

SECTION **GENERAL**

ITEM: **COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY**

ITEM No: **G-006**

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RESPONSIBILITY: College Board

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INTERPRETATION

This Policy may be varied from time to time by the College. This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment.

All Brisbane Christian College documents, policies, procedures, guidelines, handbooks, codes of conduct and other documents are to be interpreted in a manner that is consistent with the Statement of Faith. The College may adopt, supplement, vary or rescind its documents, policies, procedures, guidelines, handbooks, codes of conduct and other documents it has adopted at any time in its absolute discretion by the provision of notice. It is the employee's responsibility to read these documents and understand the expectations regarding behaviour for everyone who works in the College community. It is also the employee's responsibility to read supplemented or varied versions of these documents as are notified to them as soon as reasonably practicable after such notification. Employees are to fully support the College in ensuring compliance with these documents.

If any part of this Policy, or part thereof, is, becomes or is declared by any judicial or other authority to be invalid, void, voidable, illegal or otherwise unenforceable, the provision, or part thereof, will be either:

- (a) severed from this Policy; or
- (b) read down,

in the manner that best achieves the purpose of the College without illegality, and the remaining provisions of this Policy shall remain in full force and effect unless the College in the College's discretion decides that the effect of such declaration is to defeat the original intention of the College in which event the College may update, amend, innovate, supplement, vary or replace this Policy by the provision of notice.

This Policy in no way diminishes the responsibility nor takes away the right of Brisbane Christian College management to respond to very serious incidents with summary dismissal or to exercise the remaining rights that the College may have pursuant to any employment or other contract. Nothing in this Policy should be taken to limit the circumstances in respect of which the College may take disciplinary action in respect of an employee.

The procedures outlined in this Policy are intended only as a guide to the disciplinary procedures which may be implemented by the College. In every case, the College will determine the actual disciplinary procedure to be adopted in its discretion and in consideration of the circumstances of the case as a

whole. Nothing in this Policy prevents the College from issuing a final warning at any stage of the process. Similarly, nothing in this Policy prevents the College from dismissing an employee at any stage of the procedure set out in this Policy if the College deems this action is warranted, for example in circumstances involving an employee committing serious or wilful misconduct.

1. PURPOSE

In accordance with the College Value of “Together Developing Dynamic Relationships” this policy provides written processes to ensure that student, parent and employee concerns are responded to, and formal complaints are received, assessed, investigated and otherwise dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way to ensure our College community members are equipped to achieve their maximum potential.

COLLEGE HEART VALUES:

Honouring Jesus Christ

Empowering others

Aspiring to excellence

Respecting others and self

Together developing dynamic relationships

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1.

2. SCOPE

Any person directly affected by the subject of a complaint, including, students, parents and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.

3. SOURCES

- [Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Regulations 2017](#)
- [Australian Education Regulations 2023](#)
- [Fair Work Act 2009](#)
- [Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Anti-discrimination Act 1991 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Age Discrimination Act 2004 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Racial Discrimination Act 1975 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Standards Australia, Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations \(ISO 10002:2022, NEQ\)](#)

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Brisbane Christian College acknowledges the right of students, parents/guardians, employees and others to raise concerns or to formally complain in writing when dissatisfied with the College’s services, including an action, inaction or decision of the College. The College encourages constructive feedback, the raising of

informal concerns and/or formal written complaints and is committed to ensuring that concerns raised are responded to and formal written complaints received by the College Leadership Team (CLT) are handled in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent and fair way.

Brisbane Christian College recognises that time spent on responding to concerns and handling formal written complaints can be an investment in improved service to students' safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes. This investment is also valuable for parents and creates a better culture for employees. The College views both informal concerns and formal written complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process, as we aspire to excellence and build dynamic relationships in our College community. The College Complaints Handling processes are informed by the College commitment to Child Protection, student wellbeing and cultural safety.

5. DEFINITIONS

Complaint - An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the College, related to the College's 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. (*The College procedure identifies an informal complaint as Raising a Concern.*)

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/concern that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by the Principal or a member of the College Leadership Team.

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.

