health and Safety School Policy.

Discernment - There is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith (and with good will) and with an intention for resolution.

Impartiality - Complaints are to 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. Rights are to be protected and all parties given the opportunity to tell their side of the story.

Confidentiality - Subject to legal compliance, all complaints and subsequent action is to remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint and the body investigating.

Timeliness - Each complaint is to be finalised within as short a period as possible, given the circumstances.

Recrimination-free - Complainants ought not to suffer in any way as a consequence of their action.

Legal Compliance - The College will always act in accordance with the relevant legislation, Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM)/Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) policies and procedures (please refer to CEM Policy 2.20 Complaints Policy).

Guidelines

It is hoped that most issues can be addressed through dialogue between the parties involved and this is the preferred path for grievance resolution. However where this is not possible or cannot resolve the issue, the following guidelines will apply.

1. **Informal Complaints** must be addressed to:
 - Staff – Member of Campus Leadership Team or College Contact Officer;
 - Students/Parents – your Homeroom Teacher / House Coordinator / Campus Pastoral Co-ordinator / Head of Campus / Vice Principal: Students
 - College Community – College Contact Officer
2. **Formal Complaints:** The Complaints Manager allocates a relevant Complaints Officer. The College maintains a Complaints Register listing all formal complaints and subsequent actions. This document is maintained by the Complaints Manager; The Complaints register is available to the College Board and Executive Team subject to compliance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), (Commonwealth, relevant CEM/CECV policies and the College Privacy Policy);
3. In cases relating to child safety the complainant must address the concerns following protocols outlined in the Child Protection Policy; A complaint to the College about a known (already reported, investigated and concluded) case of child abuse can be made through this complaint process.
4. In cases of discrimination, harassment or bullying involving staff members the complainant must address their concern in writing to the College Contact Officer as directed by the Principal (See Padua College, Workplace Equal Opportunity Policy, 2016);
5. In matters involving issues between staff members a mediation process may be put in place by the Vice Principal: Staff, Vice Principal: Learning and Teaching, Senior Vice Principal or Principal to help resolve the issue;
6. In a situation where the issue cannot be resolved the Principal will act as the final arbiter in the process;
7. In the case of a dispute with the Principal the matter must be referred to the Chair of the College Board or Catholic Education Melbourne for resolution;
8. When setting the process for any complaints procedure the complainant must have the opportunity to put the complaint to the person responsible for managing that area of the College in the first instance, but otherwise as set by the Principal or delegated officer of the Principal;
9. Staff members must refrain from using public forums such as staff meetings, social media or “all staff” e-mail messages to publicise their concerns or grievances or make a complaint.

Formal & Informal Complaints Procedure

It is hoped that most issues can be addressed through dialogue between the parties involved and this is the preferred path for grievance resolution. However where this is not possible or cannot resolve the issue, the following is suggested:

