



VILLANOVA COLLEGE



# COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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## Table of Contents

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES.....	3
DEFINITIONS (KEY TERMS) .....	3
SCOPE.....	3
POLICY STATEMENT: OUR COMMITMENT .....	4
1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	4
1.1. Villanova College will: .....	4
1.2. All parties are expected to:.....	5
1.3. Employees receiving/managing complaints will .....	5
1.4. Support .....	5
1.5. Other actions .....	5
2. COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (FOUR STAGES) .....	6
2.1. Procedure overview .....	6
2.2. Stage 1 – Self-resolution (complainant + staff member/volunteer).....	6
2.3. Stage 2 – Escalate to an CLT member.....	6
2.4. Stage 3 – Escalate to the Principal.....	7
2.5. Stage 4 – Escalate to the Board Chair (Board of Directors).....	7
3. MONITORING AND REVIEW.....	8
ACCOUNTABILITY .....	8
ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS.....	8
RELEVANT LEGISLATION.....	9
REVIEW AND APPROVAL .....	9



## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Villanova College's complaints management process exists so members of the College community can raise concerns or dissatisfaction about the College's educational and/or operational functions through a fair and efficient process. While the majority of complaints and feedback will be managed through informal processes this policy details the intent and philosophy of the complaints process which will be applied to both formal and informal complaints.

The policy is intended to ensure that:

- complaints are treated seriously and handled fairly, objectively, and in a timely way
- the formality of the process matches the nature of the complaint
- all parties can be heard and provide relevant information
- privacy/confidentiality are maintained where reasonably practicable (consistent with the College's Privacy Policy)
- reprisals/victimisation connected to a complaint are not tolerated
- reasonable support is provided to people affected by a complaint.

## DEFINITIONS (KEY TERMS)

- **College:** Villanova College Ltd
- **Complaint:** An express or implied dissatisfaction where a response is sought, reasonably expected, or legally required.
- **Complainant:** The person/organisation making the complaint.
- **Respondent:** The person the complaint is about.
- **CLT (College Leadership Team):** Principal, Deputy Principal, Business Manager, Head of Senior School, Head of Middle School, Head of Junior School, Dean of Teaching & Learning, Dean of Mission & Identity.
- **Visitor:** A parent/lessee/external provider/trainer/guest/tradesperson on College premises or involved in a College related event.

## SCOPE

### Who this applies to

Applies to employees, contractors, volunteers, parents/carers, students, work experience participants, and the wider community.

### What complaints are covered

Complaints may relate to (examples):

- College or staff/student actions/inactions that may be incorrect
- perceived unfair or discourteous behaviour
- concerns about student/staff conduct (behaviour policies)
- learning programs, assessment, reporting
- communications with students/parents
- financial matters (including invoicing and payments)
- administrative issues



- non-compliance with College policies/procedures (except where excluded below)

Student complaints may be raised directly by students or, where appropriate, by parents on behalf of their child. Students are encouraged to seek support when lodging a complaint and may do so through their House Mentor, College Counsellor/Psychologist, Head of House, Head of School, or a member of the College Leadership Team. Complaints may be submitted in person, via email, or by a parent on behalf of the student.

#### **What is not covered (handled under other policies/processes)**

Examples include:

- child protection matters (covered by specific child protection policies regulated and monitored by legislation. Developed under guidance of Catholic Education Queensland Limited)
- staff grievances (handled under Complaints against Staff Policy)
- appeals relating to Student Behaviour Policy decisions (handled under that policy)
- violence/criminal matters (referred to the Principal; Police may be involved as appropriate)
- whistleblowing (excluded; covered by separate policy and accompanying legislation).

### **POLICY STATEMENT: OUR COMMITMENT**

Villanova College is a community founded in Augustinian values and principles and as such welcomes respectful and reasonable complaints, along with constructive feedback.

These play an integral part in our ongoing development and improvement and assists in our accountability processes.

