Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Aim:	The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints.	
Scope and Responsibilities:	Any person directly affected by the subject of a complaint. Examples may include staff, or a student's parent or guardian, contractors, or community members.	
Board Approval:	Board approved	
Legislation Applicable:	Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld) Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) 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) Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 ISQ Complaints Handling Policy (October 2024)	
Related Documentation:	MBC and MBBC Enterprise Bargaining Agreements Positive Behaviours Policy Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy Anti-Bullying Policy Anti-Discrimination Policy Sexual Harassment Policy Privacy Policy National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018	
Definitions:	*Complaint*	An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the school, related to the schools' services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly expected or legally required.
	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.

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	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 that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by
	Complainant	The person, organization of their representative marking a complaint.
	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.

Policy Statement

The Moreton Bay Colleges acknowledges the right of students, parents and caregivers, staff and others to complain when dissatisfied with the schools' services, including an action, inaction or decision of the school. The schools encourage constructive criticism and complaints. The Moreton Bay Colleges are committed to ensuring that complaints received are handled in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent and fair way.

The Moreton Bay Colleges will ensure employees can recognise, receive and appropriately refer complaints to the informal or formal complaints procedure.

The Moreton Bay Colleges recognise that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students and parents and caregivers, and a better culture for employees, and views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Complaints Handling Principles

The Moreton Bay Colleges 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 complaint 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.

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Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy

The Moreton Bay Colleges encourages anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving the school to file a complaint. Complaints can address matters such as:

- The school, its employees or students having done something wrong
- The school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done
- The school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
- Issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to the relevant Positive Behaviours Policy or Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student
- 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 school fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Issues relating to non-compliance with a process outlined in school policies or procedures, for example the Child Protection Policy, Anti-Discrimination Policy or the Privacy Policy.

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents 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 in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Anti-Bullying Policy
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be deal with under the Positive Behaviours Policy
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the College Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate
- Disputes relating to a staff member's employment should be directed to their Line Manager and dealt with under the MBC and/or MBBC's Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and/or employment law. This does not include disputes about work health and safety matters, which may be dealt with under the schools' Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Disputes between members of the Board should be dealt with in accordance to the MBC Constitution and MBBC Constitution.
- Formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances
- Complaints relating to the education and training services provided by the schools to an overseas student should be dealt with in accordance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018.*

Responsibilities

Schools

The schools have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the schools' Complaints Handling Policy
- Appropriately communicate with schools' Complaints Handling Policy to students, parents and employees
- Ensure that the Complaints Handling Policy is readily accessible to staff, students and parents
- Upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy
- Ensure that appropriate support is made available to all parties of the 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
- Conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register in regular intervals
- Report to the schools' insurer when that is relevant

All Parties to a Dispute

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

- Comply with the schools' Complaints Handling Policy
- Provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- Not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- No 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 and/or managing complaints have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Act in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy
- Refer the complainant to the schools' 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 Principals, 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

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Implementation

The Moreton Bay Colleges is committed to raising awareness of the processes for resolving complaints at the school, including the development and implementation of this policy and via the clear support and promotion of the policy. The Colleges are also committed to regular training of employees on the implementation of the policy during induction and annually thereafter.

Complaint Register

The Moreton Bay Colleges 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 complaints register will be stored securely.

All complaints shall be entered onto the complaints register as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. The complaint register will not contain complaints about the Principals. Records of complaints about the Principals will be maintained by the Board with access restricted to the Board.

To safeguard confidentiality and maintain the integrity of the complaints process, access to the entire complaint register will be limited to the Principals and the CEO and Executive Principal.

The Principals 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 confidentiality of all parties involved, particularly ensuring that respondents to a complaint do not gain inappropriate access to information about the allegations against them.

Lodging a Complaint

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) Where a person is uncertain as to who a complaint should be made to, it may be made to the Principal or the CEO and Executive Principal
c) A formal complaint is:
    - A complaint made in writing which the complainant indicates is a formal complaint
    - A verbal complaint which the complainant requests to be treated as a formal complaint.

