



11.02 Complaints and Grievance Policy

1. Introduction

Girton Grammar School (GGS) is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy environment characterised by tolerance and support, respectful relationships and celebrating student achievements.

Part of this commitment involves ensuring the school community has access to processes that allow grievances to be managed appropriately, promptly and fairly. GGS is a working community, and concerns, grievances, disputes, or allegations of inappropriate or illegal behaviour arise.

This policy provides clear and transparent information about how a student, parent, or other school community member (other than a staff member) can raise grievances about the school, staff conduct, a student's education or well-being, and how such grievances will be managed and resolved.

GGS takes all complaints and concerns received from staff, parents, students and other complaints from outside of GGS seriously. We aim to ensure that grievances are handled objectively and with sensitivity. In doing so, we will seek to identify both the specific and (where applicable) systemic issues raised by a grievance (thereby enabling future improvements to be identified and implemented).

The procedural steps outlined in the [11.02b Complaints and Grievance Procedure](#) are intended to be practical, non-adversarial and non-legal. Steps will be implemented flexibly at GGS's discretion, depending on the circumstances of each situation.

Specific advice for making complaints about bullying and harassment, as well as the Codes of Conduct, are included in the [Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy](#), [Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [Parent Code of Conduct](#).

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students, parents/guardians, School Board members, contractors, volunteers, labour-hire workers, secondees, visitors, and other members of the GGS community.

This policy does not apply to:

- 2.1 Staff grievances, which should be raised in accordance with [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour and Equal Opportunity Policy](#) and [Procedure for Resolving Workplace Grievances and Complaints \(Staff\)](#).
- 2.2 Concerns about child abuse, reportable conduct and other student safety and well-being matters will be addressed through the [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy](#) and [Child Safety Policy](#).
- 2.3 Legal matters, including requests for compensation, payment and redress.

To the extent that inconsistencies exist between this policy and the school's other grievance policies and procedures, this policy shall prevail.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 **Principal:** Ensure the policy is in place and participate as necessary in investigations.
- 3.2 **Teachers/Staff:** Respond to complaints and report as required in the first instance.
- 3.3 **Senior staff:** Respond to complaints and report as required in the second instance (Senior Staff members are the Head of Junior School, Head of Senior School, Head of Student Engagement, Deputy Principal and Principal).
- 3.4 **Parents:** Lodge concerns or complaints as provided for in the guidelines.



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3.5 **Students:** Lodge concerns or complaints as provided for in the guidelines.

3.6 **External Facilitators:** Intervene as required following unsuccessful school involvement (External facilitators or other suitably qualified persons) to be engaged by GGS.

4. Definitions

Rights: All students, parents/carers or other school community members are entitled to express concern or make a complaint.

Accessibility: This policy is available to the school community through the GGS's website, the Parent, Student and Staff Portal (Astra).

Responsibilities: A person expressing a concern or complaint should do so with courtesy and respect. The person hearing the concern or complaint should also behave in such a manner as to ensure that the complainant feels acknowledged and heard.

Confidentiality: When a complaint or concern is raised, the process of investigation and resolution will remain confidential and subject to law and only involve those directly affected on a "need to know" basis or who may have been a witness.

Good faith: Complaints made in good faith will be treated respectfully, and the school will endeavour to support all parties involved. Victimisation of the complainant or an associated person will not be tolerated.

Vexatious Complaints: Where complaints or concerns are found to be vexatious or unfounded, the person receiving the complaint will refer it to the Principal or Deputy Principal, who may determine to dismiss the matter without further investigation; in this event, the matter will be documented, and the complainant informed. The expectation is that people expressing a concern or making a complaint will do so with reason and consideration.

Anonymous complaints: Anonymous complaints may be where no name or address is supplied, or the complainants say they do not wish to be identified. Complainants are encouraged to give their names and given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. Anonymous complaints can be directed to the school via a letter to reception or an anonymous email address. If the complainant persists in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, will be taken, depending on:

- The nature and seriousness of the complaint.
- Whether there is sufficient information for an investigation to be conducted.

5. Guiding Principles

When raising a grievance with GGS, you can expect to:

- 5.1 Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- 5.2 Have your grievance taken seriously, considered impartially (considering any power imbalances), and dealt with on the merits.
- 5.3 Have your grievance dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
- 5.4 Access appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the grievance resolution process being followed by GGS (including this policy).
- 5.5 Be supported by GGS during the grievance handling process, with a focus on maintaining the emotional well-being of any students involved.
- 5.6 Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the grievance.



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- 5.7 Not be victimised or subjected to reprisal for raising grievances in good faith.

