



POLICY

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Purpose

Firbank Grammar School recognises the importance of fostering positive relationships with parents and families and developing strong school community partnerships. However, it also recognises that in all partnerships there will be times when there are disagreements and issues of concern that will need to be resolved.

Firbank is committed to resolving complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relevant legislation.

Application

This policy provides the framework by which complaints and appeals from International Students will be dealt with.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or grievance about the course offering, course assessments or actions of students and staff of Firbank Grammar School as well as third party International Agents.

An appeal may relate to the decision made by the School to warn or notify the relevant department or provider of the International Students unsatisfactory course completion or attendance.

This policy applies to International Students wishing to appeal or review the decision made to issue warning letters to a Student or issue a notice of intention to report for unsatisfactory course progress due to completion or attendance as outlined in the International Student Overseas Visa Requirements Policy.

This policy will be made available to international students and written records of all complaints including the outcomes and appeals will be kept in detail in student files and provided to the student.

All Complaints and Appeals will be handled fairly, professionally, equitably, confidentially, and in a timely and transparent manner with a view to achieving a satisfactory resolution as soon as practicable.

Firbank Grammar School will in the first instance always endeavour to resolve



complaints/disputes informally.

Expectations

Firbank expects the person to raise the concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs.
- Provide complete and factual information.
- Maintain the respect, privacy and confidentiality of all parties.
- Act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner.
- Acknowledge the common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.

Raising a Concern or Complaint

In the first instance a concern or complaint should be made directly to the school. The complainant should be made in person or in writing by email to the following:

- The student's teacher or mentor about learning issues and incidents that happen in their class or group.
- The Wellbeing Leader if students from several classes are involved.
- The Head of Campus or Deputy Head about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff numbers or very complex student issues.
- The Head or Acting Head of Boarding if related to any ongoing issues or incidents in the boarding house.
- The International Student Coordinator if the complaint is in relation to any issues or actions of the Education Agent or any related party.

If a complainant is unsure who to contact in the first instance, contact International Student Co-Ordinator.

International Students who have been issued a formal warning letter or notice of intention to report and wish to appeal should complete a formal complaint investigation and review form and submit it via email to enquiries@firbank.vic.edu.au.

Complaints Resolution

All complaints received will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. The School will acknowledge the complaint and provide a timeline for investigation.

If the complaint relates to the appeal of a warning or formal letter the assessment will commence within 10 working days and finalize the outcome as soon as practicable.

The School will make every effort to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. However, if a complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the School may need more time to investigate and resolve it.

The complaint resolution procedure includes.

- Receiving and clarifying the complaint
- Deciding how to handle the complaint.
- Finding out about the complaint
- Making a decision about the complaint
- Review

Depending on the nature of the concern or complaint, an informal or formal process will be adopted.

Often a complaint will be resolved on the first point of contact. Discuss the complaint with the class teacher or mentor and together attempt to resolve the issue. If unsuccessful, contact the Head of Campus or Principal. The Principal may refer some complaints to a delegate such as the Deputy Principal, Head of Year or Director of Finance and Administration.

If a formal complaint is made, Students should complete a formal complaint investigation and review form and submit it via email to enquiries@firbank.vic.edu.au. The complaint will be investigated, documented and outcomes will be discussed and communicated to the parties involved considering their privacy and confidentiality.

It is expected that a complaint will be resolved when the complainant and the School agree on an appropriate response or remedy. A complaint may be dismissed after it has been investigated and the investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated.

The Student will be given the opportunity to formally present their case at minimal or no cost and be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings.

Firbank will advise students that are unsuccessful with the School's internal complaints or appeals handling process, within 10 working days of the decision being made, of the student's right to access an external complaints and appeals process at minimal or no cost to resolve the dispute. The School must advise the student of the contact details of the appropriate complaints and external appeals body.

It may not always be possible to fully resolve all complaints to the complainant's



satisfaction. This could happen if the complainant has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint or if the Schools' policies and procedures are contrary to their views.

The student will be advised in writing (via email) regarding the outcome of any formal complaint with the option to undertake an internal appeals process. If the student is not satisfied with the result or conduct of the School's internal complaints handling and appeals process, Firbank Grammar will assist the student to access independent mediation at minimal or no cost to resolve the dispute.

All written documentation of the complaint or appeal will be retained on the Student records.

Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Unreasonable complainant conduct is behaviour that:

- is vexatious (a complaint brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person)
- is oriented towards conflict.
- is clearly and significantly outside the expectation of confidentiality, co-operation, courtesy, and respect.
- Calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint.

Review of a Decision

A request for a decision to be reviewed should be made in writing to the Principal's Office. Upon receipt of the request, the Principal will determine the most appropriate way to review the decision. Once the review is complete, the Principal's decision will be communicated in accordance with privacy and confidentiality principles.

If an informal complaint cannot be resolved then Students should complete a formal complaint investigation and review form and submit it via email to enquiries@firbank.vic.edu.au.

Academic Complaints and Appeals

- Complaints/appeals against academic decisions will be accepted up to fourteen (14) days from the date an assessment result was received.
- Assessment will be reviewed having due regard to submissions made by the participant.
- Any substantiated complaint will be acted upon. All complaints and appeals will be recorded in detail including the outcome of each stage.
- A complaint can be forwarded directly to the International Student



coordinator: Wellbeing.

- Firbank will not report a student for unsatisfactory progress or attendance until the student has been allowed to access our internal and ONE external complaints and appeals process.
- The School will await the outcome of this process (and if in favor of the provider) before reporting to the student through PRISMS.
- For appeals on the School's decision to defer, suspend or cancel a student's enrolment, the School only needs to wait until the internal complaints/appeals process is completed (if in favor of the School) to notify DET/DHA via PRISMS.

Suspension and Cancellation of Enrolment

Notification on PRISMS will not occur until the result of the internal appeals process is known, unless extenuating circumstances relating to the welfare of the student, Staff or other students apply, such as:

- The student is at risk of committing a criminal offence or is the subject of an investigation relating to criminal matters.
- The student's actual or threatened behaviour poses a threat to other students. The student has medical or psychological problems that may affect their well-being.
- The student cannot be located.

External Complaints and Appeals

The School will only await the outcome of one external appeal process before reporting/taking action against the student for course progress or attendance.

Where the appeal relates to the Schools decision to defer/suspend or cancel a student's enrolment for misbehavior or breach of School rules, the School will only await the outcome of the internal appeals process if it supports the School before notifying DET and DHA through PRISMS of the change to the student's enrolment.

Overseas Student Ombudsman

The Ombudsman provides an external complaint and appeals process for overseas students of private education providers.

If you wish to lodge an external appeal or complain about a decision made by the school, you can contact the Overseas Students Ombudsman. The Overseas Students Ombudsman offers a free and independent service for overseas students who have a



complaint or want to lodge an external appeal about a decision made by their private education or training provider.

See the [Overseas Students Ombudsman website](#)

Commonwealth ESOS Regulator

The student may send through a complaint at any point, including after they have exhausted the School or provider’s internal appeals process and the external appeals process. DET will only intervene where Firbank Grammar appeals process was not conducted correctly or if the Firbank appeals process does not meet the requirements of the National Code. The DET role is not to judge whether the outcome was right or wrong.

See [ESOS Enquires](#)

Related Policies and Documents

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Obligations Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Complaints and Concerns Policy
- International Students Overseas Visa Requirements Policy
- International Students Transfer Policy
- Records Management Policy and Procedure
- Formal Compliant Investigation and Review form

Approval

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