



Parent and Students Complaints and Grievances Policy

POLICY CATEGORY: CHILD PROTECTION

POLICY CONTROL INFORMATION

POLICY RISK RATING	POLICY REFERENCE	VERSION	OWNER
High	COCG2022	1.1	Executive Director
APPROVER	COLLEGE APPROVAL DATE	BOARD APPROVAL DATE	NEXT REVIEW DATE
High	03 Nov 2022	14 April 2022	Nov 2023
AUDIENCE	LAST CHANGE	LOCATION	PORTAL RELEASE
Internal/College Community/Public	03 Nov 2022	Network drive	TEAMS Policy

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1. PURPOSE

Worawa Aboriginal College strives to be a community of respect, rigour, responsibility and resilience where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, compassion, fairness and inclusion for all. Within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and issues will arise, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily in partnership with members of the College community.

Our response should be founded on a belief in the dignity of each person, integrity and truth, and a commitment to restoration.

Worawa Aboriginal College welcomes feedback from all members of the community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This policy is designed to assist you to understand our complaints handling process.

2. SCOPE

This policy is provided for our community including parents/guardians and students to assist you to understand our complaints handling process.

Implementing the procedural aspects of this policy applies to all Worawa Aboriginal College staff, volunteers, contractors and Board members.

This policy applies to all College activities during and outside of College hours, together with our boarding premises. This includes College activities that are occurring on College campus, offsite, online, extracurricular, sport activities and programs, excursions, camps, interstate and overseas travel.

Our policies are grounded in core values, beliefs and assumptions:

- The Worawa Way pedagogy model is based on the Aboriginal values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour that inform all aspects of College operations. Aboriginal spiritual beliefs in relationship to land and responsibility for Caring for Country are expressed in campus care and development. Along with the core academic program, emphasis is placed on nurturing and celebrating Aboriginal culture as a crucial aspect of student self-esteem and wellbeing. The cultural competence of staff is essential and includes knowledge of Aboriginal culture and respect for the beliefs, values and practices of Aboriginal people including respect for the role of Elders as the holders of knowledge wisdom.
- Worawa Aboriginal College Board of Directors will set oversight and monitor policy that is necessary for it to meet all its obligations as the governing authority of our College.
- A collaborative approach is employed with wide consultation with stakeholders at appropriate levels.
- All policy development is designed to foster continuous development and improvement at Worawa Aboriginal College.
- Worawa Aboriginal College will only develop policies that are necessary for implementation of its specific mission and remain mindful of the broader policy environment in which Worawa Aboriginal College exists.

3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Worawa Aboriginal College, related to our services or operations (including boarding premises and program), or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

4. WORAWA ABORIGINAL COLLEGE'S COMMITMENT

Worawa Aboriginal College is committed to handling and resolving complaints fairly, effectively and efficiently.

5. PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS PRINCIPLES

The College is committed to ensuring procedural fairness when determining an appropriate resolution to a complaint and will, where possible:

- Respect the right of all parties to be heard and treated fairly;
- Respond to complaints promptly and thoroughly;
- Make sure all parties understand the complaints policy and the process;
- If the complaint is about a person, give that person the opportunity to respond to any allegations;
- Conduct investigations impartially, substantiate the facts of the matter and maintain appropriate records;
- Appropriately communicate the reason for any decision and any action it intends to take;
- Meet privacy and other legal obligations; and
- Record complaints on a secure database with relevant levels of authorised access.

Our program includes the establishment of an online complaints management register which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. The regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to our commitment.

When addressing a complaint, all parties are expected to:

- Be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role;
- Be resolution focused;
- Act in good faith and cooperation;
- Behave with respect and courtesy;
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate;
- Operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and College policy.

When any parties involved in the complaint do not demonstrate the expected behaviours it may not be possible to reach a resolution.

Vexatious, querulous, frivolous or malicious complaints are governed and managed by alternative processes. To deal with these types of complaints effectively, a customised strategy may be required which does not conform with this policy. The Executive Director will determine the plan for the management of these types of complaints.

6. INFORMAL COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members. Even if an issue is able to be resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management register so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate rectification action.

Students experiencing issues with other students should contact the Head of Learning and Teaching, Head of Boarding or Head of Wellbeing in the first instance.

If the issues cannot be resolved informally, a more formal process can be instigated by the complainant as identified below.

7. HOW DO I MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT?

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

- Sending an email to admin@worawa.vic.edu.au
- Writing a letter to Worawa Aboriginal College addressed to the Executive Director
- If it is about the Executive Director, it should be sent to the Chair of the Board at chair@worawa.vic.edu.au

8. ALL FORMAL COMPLAINTS WILL BE LOGGED INTO OUR REGISTER AND MANAGED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE. OUR INTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS

Step 1

All formal complaints are logged through our complaints management register on the Risk & Compliance channel on Microsoft Teams where they are screened by the Administration Systems Coordinator or, in the case of a complaint directly related to conduct by the Executive Director or Member of the College Board, sent to the Chair of the Board.

