

HORIZONS COLLEGE – POLICY & PROCEDURE

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURES



Purpose: These Procedures support the *Complaints Handling Policy* (the Policy) and provide direction to relevant persons regarding their role and responsibilities when actioning the Policy.

Scope: Any individual can make a complaint, including students, staff, visitors, parents, guardians or other members of the community.

References:

- Horizons College Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Name:	Complaints Handling Procedures		Version 202401_01
Policy Type:	Mandatory Policies, Frameworks and Strategies*		
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Note: Policy types marked with asterisks as follows are:

* published on school website

** only mandatory for schools incorporated through the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)

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1. Introduction

These Procedures support the *Complaints Handling Policy* (the Policy) and provide direction to relevant persons regarding their role and responsibilities when actioning the Policy.

Any individual can make a complaint, including students, staff, visitors, parents, guardians or other members of the community.

Throughout the Procedures, unless otherwise indicated, the term College staff includes the Principal and all other employees.

2. Three stage complaints handling process

Unless the matter is outside the scope of the *Complaints Handling Policy* (as outlined in the Policy), all complaints in relation to an action, behaviour, omission or decision by a College staff member, or volunteer will be handled in accordance with the following three stage complaints handling process.

Refer to section 3 for information about complaints in relation to visitors, including contractors, to the College.

Stage 1 - Discuss the matter with the relevant staff member or volunteer

The complainant is directed, in the first instance, to discuss their complaint with the staff member or volunteer whose action, behaviour, omission or decision is in question.

When resolving complaints at this stage:

1. the complainant is asked to speak with the staff member or volunteer and request a time to discuss their concern regarding the staff member or volunteer's action, behaviour, omission or decision;
2. the complainant and the staff member or volunteer may speak with the Principal about obtaining support during the complaints handling process;
3. the staff member or volunteer must speak with the Principal should the matter be outside the scope of the Complaints Handling Policy;
4. the staff member or volunteer documents the complaint in TASS; including the names of all parties involved, the nature of concerns, the date and time of any discussions, the agreed outcome and any required actions;
5. if the Principal is not involved in the discussion, the staff member or volunteer is to:
 - a) inform the complainant about these Procedures and the Complaints Handling Policy, and
 - b) offer to inform the Principal of the complaint raised, and the outcome of the discussion;
6. if the Principal is made aware of the complaint, they will:
 - a) ensure the complaint is documented; including the names of all parties involved, the nature of the concerns, the date and time of any discussion, the agreed outcomes and any required actions;
 - b) consider if any other policies, procedures or protocols are to be applied, particularly those referenced in the Complaints Handling Policy regarding student protection and the conduct of staff and volunteers;
 - c) consider if it is appropriate to ensure the document outlining the management of the complaint is filed in the staff member or volunteer's personnel file and any agreed actions are completed;
 - d) consider whether the staff member or volunteer requires any additional training or support in relation to their role, or whether any other action is required; and
 - e) identify any issues or strategies to be incorporated in the College's quality improvement planning.

When the complainant determines that it is **not appropriate to discuss the complaint** with the staff member or volunteer, or they determine that their complaint has not been addressed to their satisfaction, they are asked to proceed to Stage 2 of the complaints handling process.

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Stage 2 – Make a complaint to the Principal

When escalating a complaint to this stage, the complainant may raise their complaint with the Principal either in writing or verbally. When resolving a complaint at this stage:

1. the complainant is asked to inform the Principal of their complaint: including the names of all parties involved, the nature of the concerns, any specific dates and times when incidents occurred, the complainant's feedback about their discussion with the staff member or volunteer, and the reason why the complaint remains unresolved;
2. the Principal will:
 - a) consider if any of the specific complaints handling requirements (as per Section 3 of the Procedures); or other policies, procedures or protocols (particularly those referenced in the Complaints Handling Policy regarding student protection and the conduct of staff and volunteers); are to be applied;
 - b) speak with the staff member or volunteer and obtain further information about their actions in relation to the complaint. This would include reading the TASS entry made by the staff member or volunteer at the time the complaint was made to them;
 - c) advise all parties involved about support available to them during the complaints handling process;
 - d) organise meeting/s with the complainant, or their advocate, and the staff member or volunteer, as soon as practicable; to gather further information about the ongoing complaint and develop a plan to satisfactorily resolve the complaint;
 - e) explain to the complainant, or their advocate, and the staff member or volunteer that they may have a support person present during any meeting;
 - f) ensure meetings are documented, including the agreed outcomes and required actions;
 - g) consider whether the staff member or volunteer requires additional training or support in relation to their role, or whether any other action is required;
 - h) ensure the agreed outcomes and required actions are communicated to the complainant;
 - i) ensure the records related to the complaint, e.g. meetings, reports, letters etc. are filed on the staff member or volunteer's personnel file and any agreed actions are completed; and
 - j) incorporate relevant learnings into the College's quality improvement planning.

