

Northside Christian College

POLICY & PROCEDURES

Complaints (Formal)

Issued by:	Principal's Office
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Approved by:	Principal
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Review Date:	March 2022

Introduction

1. The College recognises that there will be times when members of Northside Christian College community (staff, students, parents) will wish to question aspects of College life, address concerns, or bring complaints to the College. Sometimes, this will be in the form of a formal complaint.
2. The College has developed a Complaints Management Framework which assists the College community to be aware of how to provide feedback and complaints to the College. This Complaints (Formal) Policy and Procedure forms part of the College's Complaints Management System as outlined in the College's Complaints Management Framework.
3. Most complaints will be satisfactorily remedied informally through active communication with frontline staff, including teachers, the Operations Manager, curricular and pastoral leaders/Chaplain and College senior staff.
4. The College website has a Compliments /Feedback / Suggested Improvements Form which is available to our parents, students and community to make complaints, provide feedback and offer ideas for improvements. This on-line form is available through the College "Contact Us" page - <https://www.northside.qld.edu.au/about-us/contact>.
5. Additionally, College policies are in place to prevent, address and remedy behaviours of concern. These include the IT User Agreement, the Anti-Discrimination Policy, Workplace Harassment and Bullying Policy, Dispute Resolution Policy and Privacy Policy.

Purpose

The College endeavours to resolve complaints at the lowest reasonable level as quickly as possible. This Policy and Procedures exists to provide a clear process for parents, students and staff should they wish to make a formal complaint.

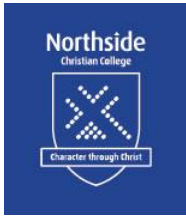
Scope

This policy covers Formal Complaints about any matter (other than Industrial or Child Protection matter, or a decision made as a result of a legislative requirement) brought by parents and staff of the College. Students over 18 years of age may bring formal complaints on their own behalf. Formal Complaints concerning anti-Discrimination, sexual Harassment and bullying are also made using this policy and procedure.

Principles

In this context:

1. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the College or action of the College, or its staff, by a person who is directly affected by the College or its action and includes complaints relating to:
 - a. A decision made or a failure to make a decision by an employee
 - b. An act of failure to act by the College
 - c. Formulation of a proposal or intention by the College
 - d. Service provided by an employee of the College.
2. All members of the College community have a right to express their opinions and feel heard with the view to seeking resolution.
3. Complaints will be dealt with at the lowest reasonable level and will apply the principles of fairness (impartiality, confidentiality, transparency), accessibility, responsiveness, and efficiency with no detriment to the complainant.
4. Natural justice will be accorded to all participants in a complaint. Appropriate confidentiality will be observed as an important principle of complaint resolution.
5. Complaints need to be handled in a consistent and timely manner.



Northside Christian College

POLICY & PROCEDURES

Complaints (Formal)

Victimisation

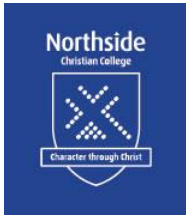
1. Victimisation occurs if a person is treated detrimentally because they made or were involved in bringing a formal complaint.
2. Victimisation under this policy extends to the person who made the complaint, the person against whom the complaint was made, and any other party involved in the handling of the complaint. Victimisation under this policy and the law will not be tolerated and may be the basis of another complaint.

Policy Statement

1. The College acknowledges the right of parents (personally or on behalf of students), students and staff to seek remedy for concerns and problems they have as arising out of behaviour or decisions associated with the College.
2. A formal review will be undertaken when a complaint cannot be resolved by a frontline staff member. Assessment and investigation will be conducted by a staff member with the necessary knowledge and experience to conduct an efficient and effective investigation. In general, we will not investigate a matter as part of a formal complaints process until the complainant has tried to resolve the problem directly with a staff member connected with the complaint.
3. All formal complaints will be addressed under this policy.
4. Natural justice and confidentiality will be stressed throughout the process.
5. Outcomes for substantiated complaints will be put in place and communicated appropriately.
6. Any person whose presence at the College is seen in the reasonable view of the Principal to be an unacceptable risk to others will either be directed to specific areas within the College Campus, or, be asked not to attend the College Campus or any of its associated facilities or activities.
7. Where this applies to a member of staff, the staff member concerned will still be entitled to their normal remuneration conditions during the time in which the complaint is being addressed.
8. An external assessment, investigation or review will be considered where a complaint raises significant or complex issues for either the complainant or the organisation and it is felt that the College cannot review the complaint itself.