Step 2

All valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing as soon as practicable, and always within 10 business days. They will be allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to commence an initial investigation and make a preliminary determination within 10 business days of acknowledging the complaint.

Step 3

The Executive Director or delegate/Chair of the Board or delegate shall conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

The investigation will establish the circumstances of alleged events and explore options for resolution. Investigations may consist of interviews with involved parties or subject matter experts and/or documentation to determine the full circumstances leading to the complaint. Following completion of the investigation the Executive Director or Chair of the Board will make a determination.

Step 4

Following the determination, if appropriate, the Executive Director or Chair of the Board shall formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5

If the initial response is not acceptable the matter will be reviewed internally by the Executive Director and the Leadership Team, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Executive Director or their delegate will seek to resolve all disputes within 20 business days of the acknowledgement of the complaint. The matter will be closed if the response of the Executive Director, or their delegate, is accepted. Where appropriate, the matter may be escalated to the Chair of the Board.

Step 6

All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7

If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

9. ESCALATION

A complaint may be escalated during any stage of the complaints process. If a complaint remains unresolved within timeframes we consider reasonable, it will be escalated, unless agreed otherwise by the parties involved.

Escalation of a complaint may include requesting an alternate staff member to review the complaint or the commencement of a formal investigation.

10. REVIEW OF DECISION

If a formal decision has been made and the complainant is not satisfied with the process and/ or outcome the complainant can request a formal internal or external review. The internal review will independently re-consider all the information available and may conduct its own enquiries and provide a decision on the matter.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied the matter may be escalated to the Board at chair@worawa.vic.edu.au.

The Executive Director and Board Chair will consider and participate in avenues such as mediation and may also appoint an independent mediator to assist in this review and process.

The Executive Director and Board Chair will also provide referrals to counselling and support services dependent on the nature of the complaint and ensure they support the complainants, staff, parents and students wellbeing through the conduct of any investigation and review process.

A complainant can also choose to contact an independent body such as the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA) if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint from the College.

Contact
Manager, Complaints Unit VRQA
03 9637 2806 select option 5
vrqa@education.vic.gov.au

11. CHILD PROTECTION COMMITMENT

We are committed to protecting students in our care. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in the young Aboriginal girls' best interest, keeping them safe from harm. All child abuse complaints must be addressed in accordance with the College Child Safety Policy and Child Protection: Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures, child protection laws and reporting obligations. Please report concerns to the Executive Director at executivedirector@worawa.vic.edu.au

12. FEEDBACK

Worawa Aboriginal College also values positive feedback. We welcome you to provide any feedback to admin@worawa.vic.edu.au.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. Worawa Aboriginal College is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

Anonymous complaints are accepted. However, should additional information be required to investigate the complaint, the absence of identifying and contact information may mean investigation cannot be undertaken.

14. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

This Parents and Students Complaints and Grievances Policy is available to parents and carers, students and our community who are able to access this policy on the College website, College staff and parent portals or provided on request to any person.

All staff will be made aware of their responsibilities with regard to this policy. Training will be provided to staff on the commencement of their employment and annually on identifying risks and their responsibilities.

15. POLICY BREACH

15.1. Policy Breach

All breaches, near misses and implementation risks related to this policy should be reported to executivedirector@worawa.vic.edu.au.

15.2. Policy Compliance monitoring

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Executive Director and Business Manager and this may include independent audits and reviews.

16. RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Board	The Board is the governing authority of Worawa Aboriginal College. The Board is responsible for endorsing this policy, ensuring this policy is reviewed and updated as needed and reviewing the College's compliance with this policy and child safety obligations, and is responsible for confirming this policy is consistent with Board guidelines.
Executive Director	The Executive Director is responsible for the College's compliance with this policy.

17. RELEVANT POLICY AND REFERENCES

17.1. Worawa Aboriginal College policy and procedure linkage

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safety Policy
- Key definitions and legislation landscape for our Child Protection Program

17.2. Related legislation

The following legislation, standards and regulations apply and this policy aligns with these mandated requirements:

- Ministerial Order 870;
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic); and
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).

17.3. Further information

Further information on this policy can be obtained from the Executive Director.

18. POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This Policy is rated high risk. This Policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently, if required, to keep up-to-date with changes to laws and government policies.

This Policy is to be reviewed by the Executive Director and the Business Manager.

Any proposed changes to this Policy must be approved by the Board.