



Learning for life

GEMS COMPLAINTS HANDLING



Learning for Life....



GEMS COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Audience:	This GEMS Christian Education Limited (GEMS) Policy applies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerald Christian College • Ontrack College • ECC Little Gems 		
Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints ¹ .		
Scope:	Any person directly affected by the complaint. Students, parents/carers and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.		
Status:	Approved		
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 (Qld)</u> • <u>Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</u> • <u>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</u> • <u>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</u> • <u>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</u> • <u>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</u> • <u>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</u> • <u>Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</u> • <u>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</u> • <u>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</u> • <u>Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organisations (ISO 10002:2022, NEQ)</u> 		
Related Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEMS Work Health and Safety Policy • GEMS Anti-Discrimination Policy • GEMS Sexual Harassment Policy • GEMS Disability Discrimination Policy • GEMS Workplace Bullying Policy • GEMS Privacy Policy • GEMS Complaints Handling Procedure • GEMS Governing Body Code of Conduct 		
Supersedes:	GEMS Complaints Handling Policy, June 2024		
Authorised by:	GEMS Governing Body Chairperson	Date of Authorisation:	June 2025
Review Period:	Annual	Next Review Date:	June 2026
Policy Owner:	GEMS Governing Body		

UNDERPINNING POLICY FOUNDATION

GEMS Christian Education Ltd. bases its governance and operations on Biblical truths and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

GEMS Christian Education Ltd. pursues the following strategic intentions towards its core purpose so that:

- Students will embrace the GEMS values of God, Excellence, Members and Service; discover who they are as individuals and pursue God's purpose for their lives.
- Employees will embrace the Core Values and personally display Christ to students by utilising stimulating, creative, innovative curriculum and teaching practices.
- Resource sustainability will continue to provide and maintain an outstanding and inspiring place of teaching and learning within an environment of seeking partnerships with the wider community.
- Culture is Christ-centred, driven by GEMS values and demonstrated by GEMS FACETS of Friendly, Appreciative, Compassionate, Encouraging, Truthful and Self-Controlled.

¹[Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Regulations 2017, s.7](#)

COMPLAINTS HANDLING

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 GEMS acknowledges the right of students, parents/guardians, staff and others to complain when dissatisfied with the GEMS services, including an action, inaction or decision of the College. The College encourages constructive criticism and complaints.
- 1.2 GEMS is committed to ensuring that complaints received are handled in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent and fair way.
- 1.3 GEMS will ensure employees can recognise, receive, and appropriately refer complaints to the informal or formal complaints procedure.
- 1.4 GEMS recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students and parents/guardians and a better culture for employees, and views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

1.5 Complaints Handling Principles

GEMS will manage complaints according to the following (which include principles of procedural fairness):

- a) complaints will be taken seriously, dealt with fairly and objectively, without judgment and addressed in a reasonable timeframe;
- b) complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible, having regard to the nature of the complaint;
- c) interested parties to the complaint (for example, the complainant and any respondent) will be heard and/or may provide relevant information in relation to the complaint;
- d) confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible;
- e) the complainant and any respondent will be offered support as appropriate;
- f) victimising behaviour towards a complainant, respondent or other people associated with the complaint, will not be tolerated; and
- g) complaints that lodge a complaint on reasonable grounds will not suffer any other reprisals on the basis of the lodged the complaint.

1.6 Complaints that may be resolved under this policy

- 1.6.1 GEMS encourages anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving the school to file a complaint. Complaints can address matters such as:
 - The College, its employees or students having done something wrong
 - The College, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done
 - The College, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
 - Issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student.²
 - Issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
 - Issues related to communication with students or parents/carers or between employees
 - Issues related to the College fees and payments
 - General administrative issues
 - Issues relating to non-compliance with a process outlined in GEMS policies or procedures.³

- 1.6.2 Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents/carers on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

1.7 Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this Policy and should be managed as follows:

- a) child protection concerns, including allegations of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse or harm to children, should be dealt with in accordance with the GEMS Child Protection Policy.
- b) student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the GEMS Student Bullying Policy;

²Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(2)(a)

³Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(5)

- c) student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the GEMS Student Code of Conduct;
- d) student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Executive Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate;
- e) Disputes between board members should be dealt with in accordance with the GEMS Governing Body Code of Conduct; and
- f) formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.

