



11.2 Complaints and Grievances Policy

1. Introduction

Girton Grammar School respects the right of any student and parent/carer to express complaints and grievances. The School is committed to responding to complaints and grievances in a fair and timely manner. Although it is often most effective to express complaints and grievances to those staff members responsible for the specific area of concern, the Principal is available to respond to any complaints.

Any complaints about the conduct of the Principal should be communicated to the Deputy Principal, who is obliged to pass these concerns directly on to the Chair of the Board.

It is the Principal's responsibility to lead and manage in all areas of the operations of the School. In finances, the Board takes final responsibility, but complaints about fees, the Business Regulations or other financial matters must be directed through the Principal or Chief Financial Officer.

Consistent with the role and the traditional practices of Independent Schools, the Principal has final decision-making powers subject to the law on all matters pertaining to students, staff and parents/carers.

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

2. Purpose

Girton Grammar School understands that from time to time parents, external organisations and other stakeholders may be dissatisfied or have a concern or complaint in relation to a decision taken or an action or activity for which the school is responsible. Where possible the school encourages such concerns to be identified and resolved speedily and informally; the complaints policy is designed to apply when that proves more difficult, and a formal process is required.

3. Definitions

Complaints are more likely to be resolved quickly and effectively when:

- 3.1 information about the process of resolution is received by the complainant in a timely manner and when reasons are given for decisions
- 3.2 the school acts with appropriate discretion
- 3.3 the school considers complainants are entitled to be taken seriously and heard
- 3.4 the school considers complaints generally as one means of receiving information that contributes to the overall improvement in the services provided
- 3.5 people believe that the principles of natural justice have been followed



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Rights

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

Accessibility

This policy is made available to the School Community through the School's [Website](#), the Parent, Student and Staff Portal, ([Astra](#)).

Responsibilities

Person's 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 expressed the process of investigation and resolution will remain confidential, 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 persons expressing a concern or making a complaint will do so with reason and consideration.

Information required when making a complaint

The complainant should provide the following information when making a complaint:

- 3.6 Your name and contact details
- 3.7 Student name (if relevant)
- 3.8 The nature of the complaint
- 3.9 Copies of any relevant correspondence or documents relating directly to the complaint
- 3.10 What you consider may be required to resolve the complaint



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Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints may be where there is no name or address supplied, or where 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 letter to reception or via an anonymous email address. If the complainant persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, will be taken, depending on:

- 3.11 the nature and seriousness of the complaint; and
- 3.12 whether there is sufficient information for an investigation to be conducted

4. Policy

All Students, Parents and Carers must understand the importance of the [Girton Grammar School Mission and Values](#) in treating those who make complaints with dignity and respect. It is very important that complaints are taken seriously, are investigated thoroughly, professionally and fairly with the results communicated appropriately with any following up conducted in a fair and timely manner.

5. Actions

INFORMAL COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION

- 5.1 In the first instance, Girton Grammar School requests there is an attempt to informally resolve the issue through informal resolution of the complaint.
- 5.2 Students should contact the Classroom Teacher, House Tutor, Head of House or Head of Junior School in the first instance to attempt mediation or informal resolution of the complaint. Written complaints or appeals are to be lodged with the Head of Junior School or Head of Senior School or Principal or Deputy Principal.
- 5.3 If the matter cannot be resolved through informal means which may include mediation, the matter will be referred to the Principal and Girton Grammar School's formal complaints and appeal handling procedure will be followed.
- 5.4 Particular complaints may be referred to or through particular members of staff. The following table provides advice about who to contact about various concerns. The table serves as a guide for staff, students and parents.



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Area of concern	Who to contact
Student Wellbeing	House Tutor (Senior School) or classroom teacher (Junior School) Head of House (Senior School), Head of Junior School and Deputy Head of Junior School. Head of Senior School or Head of Student Engagement Deputy Principal
Curriculum	Classroom teacher (JS and SS) Head of Department (SS) Head of Junior School Curriculum (JS) Head of Junior School Head of Senior School Deputy Principal
Buses	Daily Operations Manager
Careers / work experience	Head of VCE & Student Futures
Finance	Chief Financial Officer or Principal
Co-Curriculum	SMC responsible for the specific co-curricular activity or Co-Curriculum Co-ordinator
Camps	Head of Camps
Bullying and/or Harassment (students)	Refer to the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy Appropriate Workplace Behaviour and Equal Opportunity Policy
Bullying and/or Harassment (staff)	Refer to the Appropriate Workplace Behaviour and Equal Opportunity Policy
Sports Matters	Sports Co-ordinator

FORMAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

- 5.5 The process of this grievance procedure is confidential, subject to law and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- 5.6 Procedural fairness must be afforded to all parties concerned.
- 5.7 Each complainant has the opportunity to present his/her case to the Principal.
- 5.8 The complainant and/or the school may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at all relevant meetings.
- 5.9 The formal grievance process will commence within a reasonable timeframe of the lodgement of the complaint or appeal with the Principal.



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- 5.10 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 wellbeing on ASTRA. If the matter is staff related, a copy will be placed on the staff member's file.
- 5.11 If the grievance procedure finds in favour of the complainant, Girton Grammar School will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome.
- 5.12 Girton Grammar School undertakes to finalise all grievance procedures as soon as practical

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Principal:** to ensure the policy is in place and to participate as necessary in investigations
- **Teachers/Staff:** to respond to complaints and/or report as required in the first instance
- **Senior Staff:** to respond to complaints and/or report as required in the second instance (Senior Staff members are the Deputy Principal; Head of Junior School; Head of Senior School; Head of Student Engagement; Principal.
- **Parents:** to lodge concerns or complaints as provided for in the guidelines
- **Students:** to lodge concerns or complaints as provided for in the guidelines
- **External Facilitators:** to intervene as required following unsuccessful school involvement (External facilitators may include Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) or another suitably qualified persons) to be engaged by the School.

GUIDELINES

How to express a concern or complaint in regard to the education and well-being of your child.

When expressing a concern regarding students, parents should inform the School so that the School can assist in resolving the issue. Parents should not contact the other student involved or the parent of the other student as per the Parent Code of Conduct.

If the informal complaint handling process has not yielded a satisfactory outcome then please refer concerns to the Head of Junior School or the Head of Senior School, the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

How to express a concern or complaint in regard to a policy, decision or procedure of the School.

Such concerns should be expressed (preferably in writing or e-mail) to the person most responsible for the aspect of the School's operations from which the concern has arisen. (See the table and contacts list on Page 4 of this policy.)



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OTHER LEGAL REDRESS

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

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 you have 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, then you may lodge a complaint with the VIT about a registered teacher.

6 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](#)



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7 Policy Status/Document Control

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