

<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Complaints Procedure</b>
<b>Person Responsible</b>	Principal
<b>Staff Involved</b>	All staff
<b>Frequency of Performance</b>	When a complaint is raised by a student/parent/guardian or any Djerriwarrh Community College stakeholder other than staff
<b>Related Documents</b>	Complaint Form Complaint Action Form

### Definitions

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Complainant</b>	The person making the complaint
<b>Complaint</b>	Any expression of concern or dissatisfaction with an action, delivery of service, policy or procedure, system or conduct of another person.
<b>Respondent</b>	Person about whom the complaint is made and who is required to respond to the complaint

## 1. Raising a concern or complaint

Djerriwarrh Community College (the College) encourages students, parents/guardians, or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss;
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise;
- think about how the matter could be resolved;
- be informed by checking the College's Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Students, parents/guardians and community members are encouraged to raise their concerns in the first instance directly with the person concerned. This is appropriate in matters where the person feels comfortable with making a direct approach, or where the concern does not relate to allegations of misconduct or unlawful behaviour (e.g. assault, illegal discrimination or harassment, or corruption).

Concerns raised in this manner will be taken seriously and, where practical and appropriate, attempts will be made to resolve the issue or give advice on available options. This procedure does not describe the process for responding and reporting on an incident, disclosure, or suspicion of all forms of child abuse. Please refer to the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Responding and Reporting Procedure if a complaint raises any concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person participating in a service provided by the College.

## 2. Complaints

The College is always happy to discuss with students, parents/guardians and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the teacher, Learning Specialist or Youth Worker. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, students, parents/guardians or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the principal.

A complaint may be received by a student, parent/guardian or community member:

- in person to a teacher, principal or member of college staff;
- by phone to a teacher, principal or member of college staff;
- in writing (email, letter, website); or
- using the College Complaint Form.

The College is committed to ensuring that all complaints are handled respectfully, with consideration for cultural and linguistic diversity.

### 2.1 Informal complaints

Students, parents/guardians and community members are encouraged to raise complaints informally with an appropriate member of staff:

- parents/guardians with a complaint about a student other than their own child should raise it with the Lead Teacher;
- students or parents/guardians with a complaint about a teacher should discuss the issue with the relevant teacher or the Lead Teacher;
- students with a complaint about another student should raise the issue with the Youth Worker or Lead Teacher;
- complaints relating to the College's policies and procedures in the first instance should be raised with the principal;
- complaints about the Lead Teacher or administration staff should be raised with the principal;
- students or parents/guardians with a complaint about the principal should discuss the issue with the Principal or the School Council Chair.

The staff member will attempt to resolve complaints informally through discussion and conciliation with the complainant(s).

If the concern is not resolved at this stage, the complainant will be advised to lodge a complaint using the formal process.

## **2.2 Formal complaints**

If a student, parent/guardian or member of the community wishes to make a formal complaint, they are required to complete the College's Complaint Form. The Complaint Form can be accessed via the College's website [www.dcc.vic.edu.au](http://www.dcc.vic.edu.au), through Compass or at reception.

The student, parent/guardian or community member may be supported by staff or a support person to complete the Complaint Form if required. Complainants may also have a support person, such as a family member or cultural liaison, present during the process. Interpreters or translated materials can be provided if needed.

The Complaint Form and any supporting documentation is required be submitted to the Principal, Assistant Principal or Administration Officer in person or by email

## **3. Formal complaint process**

If a student, parent/guardian or member of the community makes a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, the College will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

### **3.1 Complaint received**

Upon receipt of the Complaint Form, the principal will contact the complainant(s) within two working days to acknowledge the complaint, confirm mutual understanding of the details and discuss further steps in the complaint process.

### **3.2 Information gathering**

Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.

Staff investigating complaints will systematically gather and document all relevant information, including records of interviews, telephone calls, consultations and other follow up with all persons concerned.

### **3.3 Response**

Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting the parties are unable to resolve the complaint together, the Principal will work with the complainant to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event they would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution

meeting would not appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

### **3.4 Timelines**

The College will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the College may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of the complaint. The College will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within a reasonable time frame of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, the College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

### **3.5 Resolution and outcome**

Where appropriate, the College may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret;
- a change of decision;
- a change of policy, procedure or practice;
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support;
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent/guardian and school relationship, engagement and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, the College may also ask both the complainant and the respondent to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

The outcome of the complaint process will be communicated to the complainant either in person, by telephone or email and followed up in writing within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.