The College acknowledges the rights of students, parents and staff to raise concerns, and encourages a healthy culture where constructive criticism and complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

Feedback and complaint provides the College with an opportunity to review and improve the quality of the education we provide, the care we display and the manner of our operations.

Villanova College is committed to ensuring a safe environment for students and staff but acknowledges that students and their parents / carers or the broader community may be dissatisfied with the services provided or decisions made.

The College will handle complaints in a responsive, efficient, consistent, and fair manner, giving due consideration to the issues raised.

## **1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **1.1. Villanova College will:**

- promote the complaints process and keep it accessible to stakeholders
- follow the procedure when managing complaints
- facilitate respectful discussions and use the least formal pathway appropriate
- protect parties from reprisals/victimisation
- support complainants and staff as appropriate
- train relevant employees
- record formal complaints in a complaints register to support monitoring/resolution
- maintain confidentiality



- inform insurers where appropriate and provide the Board a high-level overview of complaints
- work within response timeframes (noting term breaks may affect staff availability).

### **1.2. All parties are expected to:**

- follow the complaints handling procedures
- raise the matter as soon as possible
- maintain privacy/confidentiality
- provide clear, factual information in a timely manner
- act in good faith, with calmness and courtesy
- avoid frivolous/vexatious complaints
- avoid victimisation/reprisal
- recognise term breaks may affect response timeframes
- understand the common goal is a mutually beneficial solution
- acknowledge that all parties have rights and responsibilities that must be understood and balanced.

### **1.3. Employees receiving/managing complaints will**

- act in line with the policy
- point complainants to the policy and provide necessary information
- maintain confidentiality where reasonably practicable
- keep appropriate records
- escalate to senior staff (including Principal) if required
- avoid victimisation/reprisal.

### **1.4. Support**

Support may include interpreters/scribes for complainants experiencing cultural/linguistic barriers. Complainants may attend meetings with a support person present. The role of the support person is not to advocate for the employee, but to provide emotional support and assist the employee to understand the matters discussed.

The College acknowledges that raising a concern about the College's educational and/or operational functions can be stressful and personally challenging. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all employees and their immediate family members at no cost, and provides confidential counselling and professional support. Current EAP contact details are maintained on the Staff Portal.

### **1.5. Other actions**

Using this process does not limit a complainant's ability to take other lawful actions (e.g., contacting a statutory authority or seeking legal advice).



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## 2. COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (FOUR STAGES)

### 2.1. Procedure overview

The College uses a four-stage process with informal and formal elements. Meetings are to be respectful; participants may pause a meeting if treated with disrespect/aggression. Staff record notes and follow up in writing; staff also keep notes of relevant conversations. Stage 1 is not used for complaints about visitors (refer to Stage 2).

### 2.2. Stage 1 – Self-resolution (complainant + staff member/volunteer)

Where appropriate and comfortable, complainants are encouraged to raise the matter directly with the person involved (e.g., classroom teacher, activity coordinator, Head of Faculty, Head of House). The complainant contacts the staff member by email/phone and requests a meeting.

The staff member will:

- confirm the complaint is not governed by another policy (and redirect + inform CLT member if it is)
- respond within two business days, proposing a meeting within the following week
- inform their line manager and CLT member.

If resolved at Stage 1, the staff member:

- records the resolution.
- emails the resolution to the complainant (copying the line manager and CLT member).

The CLT member then decides whether follow-up action is needed (e.g., support/training) and whether records should be placed on a personnel file.

If not resolved (or not appropriate to raise directly), escalate to Stage 2.

### 2.3. Stage 2 – Escalate to a CLT member

A complaint can be raised verbally or in writing (email/post) to the relevant CLT contact.

**Who to contact (by topic):**

- College Teaching & Learning – Dean of Teaching & Learning
- Junior School pastoral/behaviour/wellbeing – Head of Junior School
- Middle School pastoral/behaviour/wellbeing – Head of Middle School
- Senior School pastoral/behaviour/wellbeing – Head of Senior School
- Finance / Facilities / IT - Business Manager
- Cocurricular program - Deputy Principal
- Service Mission & Identity – Dean of Mission & Identity

**Postal address for complaints (as listed in the policy):**

Attention: Principal  
24 Sixth Ave, Coorparoo QLD 4151, Australia

Complainants must provide (where available):

- names of parties
- nature of concern
- relevant dates/times



- what steps have already been taken and any outcomes.