In return, GGS expects that a member of the school community who raises a grievance will:

- 5.8 Treat others (including school staff, students, and parents, both former and present) respectfully and courteously.
- 5.9 Raise grievances in the appropriate forum regarding the below framework as soon as possible after the event that gives rise to the grievance has occurred.
- 5.10 Provide complete and factual information about the grievance.
- 5.11 Ask for assistance or further information as needed.
- 5.12 Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.
- 5.13 Be understanding and accepting of any outcome reached, being mindful that GGS must sometimes manage the interests of a number of students and other individuals when making decisions and may be privy to confidential information not known to the person raising the grievance.

GGS aims to prompt the resolution of concerns, ideally without requiring a formal complaint to be made. As the Board appoints the Principal to manage the school's day-to-day operations, a review by the Chair of the Board should be a last resort.

The timeframes listed in the procedure are only a guide and can vary due to the nature of the grievance and surrounding circumstances. Where timeframes set out in the procedure cannot be met, GGS will strive to communicate with the affected parties about the status of the grievance and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.

Please note the processes outlined in this policy are intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal.

6. Framework

GGS's framework for dealing with grievances involves a three-step process, namely:

- 6.1 Stage 1 - A concern is raised with GGS.
- 6.2 Stage 2 – A formal written complaint is made to the Principal.
- 6.3 Stage 3 - A review by the Chair of the Board is requested.

Further details about these stages and common considerations when GGS manages grievances, are set out in the Complaints and Grievances Procedure.

7. Recommendations for initially raising concerns

In the first instance, you should raise your concerns directly with GGS. GGS must be aware of a concern and its substance in order to address it.

GGS believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source, and when a concern relates to a student, it encourages concerns to be raised with the relevant staff member.

However, depending on the nature and severity of an issue and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may be raised directly with a senior staff member.

If unsure who to contact in the first instance, guidance is referred to in the Complaints and Grievance Procedure.

The following considerations are relevant before and when raising a concern:



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- 7.1 Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting GGS.
- 7.2 Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a complaint, concern, enquiry or suggestion. This will help in finding a solution.
- 7.3 Identify the party or parties involved.
- 7.4 Consider the practical outcome you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
- 7.5 If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list of the importance to you so that you are adequately prepared.
- 7.6 Consider whether there are any interim measures you would like GGS to consider while enquiring about the issue or problem.
- 7.7 Make an appointment to meet with the relevant staff member to discuss the concern - the best way to do this is to contact reception to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting. When contacting reception, please identify yourself and the student concerned, the subject of your concern, and the person you would like to speak with and provide a brief description of the issue you wish to speak about (for example, 'homework', 'enrolment decision (including appeals)', 'well-being' or 'grounds maintenance').
- 7.8 Remain courteous and calm when conveying your concerns. GGS is within its rights to terminate a conversation with the person raising the concern until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

8. Management of Records

GGS will maintain accurate and up to date records in relation to any complaint or grievance obtained by the school and any associated investigation conducted in relation to the complaint or grievance.

Records relating to a complaint or grievance will be stored securely to protect confidentiality.

Once the Principal has come to a decision regarding the complaint or appeal, the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome. If the matter is student related a copy will be retained on the student's well-being on ASTRA. If the matter is staff related, a copy will be placed on the staff member's file.

GGS will manage records pursuant to its privacy and confidentiality obligations.

9. Confidentiality

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by GGS at all times when dealing with a grievance, with information only being provided to those who have a right or need to know.

10. Communication

This policy is available to parents, students and the school community via GGS's website. This policy (or aspects thereof) will also feature in communications to parents via school, as well as in the school newsletters, bulletins and elink as required.

11. Legal Considerations

Nothing in GGS's complaints and appeals policy negates the right of a parent/student to pursue other legal remedies.



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The following page illustrates the process of expressing a concern, complaint or grievance. Pathways for pursuing a complaint outside the confines of the school include:

- **The Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA):** The Education Training and Reform Act 2006 requires the VRQA to investigate certain complaints.
- The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT): <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/>.

Advice from the VIT website is as follows: In many cases, concerns about a teacher can be resolved appropriately by discussing them with the teacher's employer. Before you lodge a complaint with us, we encourage you to contact and speak with the Principal.

The VIT can only deal with complaints that relate to allegations of:

- Misconduct
- Serious misconduct
- Serious incompetence
- A teacher's mental and physical ability to teach.

If your complaint relates to one or more of these areas, you may lodge a complaint with the VIT about a registered teacher.

12. Further Guidance

- [Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [Parent Code of Conduct](#)
- [Girton Grammar School Mission and Values](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Policy](#)

13. Policy Status / Document Control

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