If the complaint cannot be resolved within 30 days the reasons for this need to be communicated to the complainant. A record of these communications will be maintained on the complainant's file.

### **3.6 Escalation**

If a complainant is not satisfied that the complaint has been resolved by the College, or if the complaint is about the Principal and the student, parent/guardian or community member does not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the School Council.

At any time throughout the complaints process, the complainant may take their complaint to an appropriate external body. It is the College's responsibility to provide contact information for the appropriate external body.

## **4. Managing complaints**

### **4.1 Roles and responsibilities**

Djerriwarrh Community College is committed to handling all complaints fairly, promptly, and in line with the principles of natural justice. Clear roles and responsibilities are essential to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to managing complaints.

#### **Principal**

- The principal has primary responsibility for receiving, assessing, and investigating complaints.
- The principal ensures that complaints are managed in a timely, respectful, and confidential manner and that all formal complaints are appropriately documented and tracked.
- If a complaint is complex or cannot be resolved at the school level, the principal will escalate the matter to the Chair of the School Council.
- The principal will also ensure that no student's wellbeing or educational progress is adversely impacted while a complaint is being resolved.

#### **Chair of the School Council**

- The Chair is responsible for managing any complaint made against the principal.
- The Chair may delegate aspects of the complaint investigation to an appropriate independent party, ensuring impartiality.

#### **School staff**

- All staff members are expected to refer complaints to the principal and must not investigate complaints made about themselves.
- Staff have a duty to cooperate fully with complaint investigations and to uphold professional standards throughout the process.
- Staff must prioritise the safety and wellbeing of students and avoid any actions that could lead to a conflict of interest or compromise a fair process.

#### **Volunteers**

- Volunteers must refer any complaints to the appropriate staff member, usually the principal or their delegate.
- They must not attempt to resolve complaints independently and should maintain confidentiality at all times.

- They are expected to cooperate with investigations and follow any directions provided by school leadership.

### **Confidentiality and student interests**

- In some cases, and where appropriate, complaints may be kept confidential from certain staff to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of the student(s) involved.
- Complaints will not be recorded on a student's file unless the outcome of the investigation requires this.

## **5. Records and reporting**

All formal complaints and their investigation will be recorded in the Complaints Register.

The Principal will record the outcome of the complaint on the Complaint Action Form.

All documentation relating to the complaint including the Complaint Form, Complaint Action Form, correspondence, supporting documentation, witness statements and any other documentation relating to the investigation of the complaint will be maintained in a secure location separate from student files.

All formal complaints will be communicated to the School Council including actions taken and recommendations for corrective actions.

## **6. Appeals**

If a complainant disagrees with the outcome of the complaint, they can submit a request for appeal for a review of the decision.

An appeal against a decision made by the Principal will be submitted to the School Council.

An appeal against a decision made by the School Council will be submitted to the Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services Board.

## **7. Independent mediation and consultation**

At any time during the complaint or appeal process the complainant/respondent may seek the advice or mediatory services of an external independent body for example the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria, a free mediation service.

Should the complainant/respondent choose to seek alternative advisory or mediation services, the complainant/respondent will meet the financial costs of such services.

## 7.1 Advice and support services

Complainants and respondents may seek advice or support from external bodies. These may include those listed below.

Mediation and consultation	Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV) Phone: 1300 372 888 Website: <a href="https://disputes.vic.gov.au/">disputes.vic.gov.au/</a>
Refunds, fees and charges	Consumer Affairs Victoria Helpline: 1300 55 81 81 <a href="mailto:consumer@justice.vic.gov.au">consumer@justice.vic.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="https://consumer.vic.gov.au">consumer.vic.gov.au</a>
Teachers	The Victorian Institute of Teaching Phone: 1300 888 067 Website: <a href="https://vit.vic.edu.au">vit.vic.edu.au</a>
Health and safety breaches	WorkSafe Advisory Service Phone: (03) 9641 1444 or 1800 136 089 (toll free) Email: <a href="mailto:info@worksafe.vic.gov.au">info@worksafe.vic.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="https://worksafe.vic.gov.au">worksafe.vic.gov.au</a>
Discrimination and racial or religious vilification	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Phone: 1300 292 153 Email: <a href="mailto:complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au">complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="https://humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au">humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au</a>

## 8. Issuance and approval

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