When the complainant, or their advocate, determines that it is not appropriate to discuss the complaint with the Principal, or in doing so they do not believe their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they are asked to proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints management process.

Stage 3 – Escalate the complaint to the Chair

When escalating a complaint to this stage, the complainant may raise their complaint with the Chair of the College's Board in writing. When resolving a complaint at this stage:

1. the complainant is asked to inform the Chair of their ongoing complaint, including their feedback on previous meetings with the College and the reason why the complaint remains unresolved;
2. the Chair will:
 - a) consider if any of the specific complaints handling requirements (as per Section 3 of the Procedures); or other policies, procedures or protocols (particularly those referenced in the Complaints Handling Policy regarding student protection and the conduct of staff and volunteers); are to be applied
 - b) advise the Principal and staff member or volunteer, that the complaint has now been escalated and obtain further information about the matter and the College's responses to the complaint, including copies of relevant documents or complaints handling plans;
 - c) advise all parties involved about support available to them during the complaints handling process;
 - d) organise meeting/s with the complainant, or their advocate, the Principal and other relevant staff members and volunteers, as soon as practicable; to gather further information about the ongoing complaint and, if required, develop a complaints handling plan to resolve the issues;

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- e) explain to the complainant and the staff member or volunteer that they may have a support person present during any meeting;
- f) ensure meetings are documented, including the agreed outcomes and required actions;
- g) consider whether the staff member or volunteer requires additional training or support in relation to their role, or whether any other action is required;
- h) ensure the agreed outcomes and required actions are communicated to the complainant;
- i) ensure the records relating to the complaint, e.g. meetings, reports, letters etc. are filed on the staff member or volunteer's personnel file and any agreed actions are completed;
- j) incorporate relevant learnings into the College's quality improvement planning; and
- k) inform the board of the complaint.

3. Complaints in relation to visitors to the College

When a complaint is about a visitor, including contractors, to the College, the complainant is asked to inform the Principal, of their concerns including, where known, the name of the visitor, the organisation that the visitor works for, the names of any children involved, if relevant, and any dates and times of particular incidents related to their complaint.

The Principal will consider if any other policies, procedures or protocols are to be applied, particularly those referenced in the Complaints Handling Policy regarding student protection.

The Principal will document the concerns and, unless the matter involves a criminal investigation, will forward the complaint to the organisation that employs the visitor who has been named in the complaint. If the matter does relate to a criminal investigation, direction will be sought from the Police.

The Principal will also consider the nature of the complaint and determine whether this may impact any future visits to the College by the person named in the complaint.

4. Privacy and confidentiality

All information disclosed or recorded as part of a complaints handling process must be managed in accordance with privacy legislation and principles. Prior to the sharing of information, consent must be obtained from the relevant parties involved in the complaints handling process, unless otherwise allowed by law.

5. Managing complaints records

When recording information in relation to a complaints handling process, ensure all records are factual and clearly indicate the names of all parties to the complaint, the details of the concerns or complaint, the processes used to resolve the complaint, required actions and responsible officers.

6. Storing and accessing complaints records

The Principal must ensure all information and documents in relation to the complaint are stored on the relevant staff member or volunteer's personnel file.

Prior to giving any individual access to a complaint record, a staff member will consult with the Principal. The Principal will consider any need to consult with the Chair.

7. Support Person

A support person is someone who attends and provides support to the complainant at a mediation or meeting. A support person can listen and help the complainant to understand or explain the issues in a dispute in private and be there as more support in the mediation. The complainant will be required to do most of the speaking, as the support person cannot represent the complainant and is not able to advocate on their behalf.



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Where the complainant wishes for a support person to attend a mediation or meeting with them, prior notice must be provided to the College in writing, clearly stating the name of the support person, the organisation (if any) that they are from and their relationship to the complainant and student involved.

The College can refuse a preferred support person if there are reasonable grounds to do so, such as a conflict of interest or a health and safety concern.