2. Definitions

2.1 **Complaint**

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the College, related to the GEMS services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.⁴

2.2 **Informal Complaint**

A complaint about a matter that is likely to be simple, straightforward, easily manageable, or minor, where a simple or quick resolution is appropriate such as a discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member.

2.3 **Formal Complaint**

A complaint about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Examples include serious allegations or breaches of policy, complaints against a senior staff member, including the principal or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by the Executive Principal.

2.4 **Complainant**

The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint.⁵

2.5 **Respondent**

The person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 **GEMS acknowledges its role and responsibility to:**

- a) develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the GEMS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure;
- b) appropriately communicate the GEMS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure to students, parents/carers and employees;
- c) ensure that the GEMS Complaints Handling Procedure are readily accessible by staff, students and parents/carers;
- d) upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the GEMS Complaints Handling Procedure;
- e) ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint;
- f) take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them;
- g) appropriately implement remedies;
- h) appropriately train relevant employees;
- i) keep records;
- j) conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time; and
- k) report to the College insurer when that is relevant.

3.2 **All Parties to a Dispute** have the following roles and responsibilities:

- a) comply with the GEMS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure;
- b) provide complete and factual information in a timely manner;
- c) not provide deliberately false or misleading information;
- d) not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or retaliatory complaints;

⁴Standards Australia, *Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ)*, s.4.3

⁵Standards Australia, *Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ)*, s.4.2

- e) act in good faith, and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation
- f) act in a calm and courteous manner and non-threatening manner;
- g) acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties;
- h) recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced;
- i) maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties; and
- j) not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

3.3 **Employees Receiving Complaints and/or Managing Complaints** have the following role and responsibilities:

- a) act in accordance with the GEMS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure;
- b) inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required;
- c) provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint;
- d) provide the complainant with a copy of the GEMS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure;
- e) maintain confidentiality as far as possible
- f) keep appropriate records
- g) to forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Executive Principal, as appropriate; and
- h) not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

4 Implementation

4.1 **Awareness**

GEMS is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the College, including the development and implementation of this Policy and related procedure, and via the clear support and promotion of the Policy and procedure.

4.2 **Training**

GEMS is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this Policy and the related procedure.

4.3 **Complaints Handling Procedure**

Implement the GEMS Complaints Handling Procedure.

5. Complaint Register

- 5.1 GEMS will maintain a complaint register with details such as the date, source and description of complaints, the employee managing the complaint, the actions taken, outcome and the date the complaint was closed.
- 5.2 The complaint register will be stored securely.
- 5.3 All complaints shall be entered onto the complaint register as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. The complaint register will not contain complaints about the Executive Principal. Records of complaints about the Executive Principal will be maintained by the Board with access restricted to the Board.
- 5.4 To safeguard confidentiality and maintain the integrity of the complaint process, access to the entire complaint register will be limited to the Executive Principal.
- 5.5 The Executive Principal may authorise the sharing of specific, relevant entries from the complaint register with other designated staff members (such as the senior leadership team), provided measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved, particularly ensuring that respondents to a complaint do not gain inappropriate access to information about the allegations against them.

6. Compliance and Monitoring

6.1 Record keeping, monitoring and reporting

6.1.1 GEMS will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the GEMS Board about:

- a) Internal and external dispute resolution complaint volumes;
- b) Average response timeframes;
- c) Number of open complaints, in total and by status, with reference to the life cycle of the complaint;
- d) Percentage of open complaints within the stated timeframes, which may include 30, 60, 90, 180, or 365 school working days;
- e) Identification and rectification of systemic issues; and
- f) Media associated with any individual complaint or systemic issues.

6.1.2 GEMS will ensure adequate resourcing is allocated to manage complaints, address systemic issues and, if necessary, recall or cease production of associated products or discontinue associated services.

6.1.3 GEMS will provide appropriate reporting and disclosures to relevant regulators and agencies.

6.2 Confidential and impartial information

Information in this regard is to be reported to the Executive Principal.

6.3 Culture

GEMS will act to encourage students, parents/carers and employees to contribute to a healthy college culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

END OF POLICY
