



THE HUTCHINS SCHOOL

Complaints and Grievances Policy

Relevant legislation	Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas) Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) Education and Care Services National Law (Application) Act 2011 (Tas) Education and Care Services National Regulations Privacy Act 1998 (Cth)
Commencement date	01 July 2020
Last review date	01 June 2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a set of principles and procedures for the resolution of grievances at The Hutchins School (the School). This policy is to be used in conjunction with the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#) and (where relevant) the Complaints and Grievances against the Principal Procedure (available upon request).

2. Scope

This policy applies to staff (including volunteers and contractors), students, parents/carers, and members of The Hutchins School community; however, provision is also made for the lodging of complaints and grievances by persons external to the School. This policy may be used for grievances or complaints raised by groups, or raised by individuals, in relation to:

- bullying;
- discrimination;
- harassment;
- unfair treatment; or
- victimisation.

Circumstances do exist in which this policy does not apply, including:

- in relation to issues which are outside of the responsibility or scope of the School in its role as an employer; or
- where an existing review, appeal or complaint procedure is already in process.

Created by: Policy & Compliance Manager	Document version: 2.08
Online location: https://myhutchins.tas.edu.sharepoint.com/sites/PolicyCompliance	Next review date: 01 February 2027
Printed copies are uncontrolled. For the latest version please refer to SharePoint Online.	CRICOS 00478F Page 1 of 8

3. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to support a harmonious, fair and just working and learning environment by ensuring that staff, students, parents/carers and the School community have access to processes that allow for grievances, disputes, problems and complaints to be resolved.

The School believes that all managers and supervisors have an obligation and responsibility to proactively promote a workplace free of bullying and intimidation, irrespective of the parties involved. All complaints and grievances will be dealt with in a supportive environment without victimisation or intimidation by anyone connected with the grievance, either during or subsequent to the resolution procedure.

The emphasis of this policy and its accompanying procedures is on resolving problems as promptly and harmoniously as possible by directing complaints and grievances to the most appropriate resolution mechanism.

4. Definitions

Allegation	A statement of fact contained within a complaint. Such statements remain allegations until proven by supporting evidence.
Bullying	<p>Bullying is repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards an individual that creates a risk to health and safety, where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Repeated behaviour' refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour and can involve a range of behaviours over time; and• 'Unreasonable behaviour' means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.
Complaint / Grievance	<p>An expression of dissatisfaction with a situation, service, facilities, policy, procedure or behaviour, for which a response or resolution may be explicitly or implicitly expected. Complaints and grievances are broken down within this policy into two categories, informal and formal complaints. The primary distinction between these two is that a formal complaint is triggered by a Complaints and Grievances Form. Complaints received or recorded via this mechanism have specific record keeping requirements that are detailed in the text of this policy. Informal complaints are generally received via conversation or email and may not necessarily require a formal record be kept.</p>
Discrimination	<p>When someone is treated unfairly because they belong to a particular group of people or have a particular characteristic.</p> <p>For example: treating someone unfairly or differently because of their sex, pregnancy, race (including colour, ethnicity and descent), disability, sexual preference, religion, transgender, carer's responsibilities, marital status, social origin, political belief, employee association activity, irrelevant criminal record or age.</p>

	Indirect discrimination occurs when there is a requirement or rule that is the same for everyone but in effect disadvantages people from a particular group more than people from other groups - unless the requirement is reasonable in the circumstances.
Harassment	Unwelcome behaviour that makes a person feel belittled, intimidated, offended or apprehensive, and that a reasonable person, taking into account all the circumstances, would expect to cause offence, intimidation or apprehension.
Staff	For the purpose of this policy, 'staff' refers to all people engaged with the School, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity. This includes volunteers and contractors.
The Hutchins School community	For the purpose of this policy, 'The Hutchins School community' refers to alumni, associations (including, but not limited to, the Hutchins School Old Boys' Association and the Parents' Association) and governing bodies (such as The Hutchins School Board). Parents, carers and families are also covered by this designation.
Victimisation	<p>Punishing, or threatening to punish someone. It is against the law to punish, or threaten to punish someone because they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asserted their rights under equal opportunity law; • made a complaint; • helped someone else make a complaint; or • refused to do something because it would be discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation. <p>Examples of victimisation can include (but are not limited to) bullying and intimidation by co-workers, being denied a promotion, or demoted to a position with lower responsibility, dismissal from work, or being refused further work. The legal definition of victimisation is when someone "subjects or threatens to subject the other person, or an associate of that other person, to any detriment" (Anti-Discrimination Act 1998; Section 18(2)).</p>