6. POLICY

6.1 Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy

Brisbane Christian College encourages students, parents and employees or anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving the College to promptly raise their concern with the person best placed to resolve it, or to submit a formal written complaint to the Principal/CLT. Complaints can address sexual harassment, unlawful discrimination, workplace bullying 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 that they should have done;
- the College, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely;

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

- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct/character development policy, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student³;
- 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; or
- general administrative issues;
- issues related to non-compliance with a process outlined in College policies or procedures, for example the Child Protection Policy, Discrimination Policy or Privacy Policy.⁴

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

6.2 Issues Outside of this Policy

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

- Child protection concerns including allegations of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse or harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the College Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the College Character Development and Anti-Bullying Policies.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the College Character Development Policy.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Disputes relating to a staff member's employment should be directed to their manager and dealt with under employment law and/or the enterprise agreement.
- Disputes involving Board members should be dealt with in accordance with the Constitution and Board Charter.
- 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's Overseas Student's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Process.

6.3 Complaints Handling Principles

The Brisbane Christian College Leadership Team (CLT) is committed to managing formal written complaints according to the following (which include principles of procedural fairness):

- 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;

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

⁴ Education (Accreditation of Non-state Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(5)

- anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits like any other complaint and will be dealt with fairly, objectively and in a timely manner;
- the 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 (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;
- all parties to the complaint will be appropriately supported;
- the College will give reasonable progress updates;
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented;
- a review pathway will be provided for parties to the complaint if warranted;
- complainants, respondents or other people associated with the complaint, will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaint and they will not suffer reprisals;
- where conflicts arise during the investigation, an impartial party will become part of the investigation
- the College will keep confidential records of complaints;
- the College's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

6.4 Responsibilities

6.4.1 College

The College has the following role and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- appropriately communicate the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents and employees;
- ensure that the Complaints Handling procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents;
- upon receipt of a concern or formal written complaint, manage the concern or complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling model prescribed in *G-006.1 Complaints Handling Procedures*;
- ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint;
- take appropriate action to prevent the 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 College Board on complaints;
- report to the College's insurer when that is relevant; and
- refer to the College Board immediately any claims for legal redress.

6.4.2 All Parties to a Dispute

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

- apply and comply with the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- raise the concern or lodge the formal written complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises;
- expect that complaint handling principles will be applied to any concerns raised;
- expect that a formal written 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, or retaliatory complaints;
- act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
- act in a 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; and
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the complaint or any person associated with them.

6.4.3 Employees Addressing Concerns

- Employees receiving and managing informal concerns should keep records of the issue, date and resolution and report this to their Head of Campus.
- Employees should forward unresolved concerns to the Deputy Head of Campus and/or Head of Campus if the concern cannot be resolved at the initial level or to the Principal/ CLT, if it involves serious issues that require the involvement of CLT.

6.4.4 College Leadership Team (CLT) Receiving and/or Managing Complaints

The Principal and/or members of the CLT receiving and/or managing written complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- inform the party lodging a 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 formal complaint;
- refer the complainant to the College's Complaints Handling Policy, Procedures throughout the process
- maintain confidentiality as far as possible;
- keep appropriate records;
- forward unresolved concerns and/or formal complaints to the Principal and/or the Board, if the concern cannot be resolved at CLT level or if the complaint involves serious issues that require the involvement of the Board; and

- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

6.5 Implementation

Brisbane Christian College is committed to raising awareness of the process for addressing concerns and 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.

Brisbane Christian College is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff and/or Board members) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related procedures.

The Brisbane Christian College Leadership Team will keep secure and appropriate records of complaints, including date, source, description of complaint, staff member handling the complaint, actions taken, outcomes and date of closure. The College will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the College Board on complaint handling at the College. To safeguard confidentiality and maintain integrity of the complaints process, access to the secure Complaints Register is limited to the Principal and members of the College Leadership Team (CLT). The Principal and/or wider CLT may authorise the sharing of specific entries with other designated staff as appropriate, provided specific 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. Complaints about the Principal will be maintained by the Board with access restricted to the Board.

Brisbane Christian College will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy College culture where concerns are addressed and formal written complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

Brisbane Christian College will appoint an appropriate employee as an Equity Contact Officer to provide confidential and impartial information about the College's relevant policies and procedures.

Please refer to the *Complaints Handling Procedure G-006.1* for further information.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- F- 002 Statement of Faith
- G-006.1 Complaints Handling Procedures
- G-006.2 Formal Complaints Form
- G-011 Whistleblower Policy
- WHS -001 Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- ST-006 Disability Policy
- ST-002 Character Development Policy
- ST-012 Anti-bullying Policy - Students
- G-001 Privacy Policy
- G-002 Anti-Discrimination Policy
- WHS-012 Bullying and Workplace Harassment Policy
- WHS-011 Sexual Harassment Policy
- CPP-000 Child Protection Risk Minimisation Strategy
- CPP-001 Child Protection Policy
- COP-001 Code of Conduct
- Enrolment Contract