



Complaints Handling Procedure

Status:	Current	Supersedes: All previous Rockhampton Girls Grammar School procedures.
Authorised by:	Board Chair	Date of Authorisation: February 2023
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY (RGGS-009-POL)</i>• <i>COMPLAINTS FORM (RGGS-083-FRM)</i>• <i>COMPLAINTS REGISTER – SCHOOL COMMUNITY (RGGS-074-REG)</i>	
Review Date:	This policy will be reviewed annually, or as appropriate, to take account of new legislation or changes to school's operations and practices and to make sure it remains appropriate to the changing environment.	Next Review Date: February 2024
Policy Owner:	Board of Trustees of Rockhampton Girls Grammar School <i>trading as</i> Rockhampton Girls Grammar School CRICOS Provider No: 00508E	Access: S:\All Staff - Policies Procedures and Forms\BOARD RELATED DOCUMENTS\POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



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1. GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS

1.1. Dealing with a Grievance

All members of the Rockhampton Girls Grammar School community are strongly encouraged to maintain respectful and collaborative relationships and quickly address any misunderstanding should they arise. However, a person may feel aggrieved in the course of his/her engagement with the School and believe the situation is serious enough to warrant assistance to remedy the issue. The source of the grievance may be varied, ranging from conflict over professional or academic issues, concern over the application of a policy, through to serious discrimination or harassment.

A minor grievance may be remedied by the parties themselves but, if not dealt with, minor grievances and conflicts can escalate and become issues of a more serious nature. Therefore, if it cannot be remedied quickly, the person should raise issues of grievance and conflict as soon as possible.

In the first instance, the aggrieved person should, wherever practicable and if they feel comfortable doing so, attempt to amicably resolve the matter with the party/parties who are involved. A grievance may be initially communicated in a written letter, email or a meeting. Issues should be raised in the first instance as follows:

- Primary Students with their classroom teacher;
- Secondary Students with their care class teacher;
- Contractors with the person who has engaged them at the School;
- Parents and volunteers with the relevant member of staff overseeing the area of concern or where appropriate with the Business Manager, Head of Boarding, Deputy Principal – Students, Deputy Principal – Studies or Principal;
- External stakeholders with the Principal.

Complaints made without substantiation or accusations made without any basis will be viewed by the school as a very serious matter.

1.2. Support

It is acknowledged that raising issues of conflict may be difficult for some people. Therefore, the option exists for a support person to be included in any meetings with the person investigating the grievance. The role of a support person is to provide support to the complainant, for example by discussing the issue with him/her or taking notes in the meeting. In this situation, a support person is not an advocate for the complainant and should not become actively involved in the discussions.

A support person could be a colleague or friend and in the case of students, the support person can be parents or guardians.

2. PROCESS FOR COMPLAINTS

On the initial receipt of a complaint (written or verbal), the person receiving the complaint will assess the nature of the complaint and either deal with the matter themselves or, if appropriate, pass the matter to a person who is suitably independent and competent to manage the matter.

If appropriate, the person dealing with the grievance may elect to seek to resolve the issue informally by meeting with the parties singly and/or together, providing advice or strategies for action. Such an approach is not an option for dealing with formal complaints of harassment, bullying or discrimination which should always progress immediately to the formal complaint procedure (2.1).

If the matter is dealt with informally and resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, and the complaint was not trivial, then details of the issue and resolution should be noted in the *Rockhampton Girls Grammar*



School Complaints Register – School Community (RGGS-074-REG). Where this informal process is not appropriate, or does not lead to resolution, the formal complaint procedure will then apply.

2.1. Formal Complaint Procedure

- The Rockhampton Girls Grammar School regards formal complaints as serious matters. A formal complaint must be made in writing. You may choose to write your own statement or use the *Rockhampton Girls Grammar School Formal Complaint Form (RGGS-083-FRM)*. The written complaint should clearly outline the nature of the complaint and specify individuals involved. It should include all relevant supporting material available to them such as emails and notes of verbal communication including, where appropriate, the names of witnesses; and
- The formal written complaint should be directed to the relevant person as specified in Section 1.1.
 - If the complaint involves the Principal, then it should be raised as a grievance with the Board Chair via a letter addressed to him/her via the Board Secretary.