5. Policy statement

The primary objective of this policy is to achieve the resolution of complaints and grievances. The School has a duty of care to students, staff and to the School community to resolve grievances quickly, and with a minimum of distress. As such, grievances should be handled according to the following principles:

- All complaints and grievances should be acknowledged. Formal complaints and grievances will be acknowledged in writing through the [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) submission process; informal grievances or complaints may be acknowledged verbally.
- The resolution of complaints and grievances should be as prompt as possible, unless it is not practical, lawful or ethical to do so.
- It is expected that all parties should engage with the resolution processes in good faith, with a desire to work co-operatively to problem-solve.

- It is expected that all parties will treat one another with respect. Individuals must not harass or victimise other parties involved in the matter.
- Confidentiality and privacy will be strictly observed by all parties at all stages of the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#).
- Complainants and respondents will be informed of the outcomes of these processes wherever appropriate.

Principles of fairness and natural justice

The School recognises the legal and ethical right of staff, students, and the School community to:

- raise any complaint or concern related to bullying, discrimination, harassment, unfair treatment or victimisation;
- have that concern, problem, complaint or grievance dealt with confidentially, fairly, and within a reasonable time frame;
- have a support person present during the complaints and grievance process;
- access mediation at any point during the complaints and grievance process, upon request; and
- access legal advice at any time.

Commitment to Kindness

In keeping with The School's [Commitment to Kindness](#), it is expected that all complaints and grievances are handled with 'an attitude of goodwill to all people, not seeking self-gratification, but seeking to build up others'. All staff involved in the process are expected to model the School's values of humility, kindness, courage and respect.

Informal resolution

The School believes that the best possible resolution of a complaint, grievance or conflict is through an informal process in which the complainant and the respondent come together to resolve the issue. Informal grievance processes may be handled at the discretion of the parties involved, and record keeping is not mandated at this initial step. Where parties may find this process uncomfortable, they may request the assistance of a manager or supervisor to act as an impartial mediator.

Where the complaint is in respect to a child's schooling, staff are required to keep a record of the complaint and resolution in keeping with the School's [Records Management Policy](#) from the onset of the complaint or grievance.

Formal resolution

Where a complaint or grievance can not be resolved informally, a formal process may be engaged. This process commences upon the lodgement of a [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) and will be conducted according to the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#). Where it has not already commenced, lodging this form will trigger the commencement of the formal record keeping process. Subsequent investigations will require that all relevant documentation is kept, and that thorough records of the grievance resolution process are maintained.

Records Management

During the informal resolution phase, record keeping occurs at the discretion of the staff member managing the complaint. Where a complaint or grievance is between two staff members, records should be kept at step 2 (see the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#)). These will be managed by Human Resources in collaboration with the staff member managing the process.

Upon the completion of the process, the following records must be provided to Human Resources for retention:

- the Complaints and Grievances Form;
- notes of meetings
- interview notes;
- witness statements;
- phone call records; and
- any other written documentation (including, but not limited to letters and email).

A record of the outcome of the complaint or grievance investigation must also be kept. All records kept by the School should be dated, signed and retained according to the [Records Management Policy](#).

Grievances lodged through the [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) will be assigned to the appropriate member of staff for investigation through an automated online process. The name and/or job title of the staff member tasked with investigating a grievance will be clearly stated to the complainant during this process and prior to the submission of the form, to allow for an alternate selection should a conflict of interest be perceived.

Records generated by the [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) will be retained within the supporting system (CompliSpace) and used to identify trends that may emerge. These records will be managed according to the School's [Privacy Policy](#).

Timelines for disclosure

When a Complaints and Grievances Form is received by the School, immediate acknowledgement of receipt is produced by the system (Complispace). The staff member tasked with conducting the resolution process must then contact the complainant to confirm receipt of the complaint or grievance within 2 business days.

This staff member must then conduct an initial engagement and assessment process including the following steps within 10 business days:

- inform all parties of the procedures to be followed, and provide copies of the policies, procedures and guidelines considered relevant;
- explain to the complainant that the requirements of procedural fairness may mean that their identity may be disclosed to the respondent;
- provide the respondent with a summary of the allegation(s) made against them; and
- provide the respondent with time and an opportunity to formally respond to the allegation(s) and provide an explanation for the alleged conduct.