On receipt, the CLT member will:

- acknowledge within three business days (and request more information if needed)
- confirm whether the complaint fits this policy at Stage 2
- where appropriate, delegate investigation to a suitable senior leader

The CLT member arranges a meeting ASAP, and no later than **14 business days** after receipt, with the complainant, support person, and respondent, to resolve the matter or gather information and agree a resolution plan; **outcomes are decided on a “balance of probabilities” assessment.**

If resolved, the CLT member confirms outcomes in writing and closes the matter (**noting the College does not provide details of steps taken against the respondent**).

**If unresolved or inappropriate, escalate to Stage 3.**

**Visitor-related complaints:** the CLT member documents concerns and (unless a criminal investigation applies) forwards to the visitor’s employing organisation; if criminal, Police guidance is sought. The CLT member briefs the Principal; the Principal considers any implications for future visits.

## 2.4. Stage 3 – Escalate to the Principal

Complainant can escalate to:

- Email: [principal@vnc.qld.edu.au](mailto:principal@vnc.qld.edu.au)
- Mail: Attention: The Principal, 24 Sixth Ave, Coorparoo QLD 4151, Australia

Appropriate when:

- not satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2, or
- complaint concerns a CLT member.

Complainant provides the same core information set (parties, concern, dates/times, prior steps/outcomes).

Principal will:

- acknowledge within **three business days** (and request more information if needed)
- confirm it falls within the policy remit at Stage 3.
- obtain Stage 2 records.

Principal arranges a meeting ASAP, within **14 business days**, using the same resolution approach as Stage 2; confirms closure in writing if resolved; if not, escalation is to Stage 4.

## 2.5. Stage 4 – Escalate to the Board Chair (Board of Directors)

Appropriate only when:

- complainant escalates a Stage 3 matter, or
- complaint concerns the Principal
- other correspondence with the Board is not dealt with under this stage.

Escalation email: [chair@vnc.qld.edu.au](mailto:chair@vnc.qld.edu.au)

Board Chair will:

- acknowledge within **five business days** (and request more information if needed)



- confirm it fits policy remit at Stage 4
- if it's a Stage 3 escalation, notify the Principal and obtain records

Board Chair arranges a meeting ASAP, within **14 business days** (phone/video permitted), uses the same evidence-based approach, and makes a final decision.

The Board Chair will consider all the evidence presented to them and come to a decision.

The Board Chair's decision will be final and binding on the complainant and the College.

No further appeal or review actions are available, and their decision is final.

The complainant will be informed in writing of the Board Chair's decision, advising of any actions the College has are required to implement, and confirming that the matter has now been closed.

### 3. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- CLT reviews the complaints register quarterly.
- An annual overview report to the Board includes complaint numbers, recurring issues/resolution times, and effectiveness of dispute resolution processes.
- Notable complaints/resolutions may be shared across CLT for quality improvement planning.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Role	Responsible For
Board	Oversight and review of this strategy
Principal	Implementation, compliance, and reporting
Director of HR	Policy review and updates, training compliance, and Complaints
College Leadership Team	Compliance with this policy and the complaints handling process.
All workplace participants and students	Compliance with this strategy

## ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Description	Document Type
Student Protection Policy and Procedure	Policy
Privacy Policy	Policy
Code of Conduct	Policy
Whistleblower Policy	Policy
Complaints Register	Register
Complaints Procedure for Non-Compliance with Student Protection Processes	Procedure



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## RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Nil

## REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or as legislation requires.

Version	Author	Authorisation	Approval Date	Next Review
1.0	Principal	Board	2023	2026
2.0	Principal Director of HR	Board	2026	2029