

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Stuartholme School is a Year 5 – 12 Catholic day and boarding school for girls enriched by the philosophy and traditions of Sacred Heart Education, which give expression to its five goals – to educate to:

1. A personal and active faith in God.
2. A deep respect for intellectual values.
3. The building of community as a Christian value.
4. Social awareness which impels to action.
5. Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a student or parent(s)/legal guardian with the opportunity to access procedures to facilitate the resolution of a complaint involving Stuartholme School, or an education agent or third party engaged by Stuartholme School to deliver a service on behalf of the School. The internal complaints and appeals processes are conciliatory and non-legal.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all international students and their parent(s)/legal guardians.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

**Student** – a student enrolled at Stuartholme School or the parent(s)/legal guardian of a student where that student is under 18 years of age

**Support person** – for example, a friend/teacher/relative not involved in the grievance.

**Working day** – any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday during term time

## 5. POLICY STATEMENT

Stuartholme School (“the School”) is committed to ensuring that complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way. The School will seek to resolve issues quickly and use principles of conflict resolution to ensure that complaints are resolved with the least amount of stress for those involved.

The School views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process. Stuartholme School acknowledges the right of students, parents and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school and the school encourages such feedback. The School recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents and employees.

Complaints made and the response to them must reflect the ethos enshrined in the Goals of Sacred Heart Education. Complaints will be addressed in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. Procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of the interested parties to the complaint to be heard.

A copy of this policy is provided to the student within seven (7) days of the commencement of student attendance of the enrolled course.

## 6. PROCEDURE

A copy of this policy will be provided to the student (or parent(s)/legal guardian if the student is under 18) at a reasonable time prior to a written agreement being signed, and again during orientation or within 7 days of the commencement of student attendance of the enrolled course.

## Complaints against other students

- Grievances brought by a student against another student will be dealt with under the school's Peer Relations Policy.

## Informal Complaints Resolution

- In the first instance, Stuartholme School requests there is an attempt to informally resolve the issue through mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
- Students should contact the Teacher Mentor, Leader of Student Wellbeing or an Assistant Dean of Boarding in the first instance to attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
- If the matter cannot be resolved through mediation, the matter will be referred to the Dean of Student Wellbeing and where necessary to the Principal and Stuartholme School's internal formal complaints and appeals handling procedure will be followed. Boarding issues will be referred to the Dean of Boarding and Academic issues will be referred to the Leaders of Learning and Deputy Principal.

## Formal Internal Complaints Handling and Appeals Process

- The process of this grievance procedure is confidential and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- The student must notify the school in writing of the nature and details of the complaint or appeal.
- Written complaints or appeals are to be lodged with the Principal.
- Where the internal complaints and appeals process is being accessed because the student has received notice by the school that the school intends to report her for unsatisfactory course attendance, unsatisfactory course progress or suspension or cancellation of enrolment, the student has 20 working days from the date of receipt of notification in which to lodge a written appeal.
- Complaints and appeals processes are available to students at no cost.
- Each complainant has the opportunity to present her case to the Principal.
- Students and / or the School may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at all relevant meetings.
- The formal internal complaints and appeals process will commence within ten working days of lodgement of the complaint or appeal with the Principal and will be finalised within fourteen working days.
- For the duration of the internal complaints and appeals process the student's enrolment will be maintained, as required under the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* and the student must continue to attend classes.
- However, if the Principal deems that the student's health or well-being, or the well-being of others is at risk she may decide to suspend or cancel the student's enrolment before the complaints and appeals process has been accessed or fully completed. In such cases, the student may still lodge a complaint or appeal, even if the student is offshore.
- Once the Principal has come to a decision regarding the complaint or appeal, the student will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome, and a copy will be retained on the student's file.
- If the complaints and appeals procedure finds in favour of the student, Stuartholme School will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required, and advise the student of the outcome and action taken.
- Where the outcome of a complaint or appeal is not in the student's favour, the school will advise the student within 10 working days of concluding the internal review of the student's right to access the external appeals process.

However, the school is only obliged to await the outcome of an external appeal if the matter relates to a breach of course progress or attendance requirements. For all other issues, the school may take action (including making changes to the student's enrolment status in PRISMS) in accordance with the outcome of the internal appeal.

## External Appeals Processes

- If the student is dissatisfied with the conduct or result of the internal complaints and appeals procedure, she may contact and/or seek redress through the Overseas Students Ombudsman at no cost. Please see: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/about/overseas-student-ombudsman-landing-page> or phone 1300 362 072 for more information.
- If the student wishes to appeal a decision made by Stuartholme School that relates to being reported for a breach of course progress or attendance requirement (under Standard 8), the student must lodge this appeal with the Overseas Student Ombudsman's office within 10 working days of being notified of the outcome of his/her internal appeal.
- If the student wishes to appeal a decision made by Stuartholme School that relates to:
  - refusal to approve a transfer application (under Standard 7), or
  - suspension or cancellation of the student's enrolment (under Standard 9)

any choice to lodge an external appeal with the Overseas Student Ombudsman is at the student's discretion. The school need not await the outcome of any external appeal lodged, before implementing the outcome of the internal appeal.

## Other legal redress

- Nothing in the School's Complaints and Appeals Policy negates the right of an international student to pursue other legal remedies.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

Staff should refer to the CRICOS Staff Handbook.

## **8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

CRICOS Staff Handbook

## **9. REVIEW**

This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or as necessitated by legislation.