The staff member managing this process must act fairly, impartially, and without bias, considering all relevant information and mitigating factors, seeking wherever possible to allow the voices of both the complainant and the respondent to be equitably heard.

The staff member managing the process must also conduct a factual investigation of the allegation(s) made, interviewing all parties and considering all relevant information.

Timelines for resolution

Timelines for the resolution of a complaint or grievance can vary significantly depending upon the circumstances of both the report and the process that ensues as a result. Where a complaint is complex, or has a long history associated with it, it may take months to resolve, and involve investigations, mediation and interviews. A grievance over a one-time incident, however, may be resolved within a matter of hours.

The School will endeavor to resolve all complaint and grievances as quickly as possible and within 30 business days. Updates must be provided to the complainant and the respondent every 10 business days irrespective of the length of time it takes to resolve the complaint or grievance.

The role of Human Resources

Human Resources play an important (but limited) role in supporting the complaints and grievances process.

They will:

- focus on process and adherence to policies and procedures, supporting procedural fairness and ensuring that the voice of all parties is equitably heard;
- seek to ensure that the requirements of the policy and procedure are followed, particularly in respect to time frames and record keeping; and
- be present in all meetings or interviews between managers/supervisors and the complainant or respondent, keeping records and ensuring that the process is followed as per policy.

Human Resources will not independently manage a complaints or grievances process, nor conduct investigations unless explicitly tasked with this responsibility by the Principal.

The Principal may only request that Human Resources conduct an investigation or manage a complaints or grievances process where a conflict of interest means that other parties cannot be involved in seeking resolution.

Upon the resolution of a complaint, Human Resources will invite the parties involved to provide feedback on the process. This feedback will be reviewed annually to identify areas for improvement.

Conflict of interest

Where it may be demonstrated that there is a conflict of interest, or where a potential conflict of interest may be perceived with respect to the person responsible for mediation or any other of the complaint resolution processes

detailed within this policy and its associated procedures, complainants and respondents have the right to request alternate personnel, or to move to the next step in the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#).

The Complaints and Grievances Form

The [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) serves as a single point of entry for all complaints and grievances that have progressed to the formal stage. Despite being a single form, this process handles complaints from staff, students and the School community through distinct mechanisms, and will distribute the complaint to the relevant staff member automatically depending on the details entered by the complainant. Where a complaint is received via other mechanisms (e.g. email), and once informal resolution options have been exhausted, staff may either direct the complainant toward the online form, or complete the form themselves on the basis of the communication that they have received.

Complaints and grievances against the Principal

Complaints and grievances against the Principal are managed via the same form as other complaints, but with a number of significant distinctions. It is important that an attempt at informal resolution is made. Where no resolution can be reached, complainants have the right to proceed to a formal process; however, in such instances it is not appropriate for the Principal to manage the complaint.

Formal complaints made against the Principal are directed to the Chairman of the Board for resolution. This process is managed through the [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) and according to the Complaints and Grievances Against the Principal Procedure.

6. Supporting/related documents

[Commitment to Kindness](#)

[Practice and Behaviour Standards](#)

[Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

Complaints and Grievances Against the Principal
Procedure (offline)

[Professional Learning and Development Policy](#)

[Harassment, Bullying & Discrimination Policy](#)

[Records Management Policy](#)

[Induction & Probation Procedure](#)

[The Hutchins School Code of Conduct](#)

7. Record keeping

This policy is to be kept for three (3) years until review except where legislative or organisational change demands otherwise.

The master copy is kept in [SharePoint Online](#) in read-only PDF form. All printed copies are uncontrolled.

8. Policy owner

Principal

9. Review Details

Date	Version	Description of changes
01/06/2020	2.0	Complete rewrite of policy; full textual review, review by Policy & Planning committee, Board endorsement.
01/02/2021	2.05	Textual review; no procedural or policy changes made.
01/03/2021	2.06	Updated supporting/related documents; minor textual changes to ensure consistency with policy body.
01/02/2024	2.07	Minor changes to text for clarity. No procedural changes. Changed 'Headmaster' to 'Principal' throughout. Added references to the Complaints and Grievances Against the Principal Procedure.
01/03/2024	2.08	Review on cycle. Minor textual changes for clarity. No procedural changes. Added missing hyperlinks.
01/06/2024	2.09	Minor changes added to clarify role of HR and establish a role in respect to record keeping and Head of School/manager support in meetings/investigations. Added specific timelines for notifying complainant/respondent, conducting an initial investigation and working toward resolution.