



Iona College Geelong Complaints Handling Policy

Preamble

Iona College Geelong understands that from time to time Complaints arise regarding various aspects of the College's operation. The school commits to ensuring that there is a fair process embedded at the College in relation to how complaints are handled and resolved. Whilst the College is not yet in operation it understands that complaints procedures need to be available to the stakeholders of the College from the commencement of the 2020 school year.

Iona College Geelong's Complaints Handling Policy

Iona College Geelong welcomes feedback from all members of the school / College community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint.

Staff and parents of Iona College Geelong are partners in the education and wellbeing of our students. Effective communications play a vital role in this partnership, as does a shared commitment to addressing issues of concern in ways that are constructive, open, and respectful and demonstrate procedural fairness. Every member of our school community has a right to have their concern or complaint addressed, and we will work positively and resolutely to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people involved. Concerns or complaints raised by students about other students are generally handled by a student's Learning Leader or Year Level Coordinator.

In addition, procedures for raising and resolving bullying concerns are outlined in the College's Anti Bullying Policy. If your child has not been able to resolve the issue through these mechanisms, then this policy applies. It outlines our principles and procedures for receiving and resolving complaints from parents on behalf of your child. The policy also applies when parents have a specific parent/school concern.

College staff who wish to raise complaints about workplace matters can do so through applicable internal policies and/or the Disputes Procedure outlined in clause 22 of the Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement (VCEMEA) 2018.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Iona College Geelong, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Iona College Geelong's Commitment

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will direct and shape the College's actions:

- We will work with you with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve a fair and reasonable outcome.
- The complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- The person(s) facing the complaint will be provided with detailed information about the substance of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond.

- Personal information disclosed will be treated as confidential.
- Our resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, conciliation, investigation and decision making.
- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, the College will provide you with options for having the outcome reviewed or mediated via an external authority.
- The communal needs of the school community will in most instances exceed the needs of any individual.

Procedures

Expectations of People Making a Complaint In making a complaint, the College requests and expects that you will:

- Raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- Communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- Act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

How Do I Make a Complaint?

Email Communications

Due to teachers' classroom and supervision duties, your first contact is best made by email, with an appointment request for either a phone conference or face-to-face meeting. You are asked to outline concerns or issues (e.g. academic performance, discipline, student/peer incidents) so that the staff member can constructively prepare for the meeting/phone conference.

Teachers are expected to respond in a timely manner (within 24 hours), and to do so by phone or email. Teachers are not expected to respond to emails after 6.00pm on weekends, public holidays and school holidays.

An updated list of the names, roles/titles and email addresses of teaching staff is made available to parents at the beginning of each school year.

Confidential, Contentious and/or Sensitive Matters

Parents and staff are strongly discouraged from sending or discussing confidential, contentious and/or emotional information via email. These matters are best discussed face to face or over the phone. The College email systems are monitored and should not be considered private.

Informal and Formal Resolution Processes

If initial communication between the parties does not resolve the complaint (an 'informal' resolution process), then the complainant should:

- Contact the Foundation Principal or a senior member of staff to make an appointment for either a phone conference or a face-to-face meeting
- Outline the nature of the complaint, either verbally or in writing, and the steps taken to resolve it.
- In moving to a more formal process, the Foundation Principal or a senior member of staff will:

- Organise a meeting/phone conference
- Fully document the complaint, any actions taken to resolve it and outcomes of those actions
- Further and fully investigate the matter
- Ensure that no one is victimised as a result of a complaint being made
- If necessary, enable a complainant to be accompanied by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- Enable the person against whom the complaint has been made to respond, and to be accompanied to any meeting by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- Organise a process of mediation if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the College.

Avenues of Appeal

If a complaint remains unresolved or if you are dissatisfied with the outcomes, the complainant has the right to seek other avenues of appeal through authorities such as the Catholic Education Melbourne.

Serious or Repeated Complaints

Where a complaint relates to an allegation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or when complaints are sufficiently serious or repeated, the Principal will take action to report the matter to the appropriate authorities, which may include the Catholic Education Melbourne and the Police, and ensure a comprehensive investigation.

Procedural fairness

Iona College Geelong is committed to Procedural Fairness in relation to any matter lodged as a complaint to the College. Procedural Fairness in relation to complaints handling at Iona College is defined as:

- (1) People likely to be adversely affected by a decision or an action must be given reasonable opportunity to comment on information or material you intend to rely on in making your decision before the decision is made. This is only fair and what we would expect were we to be the subject of the decision-making process.
- (2) the decision-maker (in this case the Complaints Manager) must act in an impartial and unbiased manner, and be seen to do so. Actual bias is often hard to prove, but there is also a requirement that you do not act in such a way that an informed onlooker would reasonably suspect or apprehend bias, such as if the decision-maker's relatives had a pecuniary interest in the matter under consideration.

For any complaints made in relation to enrolment, see Iona College Student Enrolment Policy and Iona College Education Agreement.

Availability

The Complaints Handling Policy of Iona College Geelong will be available on the College website www.iona.vic.edu.au and hard copies will be provided upon request from the College Reception (A13)