All complaints will be treated seriously. The School will determine the most appropriate method of dealing with the grievance. All complaints received will be recorded in the *Rockhampton Girls Grammar School Complaints Register – School Community (RGGS-074-REG)* which is maintained by the Business Manager and stored in the Confidential Business Manager drive.

All stages of the complaints process should be documented and filed as appropriate. Complaints received should be treated seriously and confidentially. All conversations and discussions should take place in a quiet area.

When an individual is approached to deal with a complaint, but considers that it would be improper for them to consider the grievance (because, for example, they have a particular relationship with the claimant or the person the complaint is about), the complaint should be referred to a member of Executive.

The individual should fully discuss the aggrieved person's concerns, to get a full understanding of the issues. They have the responsibility to listen, investigate, evaluate and respond to the aggrieved person.

It may be necessary for the individual to talk to other people involved and to impartially hear their side of the story, before taking any steps to seek to resolve the matter.

Confidential written records of the complaint and the interview processes should be taken for future reference.

Following a full consideration of the matter, the individual should offer suggestions as to how the grievance can be resolved. For example, a grievance may be resolved by:

- compromise; or
- seeking an apology from the party complained about.

However, no action should be taken without first talking to the aggrieved and getting their agreement. The response to the aggrieved party should always be made in writing, so that there is a written record that the grievance has been considered and addressed.

If appropriate in a particular case, any disciplinary action against the person complained about should be conducted following the counselling and disciplinary guidelines as set out by Fair Work Australia.

2.2. Escalation

Escalation should only occur if the following circumstances occur:

- If the above process has been followed and the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved, the issue may be escalated to a higher level; or
- The issue has been raised with an employee's immediate supervisor, but action has not taken within ten days.

A grievance may be escalated as follows:

- Students with the Deputy Principal – Students or Deputy Principal – Studies;
- Parents and volunteers with the Principal; and



- External stakeholders and contractors with the Principal or Business Manager.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Whilst the Rockhampton Girls Grammar School will endeavour to preserve the confidentiality of the complainant and the person complained about, it may be necessary to speak with other people involved to determine what happened and to maintain the integrity of the investigation process.

Where potentially unlawful conduct has occurred, Rockhampton Girls Grammar School will need to alert the appropriate authorities.

Those people who are involved in the complaint (including the complainant, witnesses etc.) are also under a duty to maintain confidentiality and display a commitment to uphold the integrity of the investigation process. If the complainant chooses to bring a support person with them to any meetings, they too are bound by confidentiality. Gossiping and/or the spreading of rumours as a result of, or in connection with, a process followed under this policy will not be tolerated under any circumstances and may lead to further disciplinary action for those concerned.

4. OUTCOMES

The outcomes of all formal or informal complaint procedures, will depend on the nature of the complaint, its severity and what is deemed appropriate in the relevant circumstances.

Where the complaint involves a contractor or agent of Rockhampton Girls Grammar School and an investigation process reveals that a person has engaged in unlawful conduct or other behaviour which is prohibited by this policy, those concerned may face termination of their contracts immediately, or may not be renewed in the future.

Additional action may be deemed necessary to resolve or remedy the behaviour complained about, including but not limited to:

- Providing training to employees concerned;
- Requiring employees who have breached this policy to apologise to appropriate person(s);
- Providing counselling to employees (complainant and the person complained about);
- Placing employees on performance improvement plans to ensure improved behaviour; and/or
- Providing coaching and mentoring.

Any disciplinary action required based on the nature of the incident and information disclosed as part of the investigation will not be communicated with the complainant.

5. APPEALS PROCEDURE (INTERNAL)

If any parties involved are unhappy with the outcome, or the way the complaint handling procedure was managed by Rockhampton Girls Grammar School, they may refer the complaint to the Principal or Board of Trustees for review.

Once notified, the Board of Trustees will conduct a review of the procedure followed, the outcome issued and make a final determination on the issue. Once this determination is made, the person who has made the appeal will be notified of the outcome and this determination will be final.