



# International Students

## International Students Complaints Handling Policy

<b>Source of Obligation</b>	<p>Standard 10 of the National Code requires the School to have and implement a documented internal complaints handling process and policy, and provide international students with comprehensive, free and easily accessible information about that process and policy.</p> <p>Standard 6.1 requires the School to include information about our complaints handling process in our orientation program for international students.</p>
<b>Meriden School's Policy</b>	<p>It is the School's policy to provide access to the School's Complaints Handling Policy to our international students for both formal and informal complaints .</p> <p>The School will respond to any complaint that an international student makes regarding their dealings with the School, the School's Education Agents or any related third party that the School has an arrangement with to deliver</p>

	<p>the international student’s course or related services.</p>
<p><b>Complainant</b></p>	<p>A “complainant” as the term is used in this Policy, can mean an international student or their parent/legal guardian.</p> <p>A “complainant” can also be a friend or advocate of an international student, subject to the international student confirming the appointment of the friend or advocate to act on their behalf.</p>
<p><b>No Cost</b></p>	<p>Our internal complaints handling processes are available at no cost.</p>
<p><b>What is a Complaint?</b></p>	<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School, related to our services or operations or the complaints handling process itself where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.</p>
<p><b>How Do We Encourage Complaints?</b></p>	<p>We are committed to handling and assessing complaints and appeals in a prompt, professional, fair and transparent manner, and to this end, we have adopted the following steps to make it easy for an international student to lodge a complaint or appeal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this International Students Complaints Handling Policy is available on our public website</li> <li>• all staff are made aware of the importance of capturing and recording</li> </ul>

	<p>critical feedback. Many complaints are received by email, and the ability of our staff to recognise a complaint, and to capture it effectively, is a central feature of our complaints handling process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• complaints or disputes do not need to be in writing</li><li>• international students are encouraged to discuss any issues verbally with staff in the first instance to try and resolve problems as quickly as possible</li><li>• where we identify that a complainant has limited literacy skills, we give them help in expressing their complaint</li><li>• where complainants have special needs, the availability of interpreters and staff who are cross-culturally trained, are provided</li><li>• complainants can make an anonymous complaint or use a pseudonym.</li></ul>
<p><b>Prompt Acknowledgement of a Complaint</b></p>	<p>The School commits to acknowledging a complaint within 3 working days of receiving it. The staff member who received the complaint will strive to make the acknowledgement in the same method in which it was received by the School (e.g. by phone, email, letter).</p> <p>If, for some reason, there is a delay in acknowledging a complaint, we will provide reasons for that delay.</p> <p>The international student will receive a contact number and the name of a contact person as part of the acknowledgement of their complaint.</p>

<b>Assessment of Complaint</b>	<p>Once the complaint has been received and an acknowledgement has been delivered to the complainant, the staff member will assess the complaint as being either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• an informal complaint</li><li>• a formal complaint.</li></ul>
<b>Informal Complaints Resolution</b>	<p>The vast majority of issues causing concern can be handled quickly and in an informal manner by the 'first point of contact' staff member. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal, verbal discussions with appropriate staff members.</p> <p>If the issue can be resolved informally, staff are required to keep a record on the student's file.</p>
<b>Lodging a Formal Complaint</b>	<p>It is the School's policy that formal complaints require further investigation. All formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing.</p> <p>If an international student has been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wishes to make a formal complaint, they or their parent/legal guardian can do so by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• writing to the Head of Student Wellbeing (Senior School) or Head of Junior School</li></ul> <p>All formal complaints will be logged through the International Student Complaints Register.</p> <p>Once the Head of Student Wellbeing (Years 7-12) or Head of Junior School (Years K - 6) has received the complaint, they will inform the international student or their parents/legal</p>

guardians that the complaint has been received and the School will commence the assessment of the complaint within 10 working days from the date the complaint was lodged.

**Our Internal Formal Complaints Handling Process**

Step 1 - All formal complaints are logged on the International Student Complaints Register where they are screened by the Principal or, in the case of complaints against the Principal, by the Chairman of the School Council.

Step 2 – All formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date.

