

## COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### 1. PREAMBLE

The College makes a concerted effort to ensure that a student-centric philosophy is adopted by staff. The delivery of quality education, teaching and learning are core to the values of the College and its mission and vision. Feedback from students relating to complaints or grievances is of utmost importance to the College and its strategic direction.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to document the process of student complaints and grievances, but also student compliments.

### 3. SCOPE

This policy and procedure relate to all complaints, grievances and compliments of an academic or administrative nature. These may be about the College or any of its staff or students, or any of its education agents. The document does not apply to complaints of discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying, for which a specific policy and procedure applies (“Student Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedure”).

### 4. COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES AND COMPLIMENTS

A *complaint* in this document is defined as any statement that classifies any of the College’s activities or the activities of its education agents as unsatisfactory or unacceptable.

The College is required by the National Code 2018 to take responsibility for our education agents and will act on complaints from students about the agents.

A *grievance* is a cause for complaint due to unfair treatment or the perception of unfair or unreasonable treatment or outcome.

A *compliment* is a statement of praise or admiration.

In this document the use of the word “complaint” denotes a “complaint” or a “grievance”.

The procedure adopted by the College is a transparent, objective and unbiased one incorporating the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

All complaints are treated as confidential.

A specific staff member must be accountable to the complainant. The person responsible for receiving and forwarding, acting on, resolving and reporting back on complaints is the Quality Systems Manager.

## **5 INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

Students making complaints are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve their grievances informally with the staff member concerned. If the grievance is not resolved to the student's satisfaction at this informal resolution stage, the student can select to lodge a formal procedure outlined below at 5 below.

### **5. PROCEDURE**

- 5.1 Students are able to lodge a complaint using the "Student Complaints, Grievances and Compliments Form". Forms are available at reception, on the College's Moodle site and on the College web site.
- 5.2 Completed forms can be lodged by the student by placing it in the Student Complaints Box at reception. Alternatively, complaints can be made by the student in person by making an appointment to meet with the Quality Systems Manager or by emailing the complaint directly to them.
- 5.3 The Student Complaints Box is emptied once a week by the Quality Systems Manager. The Quality Systems Manager is an independent, trusted individual who will not divulge complaints or the complainant's name to a third party outside of the staff involved in the complaints process.
- 5.4 The Quality Systems Manager will investigate the complaint and may ask for more information from the student, while at all times maintaining the confidentiality of the student interaction.
- 5.5 At any relevant meetings between the College and the student during the Complaint or Appeal process, the student has the right to be accompanied and assisted by a support person of their choice.
- 5.6 Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged in writing. The Quality Systems Manager will provide a response to the complaint within four (4) weeks of the complaint being lodged and, where suitable; will provide proposed solutions to the complaint. If no solution can be found pertaining to the specific issue reported by the student, an interim monitoring regime will be proposed by the Quality Systems Manager for purposes of reviewing the issue for a pre-agreed period of time.
- 5.7 If a student is not satisfied with the result of an investigation of complaint, they may lodge an appeal against the result of the complaint investigation. The appeal can be lodged using an "Appeal against Complaint Investigation

Outcome Form” collected from the same repositories as those for Complaints, Grievances and Compliments Form (at reception, on the LMS and on the College web site) and hand delivered or emailed to Dean for the relevant qualification.

- 5.8 The Dean, in consultation with the nominated committee/s of the Academic Board and/or other stakeholders, not directly involved in the complaint, will provide a response and a decision regarding the student’s appeal within four (4) weeks of the date of lodging the appeal and in writing.
- 5.9 If the result of findings of the Dean is still unacceptable to the complaining student, a Dispute Resolution Meeting (DRM) will be held between the student, the Dean and the Principle Executive Officer to resolve the issue. The results of that meeting will be treated as binding on the parties.

## **6. INTERNAL APPEAL**

- 6.1 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may lodge an appeal with the College’s Internal Ombudsman who is independent to the College’s decision maker.
- 6.2 The Internal Ombudsman will consult with the complainant and other relevant parties within ten (5) working days. Where possible such consultations should take the form of face-to-face interviews. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to these interviews.
- 6.3 Following the consultation, the Internal Ombudsman will provide a written report to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the issue, including the reasons for the decision, within ten (5) working days. The report will also advise the complainant of their right to access the external appeals process if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal.
- 6.4 The student has other avenues of appeal available to them outside of the College as mentioned below.

## **7. EXTERNAL APPEAL**

### **7.1 DOMESTIC STUDENTS**

If the student making the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal with Internal Ombudsman, they may seek independent mediation or arbitration through the Resolution Institute. The student can contact the Resolution Institute directly as follows:

**Address:** Level 1, 13-15 Bridge Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
**Phone:** 02 9251 3366  
**Freecall:** 1800 651 650  
**Fax:** 02 9251 3733  
**Email:** [leadr@leadr.info](mailto:leadr@leadr.info)  
**Website:** <https://www.resolution.institute>

The costs of such an external appeal will be fully covered by the College (SydneyMet).

## 7.2 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

For *academic matters*, international students may access the Resolution Institute in the same way as domestic students (see above).

For *non-academic matters*, if an international student making complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal with the Internal Ombudsman then they may lodge an external appeal by contacting the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman offers a free and independent service for international students who have a complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their provider. For more information, please to the following contact details of the Commonwealth Ombudsman:  
<https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students>

Phone - 1300 362 072

SydneyMet agrees to be bound by any recommendations from the *Commonwealth Ombudsman* and the PEO will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented immediately on receipt of such recommendations.

Complaints or grievances related to academic merits are not dealt by Commonwealth Ombudsman.

## 8 COLLEGE REMEDIAL ACTION

If the internal or any external complaints handling or appeal process results in a recommendation or decision in favour of the student, SydneyMet must implement the agreement or decision immediately and/or take the preventative or corrective action required by the decision and advise the student accordingly.

## 9 FURTHER ACTION

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other policies or under statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection or other laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies, but it would be expected that a complainant would first seek to have their grievance resolved under this policy

## 10 ENROLMENT STATUS

Where a current student chooses to access this policy and procedure, SydneyMet will

maintain that person's enrolment while the grievance handling process is ongoing.

## **11 RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the General Manager (Admin). These records will be maintained at 2-4 Marmaduke St, Burwood, NSW 2134.

All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential and will be covered by SydneyMet's Student Information Privacy Policy and Procedures.

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