

Complaints Handling Policy

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints.	
Scope:	Any person directly affected by the subject of a complaint. Examples may include staff, students or a student's parent or guardian, contractors, or community members.	
Status:	Approved	Supersedes: Previous
Authorised by:	Board Chair	Date of Authorisation: 22.04.24
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld)</u> ● <u>Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</u> ● <u>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</u> ● <u>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</u> ● <u>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</u> ● <u>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</u> ● <u>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</u> ● <u>Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</u> ● <u>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</u> ● <u>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</u> ● <u>Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2022, NEQ)</u> ● <i>MIC policies as appropriate</i> 	
Review Date:	Annually	Next Review Date: 22.04.25
Policy Owner:	College Governing Body	

Policy Statement

MIC acknowledges the right of students, parents/guardians, staff and others to complain when dissatisfied with the college services, including an action, inaction or decision of the college. The college encourages constructive criticism and complaints. MIC is committed to ensuring that complaints received are handled in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent and fair way.

MIC will ensure employees can recognise, receive, and appropriately refer complaints to the informal or formal complaints procedure.

MIC recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students and parents/guardians and a better culture for employees, and views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Definitions

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the college, related to the college services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. ¹
Informal Complaint	A complaint about a matter that is likely to be simple, straight forward, easily manageable, or minor, where a simple or quick resolution is appropriate such as discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member.
Formal Complaint	A complaint about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Examples include serious allegations or breaches of policy, complaints against a senior staff member, including the principal or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by the Principal, Executive or Board as appropriate.
Complainant	The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint. ²
Respondent	The person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern.

Complaints Handling Principles

MIC will manage complaints according to the following (which include principles of procedural fairness):

¹ Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.3

² Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.2

- complaints will be taken seriously, dealt with fairly and objectively, without judgement and addressed in a reasonable timeframe
- complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible, having regard to the nature of the complaint
- interested parties to the complaint (for example, the complainant and any respondent) will be heard and/or may provide relevant information in relation to the complaint
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- the complainant and any respondent will be offered support as appropriate
- victimising behaviour towards a complainant, respondent or other people associated with the complaint, will not be tolerated
- complainants that lodge a complaint on reasonable grounds will not suffer any other reprisals on the basis of the lodging the complaint

Complaints that may be resolved under this Policy

MIC encourages anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving the college to file a complaint. Complaints can address matters 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 behaviour management policy or code of conduct, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student.³
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees
- issues related to college fees and payments
- general administrative issues.
- issues relating to non-compliance with a process outlined in college policies or procedures, for example the child protection policy, discrimination policy, or privacy policy

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns including allegations of sexual abuse or harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the college Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the MIC Student Bullying Policy.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Behaviour Management Policy Student discipline matters.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.

³ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(2)(a)

- Disputes between board members should be dealt with in accordance with the Constitution
- Formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.
- Complaints relating to the education and training services provided by the college to an overseas student should be dealt with in accordance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and National Code and the college Overseas Student's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Process.

Responsibilities

The College I has the following role and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the college Complaints Handling Policy
- appropriately communicate the college Complaints Handling Policy to students, parents and employees
- ensure that the Complaints Handling procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy
- 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
- keep records
- appropriately train relevant employees with annual training via SALT and their professional development.
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register in regular intervals
- monitor and report to the governing body on complaints not in template
- report to the college insurer when that is relevant not in template
- refer to the college governing body immediately any claim for legal redress. Not in template

All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or retaliatory complaints
- act in good faith, and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation.
- Act in a calm, courteous and non-threatening manner
- 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.

Employees Receiving and/or Managing Complaints

Employees receiving and/or managing complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the college Complaints Handling Policy
- refer the complainant to the college Complaints Handling Policy and provide additional information as necessary
- maintain confidentiality as far as possible
- keep appropriate records
- forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, if the complaint cannot be resolved at the initial level or if it involves serious issues that require the involvement of more senior employees
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

Implementation

MIC 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.

MIC 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.

Formal Complaint Register (appendix A)

MIC will maintain a formal complaint register with details such as the date, source and description of complaints, the employee managing the complaint, the actions taken, outcome and the date the complaint was closed.