It is our policy that the School will commence the assessment of the complaint within 10 working days from the date that the complaint was lodged.

It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes as soon as practicable.

Step 3 – The Director of Compliance shall conduct an investigation into the issues raised, in a transparent manner and following principles of procedural fairness, before making a determination.

Step 4 - Following the determination, if appropriate, the Director of Compliance shall formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant, including detailed reasons for the outcome. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 – If an international student or their parents/legal guardians are not satisfied with the initial result of the School’s complaints handling process, they can decide to internally appeal the School’s decision. The matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal’s delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate will seek to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated.

The international student is given a written statement of the outcome of the internal appeal, including detailed reasons for the outcome.

The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.

Step 6 - All formal complaints received will be logged on the International Student Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7 - If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant will be advised that they may pursue external resolution alternatives.

**Informing Student of Delay**

In the event of a delay in the assessment or resolution of the international student’s formal complaint, the Director of Compliance will keep the international student and their parent/legal guardian informed about how their complaint is progressing.

<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	<p>All staff involved in the complaints handling process are trained to recognise and report any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest including one that has not been previously reported. For example, a relationship with an international student. Staff must notify the Director of Compliance immediately of any conflict of interest.</p> <p>If the international student’s complaint involves a staff member, we ensure that a different staff member is responsible for handling the complaint.</p>
<b>Cost and Student Support</b>	<p>The international student will be given the opportunity to present their case, including providing evidence, before a decision is made and at minimal or no cost.</p> <p>The international student can be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings that occur as part of the informal and formal complaints handling processes.</p>
<b>Responsiveness</b>	<p>Where complainants have special needs, the availability of interpreters and staff who are cross-culturally trained, are provided.</p>
<b>Maintaining Enrolment</b>	<p>During the complaints and appeals process, the School will maintain the enrolment of the international student. Enrolment will also be</p>

maintained while any external appeal is ongoing.

### Right to Access External Appeals

If an international student or their parents/legal guardians are not successful in the School's internal complaints and appeals process, the School will advise the international student within 10 working days of concluding the internal complaints handling and appeals process of their right to access an external complaints handling and appeals process at minimal or no cost.

The School directs students to the Overseas Student Ombudsman (OSO).

The OSO investigates complaints about problems that international students or intending international students may have with private education and training in Australia. The contact details for the OSO are as follows

**Call:** 1300 362 072 within Australia. Outside Australia call +61 2 6276 0111.

**Enquiries:** 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday, Australian Eastern Standard Time (Australian Eastern Daylight Time when daylight savings is in effect)

**Postal:** Commonwealth Ombudsman, GPO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601.

**Website:**  
<https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/complaints/international-student-complaints>



<b>Purpose of External Appeals Process</b>	<p>The School will inform an international student who wishes to access the services of the OSO that, in most cases, the purpose of the OSO is to investigate whether the School has followed our own internal policies and procedures and treated the international student fairly. Generally, the OSO does not make a decision in place of the School.</p>
<b>Result of Appeal Process</b>	<p>If the internal or external appeal process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the international student, the School will immediately implement the decision or recommendation and/or take preventative or corrective action required by the decision and advise the international student of that action.</p>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint and, if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. The School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.</p> <p>Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.</p> <p>Where the international student appoints a friend or advocate to make a complaint on their behalf, the School must ensure that the complainant's authority to act for the international student is confirmed so that</p>

personal information about the international student is not improperly disclosed to a third party. Accordingly, staff may ask questions or ask for evidence from the complainant and the international student to satisfy any confidentiality concerns they may have.

Access to our International Student Complaints Register is restricted to authorised staff.

### **Record Keeping**

The School ensures that we keep all records relating to the receipt, acknowledgement, management, assessment, resolution and appeal of any complaint.

Records include:

- file notes of verbal complaints and conversations held regarding a complaint
- acknowledgements, whether made in writing or verbally
- written resolutions of a complaint
- any evidence submitted by a complainant in relation to a complaint.

The School maintains a International Student Complaints Register and all information relating to a complaint is kept by the School and maintained.

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