    Where are formal complaint is made verbally, the complaint must be documented by the person receiving it.

    If a staff member does not feel confident about handling the complaint or if the complaint is about an area that lies outside a staff member's responsibility, they should consult with a member of the Senior Leadership Team immediately.

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Area of Complaint	Person to receive the Complaint	Person to receive the Complaint if unresolved	Person to receive the Complaint if still unresolved
Member of Professional Services	Business Manager	CEO and Executive Principal	-
Volunteer or Contractor	Business Manager	CEO and Executive Principal	-
Primary School Staff	Head of Primary	Principal	CEO and Executive Principal
Secondary School Staff	Head of Secondary	Principal	CEO and Executive Principal
Colleges' Leadership Team	Principal	CEO and Executive Principal	-
Principal or Business Manager	CEO and Executive Principal	Chair of the Board	-
CEO and Executive Principal	Chair of the Board	-	-
Board Member	Chair of the Board	-	-
Chair of the Board	Deputy Chair of the Board	-	-

d) Anonymous Complaints
   i. Anonymous complaints may be where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say that they do not which to be identified
   ii. Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of students will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about the schools' expectations
   iii. Complainants should be encouraged to give their names and should be given reassurance on the issue confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the CEO and Executive Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint
   iv. Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the complaints register

Acknowledgement, Assessment and Referral

a) The staff member receiving the complaint will;
   i. Acknowledge the complaint within two (2) business days, outlining the next steps and where possible the estimated timeframes
   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

Registration and Support

a) The recipient of the complaint will promptly enter it onto the complaints register, 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 schools may offer

the student support where appropriate e.g. discussing suitable adjustments with parents and caregivers

Informal Complaints Handling Process

a) The informal process is designed to resolve issues promptly and collaboratively at the local level
b) It may involved constructive discussion and negotiation between the complainant and the relevant staff member (s)
c) If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to the formal process

Formal Complaints Handling Process

a) The formal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g. a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the CEO and Executive Principal for complaints against the Principal or Business Manager)
b) The staff member may gather additional information through investigation, interviews, or evidence review
c) The staff member will determine appropriate action, which may include:
    i. Mediation
    ii. Desciplinary measures
    iii. Implementation of policy changes
    iv. Referral to external agencies (e.g. Police)
    v. Provision of written updates to the complainant throughout the process
    vi. Other actions as deemed appropriate in the circumstances by the staff member managing the complaint

Complaint Closure

a) The complaints register will be updated with the date of 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

Appeals Process

a) Complainants may appeal the outcome of a complaint by writing to:
    i. The Principal (for complaints not previously managed by the Principal)
    ii. The CEO and Executive Principal (for complaints previously managed by the Principal, or complaints about the Principal or Business Manager)
    iii. The Chair of the Board (for complaints about the CEO and Executive Principal)

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DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Status

The current status of this document is shown below.

Policy	The Moreton Bay College Complaints Handling Policy
Version	V3
Issue Date	May 2025
Revision Date	March 2026
Owner	CEO and Executive Principal
Confidentiality	

Document History

The history of changes made to this document is shown below. The most recent changes are listed first.

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
3.0	March 2025	Update name to 'Handling Policy' Amended Areas of Complaint and Persons of Responsibility Reference to ISQ Complaints Handling Policy (Oct2024)
2.2	October 2023	Amend Chair of the Board of the Board – Chair of the Board Amend Head of College – Principal as needed
2.1	15 Nov 2016	Minor review – Amendment to background information. Reference to Principal changed to Executive Principal
2.0	25 July 2014	RLE changes (review of sustainability section to clarify focus in teaching of languages), CKU formatting
1.0	2012	First Draft

Approval

This document has been approved for publishing by:

Reviewed by	ELT
Authorised by	Board

Distribution

Controlled paper copies of this document are distributed as follows:

No.	Issued To
n/a	