The complaint register will be stored securely.

All complaints shall be entered onto the complaint register as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. The complaint register will not contain complaints about the Principal. Records of complaints about the Principal will be maintained by the Board with access restricted to the Board.

To safeguard confidentiality and maintain the integrity of the complaint process, access to the entire complaint register will be limited to the Executive.

The Principal may authorise the sharing of specific, relevant entries from the complaint register with other designated staff members (such as the senior leadership team), provided measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved, particularly ensuring that respondents to a complaint do not gain inappropriate access to information about the allegations against them.

Complaint Handling Procedure

1. Lodging a Complaint

- a) Complaints can be lodged with the most appropriate staff member at the local level, for example, the initial contact point for many complaints is the student's relevant classroom teacher.
 - i. Complaints can be lodged through various methods, including:
 - ii. Phone
 - iii. Email

- iv. In-person (by appointment)
- b) If the complainant is unsure where to direct their complaint, they can contact the Executive Assistant for guidance.
- c) If the complainant is uncomfortable directing the complaint to the most appropriate member at the local level, or wants to make a formal complaint, they can submit a complaint by
 - i. emailing, phoning or visiting the college in person
- d) Other method e.g. report to member of the executive
- e) Where an anonymous complaint is lodged, the college will follow the complaints handling policy, when there is sufficient information to do so.

2. Acknowledgement, Assessment and Referral

- a) The Principal or member of the Executive upon receipt of the complaint will:
 - i. acknowledge the complaint within two (2) business days, outlining the next steps and where possible the estimated timeframes.
 - ii. assess the complaint, using the definitions of informal and formal complaints in this policy, and refer the complaint to the informal or formal complaints process.

3. Registration and Support

- a) The recipient of the complaint will promptly enter it onto the formal complaints register regardless of whether it proceeds through the informal or formal process.
- b) The recipient of the complaint will offer support to the complainant as appropriate, which may include assistance with completing forms or understanding procedures.
- c) If a student is a complainant, respondent or victim, or the child of a complainant, respondent or victim of a matter being managed through this policy, the college may offer the student support where appropriate e.g. discussing suitable adjustments with parents/caregivers.

4. Informal Complaints Handling Process

- a) The informal process is designed to resolve issues promptly and collaboratively at the local level.
- b) It may involve constructive discussion and negotiation between the complainant and the relevant staff member(s).
- c) If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to the formal process.

5. Formal Complaints Handling Process

- a) The formal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g., a member of the senior leadership team or the board chair for complaints against the principal)
- b) The staff member may gather additional information through investigation, interviews, or evidence review
- c) The staff member will determine appropriate action, which may include:
 - iii. Mediation
 - iv. Disciplinary measures
 - v. Implementation of policy changes

- vi. Referral to external agencies (e.g., police)
- vii. Provision of written updates to the complainant throughout the process
- viii. Other actions the Principal determines as appropriate in the circumstances.

6. Complaint Closure

- a) The complaint register will be updated with the date the complaint is closed and a brief summary of the outcome.
- b) The complainant will receive written notification of the outcome and any actions taken where appropriate.

7. Appeals Process

- a) Complainants may appeal the outcome of a complaint by writing to:
 - i. the Principal (for complaints not previously managed by the principal)
 - ii. the board chair (for complaints previously managed by the principal).

Appendix A

FORMAL COMPLAINTS LOG								
Log ID	Date Issue Raised	Complainant Name	Respondent Name	Nature of complaint - brief summary	Process for managing	Outcome -brief summary	Copy of Mediation or Investigation Outcomes	Date issue resolved or completed
2024/04	1/1/2024	Mr J Brown	Teacher in charge of EL	Lack of compliance with Early Childhood Education and Care national law and regulations (information not updated)	Complaint forwarded to Chair of the Board; Information with ACEQA reviewed and updated	Chair asked for response from Principal. Response sent 20.01.24	Chair emailed Principal - Closed 22.01.24	22/01/2024

Version	Date	Author	Detail of Amendments	Approved By
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0.01	03.04.24	Cora King	Cross referencing of policy with ISQ website template and amending as appropriate. Removal of non-applicable references.	