



## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS (GRIEVANCE) POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**Approved:** Principal

**Date approved:** 4 October 2017

**Responsible Officers:** Manager, International Programs, Chief Financial Officer

**Policy Review Date:** 4 October 2018

### Rationale

Billanook College has a commitment to quality programs, student welfare and our Mission Statement. Accordingly, this policy should be read in conjunction with all other student policies developed and implemented by the College. In particular, this policy focuses on establishing mechanisms to address any complaints by students, whether they be prospective, currently enrolled or former students.

### Guiding Principles

1. The College is committed to resolving complaints efficiently and ensuring that the outcomes are consistent, fair and just and that all processes are cost free to the complainant;
2. Confidentiality is to be maintained in all matters relating to a student complaint. Information shall be given only on a 'need to know' basis and students shall be made fully aware of the strict confidentiality that will be applied during all stages of the complaints process;

### Process and Practices

The complaints process consists of a number of stages and may involve various members of the College staff and College Leadership team, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Students and their parents / guardians may have concerns or grievances regarding but not limited to:

- a. The management by the College of Student Conduct and Welfare Matters
- b. Delivery of Educational Services and Academic Programs
- c. Homestay Accommodation Matters
- d. Financial and Contractual Issues

Students/parents should, in the first instance, report the concerns to the Manager, International Programs for direction on the most appropriate avenue for clarification of the issue and lodging of an informal complaint. Where the complaint is not resolved informally to the student's satisfaction, then it is recommended that a Formal Complaint be lodged using the College's Complaint Form.

## **1. Nature of Complaint and Informal Resolution**

- 1.1 Where a student has a complaint relating to the application and/or enrolment process he/she should, in the first instance, make contact with the Manager, International Programs who shall respond after consultation with the Registrar or Head of School.
- 1.2 Where a student has a complaint relating to assessment and/or reporting he/she should, in the first instance, make contact with the Manager, International Programs who shall investigate and respond after consultation with the Subject Teacher, Learning Leader or Director of Learning.
- 1.3 Where a student has a complaint relating to the quality of delivery, course content and/or teaching and learning practices he/she should, in the first instance, make contact with the Manager, International Programs who shall investigate and respond in consultation with the Subject Teacher, Learning Leader, Director of Learning or Head of School.
- 1.4 Where a student has a complaint concerning behaviour and/or discipline matters relating to other students or staff he/she should, in the first instance, make contact with the Manager, International Programs who shall investigate and respond after consultation with the Head of Year or Head of School.
- 1.5 Where a student has a complaint relating to financial and contractual issues, the College policy on these matters is clearly stated in the Terms and Conditions for International Students. The Manager, International Programs will assist the student, their parent or agent to raise queries relating to fees with the College Accounts Department. If the student, parent or agent is dissatisfied with the advice or instructions provided by the Accounts Office, he or she may write to the Chief Financial Officer who will convey a decision in writing to the parent. If the student, parent or agent is still dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she may follow the necessary steps to lodge a Formal Complaint or Appeal.

## **2. Process for Informal Complaint Resolution**

- 2.1 The Manager, International Programs will interview the student and /or receive and record details on the substance of the complaint from the parent. Notes will be made on the substance of the complaint.
- 2.2 The Manager, International Programs will then gather further information by interview or discussion with relevant stakeholders. Notes will be made as further information is gathered.
- 2.3 The Manager, International Programs undertakes to consult the relevant Staff on College Leadership Team should initial investigation suggest that the complaint has substance.
- 2.4 A decision on the nature and mode of response to the student or parent will be made by the Manager, International Programs in consultation with the relevant member of the College Leadership Team.
- 2.5 The Manager, International Programs undertakes to meet with the student or report back to the parent to ascertain whether they understand and accept the informal resolution. Notes will be made of that informal resolution and student/parent response to same. If the complaint is resolved informally to the student/parent satisfaction, in the first instance, a record shall be made and placed on the student file. If required, relevant College personnel shall be informed if a change to current policy and/or practice is recommended to avoid similar student complaints in the future.

### **3. Formal Hearing for Complaint Resolution**

#### **3.1 Request for Formal Complaint Resolution**

- a. If the complaint is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, then the student shall be advised in writing of their right to register a formal complaint to the College, including a statement that such a formal complaint must be lodged within 20 working days of the completion of the Informal Resolution process. The International Student/parent will be guided by the Manager, International Programs on accessing the pro-forma to be completed to register a Formal Complaint or Appeal. A link to this Pro-forma exists herein.
- b. The Formal Complaint and Appeal Hearing must occur within 10 working days of the lodgement of the pro-forma. The scheduled date of the Formal Hearing must be set by negotiation with the student to allow every opportunity for support persons to be present.
- c. International Students are also advised that they must maintain attendance and involvement in all required College programs while the Formal Complaints and Appeals process is underway.

#### **3.2 Panel Members for the Hearing of Formal Complaints and Appeals**

- d. Issues of Academic Progress and Course Assessment Panel Members:  
Principal/Deputy Principal, Director of Learning and Head of School.
- e. Issues of a Student Welfare/Disciplinary nature Panel Members:  
Principal/Deputy Principal and Head of School
- f. Issues Associated with Homestay Accommodation Panel Members:  
Principal/Deputy Principal and Manager, International Programs
- g. Issues Associated with Contractual Arrangements with Billanook College  
Panel Members: Principal/Deputy Principal and Chief Financial Officer

The Student may attend the Formal Hearing alone or may attend with a parent/local support person or a nominated Staff member of the College as their Support Person.

### **4. Formal Complaint Hearing Process**

- a. A Panel Hearing will commence with the Chair of the Panel outlining the findings from the Informal processes to resolve the dispute.
- b. The student/parent shall then be provided with an opportunity to provide further explanation of their concerns, to present any further information in their favour and to counter any reasons provided by the Panel Chair for the decision reached by the initial Informal Process.
- c. Panel Members are then able to question the parent/student on their claims.
- d. The Panel will then deliberate in private on their final decision.
- e. The student/parent shall then be called back to the Panel for a verbal explanation of the Panel decision.

- f. A written summary of the final decision by the Panel shall be issued to the student/parent within five working days. If the complaint is resolved formally to the student's satisfaction, a record shall be made and placed on the student file. If required, relevant College personnel shall be informed if a change to current policy and/or practice is recommended to avoid similar student complaints in the future.
  
- g. If the student complaint is still not resolved to the student/parent satisfaction, then the complainant may access external source of advice through contacting one of the following:
  - Overseas Student Ombudsman  
Melbourne Office Phone Contact: 1300 362 072  
Website: [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au)
  
  - Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria  
Phone Contact: 1300 372 888  
Website: [www.disputes.vic.gov.au](http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au)
  
- h. A record of the process shall be maintained on the student file in a manner consistent with the College Privacy Policy provisions.