

HUME CENTRAL SECONDARY COLLEGE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents/guardians, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our College. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment. The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Hume Central Secondary College so that parents/guardians and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our College
- ensure that all complaints regarding Hume Central Secondary College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

SCOPE

On occasions, parents/guardians may have concerns about particular aspects of their child's schooling.

This Complaints & Grievances Policy for community members outlines an agreed process for resolving issues in a positive and supportive manner, in addition to:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parent/guardians and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

GUIDELINES

These implementation procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents/guardians
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters.

Hume Central Secondary College welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value and encourage open communication and positive relationships with our families and our school community and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

THE ROLE OF THE COLLEGE IS TO:

- develop, publicise and implement its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints
- ensure all reasonable steps have been undertaken in resolving parent complaints and grievances
- maintain the confidentiality of all parties and observe the principles of natural justice
- contact the regional office for support with any complex complaints
- communicate the outcomes of complaints and grievances, where possible, to all relevant parties
- communicate its policy and procedures clearly and regularly to parents and the school community and ensure that all new staff members are aware of the school and Department's policies and procedures in relation to addressing parent concerns and complaints
- brief all staff members (including volunteers) on the policy and procedures annually
- establish and maintain administrative processes to manage concerns and complaints raised at the College
- ensure that this policy and procedures is consistent with the Department's policy
- regularly reviews its record of complaints to identify common or recurring issues that may need to be addressed
- ensure that all parties in a disputed complaint are aware of their entitlement to support through an advocate. An advocate can be a buddy, friend or colleague or an unpaid support person provided through an appropriate agency.

PREPARATION FOR RAISING A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Hume Central Secondary College encourages parents/guardians/ members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Hume Central Secondary College.

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Hume Central Secondary College is always happy to discuss with parents/guardians and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child's teacher, Team Leader or Team Coordinator. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Assistant/Campus Principal or College Principal. If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our College will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Assistant/Campus Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Assistant Principal, Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal/Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
4. **Timelines:** Hume Central Secondary College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Hume Central Secondary College may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Hume Central Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

RESOLUTION

Where appropriate, Hume Central Secondary College may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Hume Central Secondary College may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

ESCALATION

If a parent/guardian or community member is not satisfied that their complaint (or enquiry/concern) has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the North Western Victoria Region by phone: 1300 338 691 or via email: nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au. Hume Central Secondary College may also refer a complaint to the North Western Victoria Region Office if we believe that the complaint has been adequately dealt with.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see DET's web page: [Make a complaint or offer feedback - https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complaintslanding.aspx](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complaintslanding.aspx)

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as required or due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Date Reviewed	To Be Reviewed	College Council
May 2021	3-4 Years	24 th June 2021