

Grievance resolution policy and procedures [non-academic]

Introduction

Australian Lutheran College [ALC] is committed to providing a positive, supportive and harmonious environment conducive to personal, academic and professional development. ALC also has a legislative responsibility to ensure that students are not subjected to any form of discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation.

As part of our commitment ALC undertakes to provide fair and equitable processes to enable student issues or concerns to be addressed promptly and impartially and resolved as quickly as possible.

Interpretation

Grievance: an issue or cause for complaint

Victimise: to act or omit to act towards a person in a way which is intended to cause disadvantage to that person because they have made a complaint, or may make a complaint, or may be or are the subject of a complaint.

Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- All concerns will be addressed at the local level in the first instance, *as close as possible to their source*
 - All parties to a concern or grievance will have a right to be heard, to be treated without bias, to be informed of any allegation which relates to them, to respond to the allegations and to be informed of the status of any grievance which has been formally raised
 - Students will not suffer any disadvantage, victimisation or discrimination as a result of raising a grievance, with minimum stress and maximum protection for all concerned
 - Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained [where possible grievance information disclosure is limited to those who are legitimately involved in the process of resolving the grievance]
 - Negotiated solutions will aim to address the key issues and be acceptable to all individuals or parties involved without ascribing blame, victimisation or discrimination
 - Clear & prompt responses and feedback will be provided at all stages of the process
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Scope of the policy

- Grievances may arise between students, between student and staff member, or between a student and an external agency cooperating with ALC
- All students of ALC may use these procedures to submit a grievance in relation to a non-academic matter free of charge
- **Non-academic matters:** includes all matters which do not relate to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study and may include complaints in relation to personal information that the provider holds in relation to the student.

- **Related policies:** Domestic & Overseas Student Responsibilities; Access, Equity and Equal Opportunity Policy & Procedures; Privacy Policy; ICT Facility Policy Agreement; Health and Safety Policy and Procedure; FEE-HELP Review Procedures.

Procedures

As per the Grievance Resolution [non-academic] Flow Chart

ALC recognises both informal and formal complaints as being of equal importance and both will normally remain confidential to the individuals involved, except where legislative requirement or special circumstances apply.

- Students may lodge a complaint or appeal via this process within 20 working days of the issue/incident. The grievance procedure will commence within 10 working days of the lodgement of the grievance.
- Before informally or formally commencing the 3 stage grievance process as outlined in the flow chart, ALC recommends that [where possible] the issue or concern be discussed between the main parties or individuals at the local level, as close to the source as possible, and a mutual resolution or understanding be sought firstly at that level.
- Where no suitable mutual resolution is reached, the student may then consider using the 3 stage resolution process, choosing the initial internal Stage1 informal or formal pathway to resolution:
 - **Informal** grievances are those made verbally and/or by exchange of emails where all concerned agree & are acknowledged in the same form as submitted [Process A]
 - **Formal** grievances are those submitted in writing on the ALC Grievance Resolution Form and signed [Process B]

Both processes closely follow the steps of identifying the key individuals, the pertinent manager and include the option of a student nominated support person [who may be a member of the student association]. A final decision about the grievance will be made within 14 days.

- Students may elect to move from the informal process to the formal, or directly into the internal Independent Grievance Committee chaired by the Principal or their nominee in the internal Stage 2 process where there has been no mutual resolution. This committee will deal with the grievance normally within 30 days of receipt.
- If there is no mutual resolution further action may be pursued by referring the grievance to the final Stage 2 step of Independent Internal Resolution by the ALC Board of Directors [or Executive].
- Having exhausted all internal means of successful resolution, Stage 3 provides for an external independent dispute resolution service provided by Lutheran Community Care that will address the grievance within 30 days. [Forwarded recommendations arising from Stage 3 will be implemented within 30 days of receipt.] This is a *free service* for students funded by ALC:

Contact details:

PO Box 288
 KILBURN SA 5084
 Ph: [08] 8269 9300
 Fax: [08] 8269 1935
 Email: enquiries@lccsa.org.au
www.lccsa.org.au

- If the first external resolution option is unsuccessful, the final Stage 3 External resolution option may be independently pursued by students by contacting the an external body such as the Equal Opportunity Commission [EOC] the

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC] or the S A Ombudsman.

Formal complaints made in writing are to be acknowledged in writing within five working days of their receipt. An opportunity to negotiate a solution is to be negotiated within ten working days of the lodgment of the grievance form. The Student Grievance Notification Form is to be issued within 14 days of lodgment. If the matter is not resolved at that time and there is further correspondence, on each occasion that the complainant communicates with those who are dealing with the grievance, whilst desirable for the matter to be dealt with as quickly as possible, the maximum time for response is ten working days. This process applies until the matter is resolved or the grievance ceases to be dealt with internally. Final recommendations are then to be implemented within a period of 30 days of agreement.

General

- The student [complainant and/or respondent] has a right at all stages to be accompanied and/or assisted by a nominated support person.
- As the grievance process unfolds, feedback is available at all stages of the process at the request of the complainant and/or the respondent. As part of the formal process, those responsible for dealing with the complaint are required to record in writing [using the Student Grievance Response Form] full details and reasons for actions taken as part of these procedures, suggestions offered and/or decisions made. Also on each of these occasions the complainant and/or respondent will be invited to respond.
- A separate hard copy file record shall be maintained for each student who initiates the formal grievance process, and all related correspondence both inwards and outwards is to be maintained on the file and stored in the office of the Executive Assistant to the Principal. Each file is to be held by the college for a minimum period of five years after the student's final dealings with the college on the grievance. The minimum five year file retention provision also applies where grievances are dealt with externally, with the retention period commencing at the conclusion of the external reviewer's involvement with the grievance. Informal grievance records will be destroyed when mutual resolution is agreed.
- Confidentiality is observed at all times, with supervised access to files restricted to parties to the complaint and those with direct involvement in the grievance resolution process. Likewise, information on the matter, both oral and in writing shall be exchanged only among those who are involved in the matter.
- Students who wish to seek advice on process before contacting the pertinent manager are invited to consult with a Grievance Coordinator in the first instance.
- ALC recognises the importance of reaching mutually acceptable resolution of grievance disputes and the associated rights and obligations of complainants, respondents and ALC.

Publication, Approval and Training

This policy is published and communicated to all staff and students as an ALC Quality document on the ALC website www.alc.edu.au, is listed in the ALC Student Handbook and published in the staff ALC intranet based Quality manual.

This policy was approved by the ALC Board of Directors and Management Team on the date as amended in the document footer below [following the regular ALC Quality document generation approval, tracking and publication process].

The Principal is responsible for the training of all staff in the application of this policy.