



Alta-1 College QLD Ltd  
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# COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY & PROCEDURE

Issue #5

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## COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY & PROCEDURE

<b>Purpose:</b>	The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints. <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Scope:</b>	Any person directly affected by the subject of a complaint. Examples may include staff or volunteers, students or a student's parent or guardian, contractors, or community members.	
<b>Status:</b>	APPROVED	<b>Supersedes:</b> All previous Complaints and Grievances Policies / Complaints Handling Policies and Procedures
<b>Authorised by:</b>	Alta-1 College QLD Board	<b>Date of Authorisation:</b> 11 November 2024
<b>References:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 (Qld)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations ISO 10002:2022, NEQ</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Related Documents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Anti-Discrimination Policy</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Behaviour Management Policy</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Child Protection Policy</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Constitution or Board Charter</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Complaints Procedure for Parents and Guardians</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Complaints Procedure for Students</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Complaints Procedure for Workers</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Complaints Form</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Complaints Register</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Disability Discrimination Policy</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Enrolment Contract</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Enterprise Bargaining Agreement or equivalent</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Privacy Policy</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Staff Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Student Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Work Health &amp; Safety (WHS) Policy</li> <li>• Alta-1 College QLD Workplace Anti-Bullying Policy</li> </ul>	
<b>Review Schedule:</b>	Annually	<b>Next Review Date:</b> November 2025
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Alta-1 College QLD Board	

<sup>1</sup> [Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Regulations 2017, s.7](#)

## Policy Statement

Alta-1 College QLD acknowledges the right of students, parents/guardians, staff, and others to complain when dissatisfied with the college's services, including an action, inaction, or decision of the college. The college encourages constructive criticism and complaints. Alta-1 College QLD is committed to ensuring that student, parent/guardian and employee complaints are handled in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent, and fair way.

Alta-1 College QLD will ensure employees can recognise, receive, and appropriately refer complaints to the informal or formal complaints procedure.

Alta-1 College QLD 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. Alta-1 College QLD views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

## Definitions

<b>Complaint</b>	<p>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.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>For the purpose of this policy, the words concern/ grievance/ issue/ problem/ matter may be used interchangeably to mean a complaint.</p>
<b>Informal Complaint</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Formal Complaint</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Complainant</b>	<p>The person, organisation, or their representative making a complaint.<sup>3</sup></p>
<b>Respondent</b>	<p>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.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.3

<sup>3</sup> Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.2

## Complaints Handling Principles

At Alta-1, one of our core values is *Relationship*. Our desire is that complaints are raised and resolved relationally and informally with the relevant staff member/s.

Alta-1 College QLD will manage 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
- 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

Alta-1 College QLD encourage 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 Code of Conduct, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student.<sup>4</sup>
- issues related to learning programs, assessment, and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents/guardians 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.<sup>5</sup>

Student complaints may be brought forward by students or by parents/guardians 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, likely sexual abuse or harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the college's Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Student Anti-Bullying Policy and the Behaviour Management Policy.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Behaviour Management Policy.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Disputes between board members, between Alta-1 College QLD members and board members or between Alta-1 College QLD members should be dealt with in accordance with the 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.

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<sup>4</sup> Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(2)(a)

<sup>5</sup> Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(5)

## Responsibilities

### Alta-1 College QLD

The college has the following **roles and** responsibilities:

- **develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the college's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure**
- appropriately communicate the college's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure to students, parents/guardians, and employees
- **ensure that the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure are readily accessible by staff, students, and parents/guardians**
- **upon receipt of a complaint**, manage the complaint in accordance with the college's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure in a timely manner.
- 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
- appropriately train relevant employees
- keep records of complaints
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register at regular intervals
- **report to the college's insurer when that is relevant**

### All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following **roles and** responsibilities:

- comply with the college's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
- 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 maintain a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation**
- act in a calm, courteous manner 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 complaints have the following **roles and** responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the college's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
- **refer the complainant to the college's 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

Alta-1 College QLD is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the college, including by the development and implementation of this policy and via the clear support and promotion of the policy. The Principal will report on a high-level basis to the college Board on complaints handling at the college.

Alta-1 College QLD is also committed to regular training of employees on the implementation of this policy. The college will train employees during induction and at least once every two years. Thereafter.

## Complaints Register

Alta-1 College QLD will maintain a 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 Principal/ Executive Assistant. It is the Principal's / Executive's responsibility to populate, maintain, and review the Complaints Register on a termly basis.

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

Usually, complaints are resolved directly and informally between the people involved and no further action is required.

- 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.
- b) Complaints can be lodged through various methods, including:
  - i. Phone
  - ii. Email
  - iii. In-person (by appointment if required)
- c) Direct complaints about staff to the relevant line manager, complaints about the Principal to the Board Chairman, and complaints about a Board member to the Principal.
- d) If the complainant is unsure where to direct their complaint, they can contact the college's administration office for guidance.
- e) 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 completing the Complaints Form (available from the administration office) and handing it to a staff member of their choice.
- f) Where an anonymous complaint is lodged, the school will follow the complaints handling policy, when there is sufficient information to do so.

### 2. Acknowledgement, Assessment, and Referral

- a) The staff member receiving the complaint will:
  - i. acknowledge the complaint **within 2 business days** and provide an initial response outlining the next steps and where possible the estimated timeframes within five (5) business days.
  - 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 pass it on to the Program/Team Leader and/or the Principal, 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 school 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) **The person against whom a complaint is made is given opportunity to respond.**
- d) If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to the formal process.



## 5. Formal Complaints Handling Process

Unresolved complaints may lead to a formal complaint being lodged, which will ensue in the following process:

- a) The formal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g., the Regional Principal, the Principal, or the Board Chair for complaints against the principal)
- b) The Regional Principal will be involved in all regional complaints, but the Principal is informed. Where the complaint is about the Regional Principal, it is brought to the attention of the college Principal.
- c) The Principal records the complaint on the Complaints Register.
- d) The designated staff member may gather additional information through investigation, interviews, or evidence review
- e) The person against whom a complaint is made is informed and given opportunity to respond.
- f) The designated 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 or Board Chair determine as appropriate in the circumstances.
- g) The resolution (and whether it was satisfactory or not) is recorded.
- h) If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved the Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Alta-1 College Board Chairman.
- i) If unhappy with the decision of the College Board a request, through the Principal, can be made for a meeting with an independent mediator. The Principal may contact CSA or ISQ to appoint an independent arbiter if required.

Throughout the process confidentiality will be maintained by limiting knowledge of the issue only to those directly involved. Depending on the issue, and in accordance with other Alta-1 College policies and procedures (e.g., Child Protection Policy and mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse), third parties outside the college may need to be contacted. Information on file will remain confidential.

## 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 and respondents 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).

## Complaints Process Flow Chart