Procedures

1. Prior to making a formal complaint, the complainant should have tried to resolve the problem directly with a staff member connected with the complaint.
2. The complainant is required to make a formal complaint in writing to the Principal. The complaint and any other documentation are to be submitted to the Principal by the Complainant.
 - a. A complaints form (see Annexure A) is available, but not obligatory.
 - b. In cases where the complaint is regarding the Principal, the relevant documentation is to be addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Directors, marked "Confidential – Formal Complaint". All documentation is to be handed to College Administration, which will document the receipt of the complaint and forward it on.
3. The Principal and/or such other internal person/s nominated by the Principal will decide how best to manage the complaint. This may include:
 - a. internal investigation by appropriate senior staff member
 - b. handling the complaint under a specific College Policy – if applicable
 - c. mediation
 - d. engaging an external person to investigate the complaint if the complaint raises significant or complex issues for either the complainant or the organisation and it is felt that the College cannot review the complaint itself.
4. The Principal or their nominee will investigate, review and decide on a solution. Where the complaint is about a person, that person will be informed of the complaint and of documents received. The Principal or their nominee will invite the respondent to respond then and there, if he/she wishes or at a later time.



Northside Christian College

POLICY & PROCEDURES

Complaints (Formal)

5. If mediation has been decided upon, a mediator will be engaged.
 - a. The mediation will take place.
 - b. Both parties will be requested to support any outcome.
 - c. Both parties will be requested to sign on the outcome agreed upon.
 - d. Apart from the agreed outcome, the mediation meeting will not be recorded in any form.
 - e. The matter will be monitored at set intervals subsequently.

6. If the Principal or their nominee decides the matter needs to be looked into internally, a senior staff member may be delegated to investigate the complaint in question.
 - a. Relevant members of staff will be interviewed.
 - b. The investigator may meet with College senior staff to give a summary of the matter.
 - c. The Principal and College senior staff (at the discretion of the Principal) will decide on the outcomes.
 - d. The Principal will put such outcomes in place and communicate those outcomes to relevant parties.

7. If an investigation by an external reviewer is decided to be appropriate:
 - a. The outside investigator will be engaged by the Principal
 - b. The investigator may attend the school to investigate, including interviewing both parties and relevant witnesses as nominated by complainant, respondent and investigator
 - c. A report including solution, recommendations and a communication plan will be provided to the Principal. This report is privileged to the Principal and the Board.

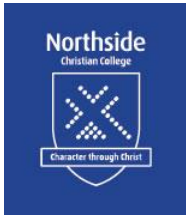
8. Relevant supporting evidence such as written statements, reports, photographs and other records will be considered.

9. Regarding outcomes, the Principal or their nominee will:
 - a. decide on the most appropriate outcomes in view of the report and recommendations
 - b. inform the complainant and the respondent of the outcomes
 - c. put in place any outcomes of the investigation

All parties will be informed of the outcome of the complaint process unless the Principal or responsible nominee decides it is appropriate in all the circumstances to withhold such information to one or more parties.

10. Outcomes may include:
 - review of existing processes, systems policies and procedures
improved processes, systems, policies and procedures
 - counselling, mediation, training, development
 - disciplinary action
 - formal apologies.

11. Outcomes decided upon will depend on factors such as:
 - the severity and frequency of the issue causing concern
 - the weight of the evidence
 - the wishes of the person who is making the complaint.



Northside Christian College

POLICY & PROCEDURES

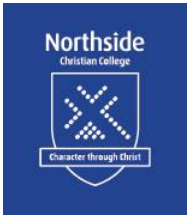
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Other Considerations

1. Disciplinary outcomes will apply to anyone who brings a complaint, which is considered vexatious, or without any basis.
2. There may be times when a Complainant does not want to continue with any process or investigation. If the issues raised are such that the health and well-being of staff or students are being adversely affected, the College reserves the right to instigate an investigation, irrespective of the wishes of the Complainant or other parties.
3. The decision of the Principal or their nominee marks the end of the Formal Complaints Process offered by the College.
4. Where the Formal Complaint pertains to the Principal, the Board of Directors will appoint a suitable representative sub-committee to address the complaint, as per the guidelines outlined above.

Related Documents

- Complaints Management Framework
- Formal Complaint Notification Form
- Dispute Resolution Procedure
- WHS Dispute Resolution Procedure
- Anti-Discrimination Policy
- Workplace Harassment and Bullying Policy



Northside Christian College

POLICY & PROCEDURES

Complaints (Formal)

Annexure A - Formal Complaint Notification Form

TO BE COMPLETED BY PERSON LODGING FORMAL COMPLAINT

1. Full Name: _____

2. Daytime Phone: _____ After Hours / Mobile Phone: _____

3. Have you personally taken steps to try and resolve the issue before proceeding to lodgement of a Formal Complaint?

(Circle Yes or No) YES

NO

4. If "YES": Please provide details and attach any supporting documentation: _____

5. Nature / description of complaint: _____

6. Names of any witnesses or support person/s (if applicable): _____

I maintain that the above is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Name

Signature

Date

Please submit this form to the College main reception or email ncc@northside.qld.edu.au marked: Attention Principal