



STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

Contextual Statement

St Patrick's College community endeavours to foster a vibrant College modelled on the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice where there is an atmosphere of care, openness and positive encouragement between staff, students, family and the wider community. We strive to create an atmosphere of belonging and pride in the college where richness, equality and contribution of all is appreciated and respected.

Scripture

'So then, whenever we have an opportunity let us work for the good of all and especially those of the family and faith' (Galatians 6:10)

Guidelines

St Patrick's College is committed to resolving all grievances through effective, fair and impartial procedures. While members of staff are professional educators, whose aim it is to promote the learning and personal development of all students and help them achieve their personal best, it is acknowledged that there may be occasions when a student perceives that:

- he has received an unfair or inappropriate response to a behavioural issue;
- an academic result does not correspond to the level of learning put into a task; or
- Been subject to behaviour likely to have a negative impact on the student.

In cases such as these, the need to have in place a set of guidelines by which a student may seek review of that matter is essential. One of the key aims of this Policy is to maintain good pastoral relations between all parties.

This Grievance Policy provides a process by which grievances can be resolved. It is based on the principle and procedures of *Due Process*, which include among other things:

- Informing the community about the working of the Policy;
- Providing all parties with a fair and complete hearing;

- Enacting consequences which are consistent, fair and commensurate with the seriousness of the matter;
- Having in place a system of appeal.

Underpinning the Grievance Policy lies a commitment on the part of the school community to the following key principles, that:

- All members of the school community will be informed of the Grievance Policy and its procedures;
- The focus for resolution of a grievance will be upon an issue/s, not an individual;
- All individuals will be ensured fairness and impartiality;
- All individuals will have a right to present their case fully and openly, and without fear of retribution;
- All individuals will have a right to confidentiality;
- Grievance issues will be dealt with one at a time;
- Grievances are to be lodged **within a period of five days** from formal notification of an academic result or a consequence;
- Resolution of any grievance will be achieved as quickly as possible;
- Parents / Guardians will be kept informed, where applicable, of matters pertaining to the grievance;
- Grievance resolution will involve the minimum number of people;
- Parties will be encouraged to resolve the matter together in the first instance.

Academic Grievance

Process

Stage 1

On receiving a grade or mark that a student believes, in all honesty, fails to recognise the level of learning that he put into a task, the student can choose from the following 3 options:

- Speak with the teacher who assessed the piece of work;
- Seek advice from his Teachers, Head of Faculty, Year Level Coordinators, Deputy Headmaster – Teaching & Learning or College counsellors;

- Take no action.

In most cases, speaking with the teacher about the reasons why a mark / grade was given will mutually resolve the issue for both parties. The school does recognise that, on some occasions, the subjectivity of the matter may inhibit resolution.

The school advocates discussion between the two parties as the first step in the process of resolution.

This Grievance Policy is based upon students, who believe that they have a legitimate grievance, making a reasonable attempt, in good faith, to resolve the issue on an informal basis by discussion with the other party to the grievance in the first instance.

Stage 2

If the issue remains unresolved, the student has 2 further options:

- Take no further action;
- Speak with the relevant Head of Faculty.

In the case of an academic matter, the student should bring the assessed task with him to the Faculty Head. The Faculty Head will discuss the matter with the student and determine whether the grievance may be valid and whether or not the appropriate steps have been taken to resolve the matter.

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Head to notify the relevant teacher(s) of the matter at the earliest possible time – after taking into account matters of confidentiality, etc.

The Faculty Head, after negotiation with the subject teacher, may opt to have the task re-assessed by him/herself or appoint another person to assess the task. Once the task has been re-assessed, liaison between the Faculty Head and the teacher will occur before the decision is communicated to the student. In normal circumstances, the issue will be resolved at this stage.

Stage 3

The Faculty Head may elect at Stage 2 to involve the Deputy Headmaster – Teaching & Learning who will make a decision on the matter. The decision will be based on an impartial/ dispassionate, responsive and equitable handling of the issue.

Behavioural Grievance

Process

Stage 1

On receiving a consequence to a matter of behaviour that a student believes to be unreasonable, the student can choose from the following 3 options:

- Speak with the teacher who issued the consequence (behaviour);
- Seek advice from his Pastoral Tutor, parents, Year Level Coordinator, College Counsellor or Deputy Headmaster – Wellbeing;
- Take no action.

The school advocates discussion between the two parties as the first step in the process of resolution.

This Grievance Policy is based upon students, who believe that they have a legitimate grievance, making a reasonable attempt, in good faith, to resolve the issue on an informal basis by discussion with the other party to the grievance in the first instance.

Stage 2

If the issue remains unresolved, the student has 2 further options:

- Take no further action;
- Speak with Year Level Coordinator or Deputy Headmaster – Wellbeing.

Where the matter concerns a behavioural / pastoral issue, the student should bring a written statement of his perceived recollection of the matter with him to the Year Level Coordinator.

The Year Level Coordinator will speak with the student, at which point the student may choose to proceed no further. The issue will be deemed to have been resolved.

The Year Level Coordinator may wish to mediate a conference between the teacher and student. Where a consequence for behaviour is amended, the Year Level Coordinator would speak in the first instance to the issuing teacher.

It is the responsibility of the Year Level Coordinator to notify the relevant teacher(s) of the matter at the earliest possible time – after taking into account matters of confidentiality, etc.

It is the responsibility of both the Head of Faculty and Year Level Coordinator to monitor student grievances and keep relevant teachers informed of developments in matters that pertain to them. On occasions, there may be need for a Head of Faculty or Year Level Coordinator to speak among themselves on matters relating to a student grievance. This may be done either before or after the grievance is resolved, depending on circumstances.

Stage 3

If the issue still remains unresolved, the student has a further 2 options:

- Take no further action.
- Speak with the Deputy Headmaster – Wellbeing.

After any investigation, the Deputy Headmaster - Wellbeing will make a decision on the issue. The decision will be based on an impartial/dispassionate, responsive and equitable handling of all issues.

In some extenuating circumstances, there may be a need to seek advice or clarification from an external agency in relation to a particular matter.

Responsibilities of Parties in Grievance Issues

St Patrick's College Grievance Policy documents the responsibilities of the major parties in the grievance process as:

Student

- Speak to others in a calm and respectful manner;
- Specify the issue or enquiry within the specified time;
- Not knowingly present an unjustified complaint;
- Listen to advice and fair comment;

Teacher

- Listen to the student's grievance;
- Be objective and fair in dealing with the matter;
- Provide appropriate justification for the result/issue/consequence;
- Re-assess issue if deemed appropriate and fair;
- Recommend to the student an appropriate pathway for proceeding if the matter still remains unresolved.

Faculty Head / Year Level Coordinator

- Listen to the student's grievance;
- Speak with the subject/consequence-issuing teacher and listen to the teacher's reasoning;
- Re-assess or recommend re-assessment of issue, if required;
- Call a meeting of the parties, if deemed suitable;

- Make decision on the issue and communicate this to the student and the teacher;
- Communicate information to any other relevant parties, where the need arises;
- Refer the matter on to the Deputy Headmaster – Wellbeing / Deputy Headmaster – Teaching & Learning.

Deputy Headmaster

- Listen to the concerns of all parties on any issue;
- Collect all necessary information relating to the grievance;
- Review all steps taken;
- Interview necessary parties;
- Make a final decision in relation to the matter;
- Recommend the decision to the Headmaster, in serious matters;
- Recommend final decision to external agency, where appropriate and in consultation with the Headmaster.

Status of Policy: Ratified by the College Board, 2014

Review: 2019