



OVERSEAS STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Fintona Girls' School (the School), values good relationships and open communication. The School understands that an overseas student and their parents/legal guardian has a right to raise concerns and have them addressed. To maintain good relationships the School will work to ensure grievances and conflicts are addressed.

The purpose of this policy is to provide overseas students or their parents/legal guardian the opportunity to access procedures to facilitate resolution of a dispute or complaint.

Grievances brought by a student against another student will be dealt with under the School's Student Grievances Policy and the Student Code of Conduct and Behaviour Management Policy.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all of the School's, overseas students, their parents, legal guardians, and all school staff and any other persons supporting the School's overseas students.

3. POLICY

It is the School policy that we will have a clear internal complaint handling and appeals process in place that ensures any grievances the overseas students and their parents/legal guardian has with the School are heard and addressed in a professional and timely manner.

If the overseas student or their parents/legal guardian are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints and appeals process they will be advised within 10 working days of their right to access an external appeals process.

The School will immediately implement any decision or recommendation in favour of the overseas student through the internal or external appeals process.

4. INTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

4.1 INFORMAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING

In the first instance Fintona Girls' School requests that there is an attempt to informally resolve the issue through mediation/informal resolution of the complaint:

- overseas students or their parents/guardians should contact their Head of School or the Registrar in the first instance for mediation or informal resolution of the complaint;
- if further consultation is required to resolve the issue, the matter can be referred to the Deputy Principal or when necessary, the Principal. In these circumstances the School's formal Overseas Students Complaints and Appeals Handling Procedure will be followed.

4.2 FORMAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING

The formal complaints handling procedure is confidential and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process:

Document Title:	SW11.00 Overseas Student Complaints and Appeals Policy	Original Issue:	May 2019
Document Owner:	Registrar	Version / Date:	V5.0 / March 2024
Approval Chain:	Deputy Principal	Next Review:	2026
CRICOS No:	00139C	Page:	1 of 3

- the overseas student or their parents/legal guardian must notify the Head of School or Registrar in writing of the nature and details of the complaint or appeal;
- written complaints or appeals are to be lodged with the Principal;
- the formal grievance process will commence within 10 working days of the lodgement of the complaint with the Principal and the School will finalise the outcome as soon as practical;
- the Principal or their delegate will conduct the assessment of the complaint or appeal in a professional, fair and transparent manner;
- overseas students or their parents/legal guardian will be given an opportunity to present their case at no cost and may be accompanied and assisted by a support person if necessary, at all relevant meetings;
- 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 reason for the outcome;
- if the grievance procedure finds in favour of the student, the School will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required;
- where the internal complaints and appeals process is being accessed because of unsatisfactory course attendance, unsatisfactory course progress or suspension or cancellation of enrolment, the student has 20 working days from the date of notification in which to lodge a written appeal;
- the School will keep written records of the complaint or appeal including the outcome and reason for the outcome on the student's file;
- for the duration of the appeals process, the student is required to maintain enrolment and attendance at all classes as normal.

5. EXTERNAL APPEALS PROCESS

In the event that a resolution is not possible using the resources within the School, the Principal will provide the complainant the contact details of an appropriate external complaints and appeals body, such as the bodies listed below:

- Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria <https://www.disputes.vic.gov.au/about-us/mediation>
- Commonwealth Ombudsman <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/complaints/international-student-complaints>
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

The overseas student's parents/legal guardian can also access legal assistance for arbitration of the issues.

Overseas students and their parents/legal guardian should be aware that in most cases the purpose of the external appeals process is to consider whether the School has followed its policies and procedure, rather than make a decision in place of the School.

When the external appeals process has been completed the School will immediately implement any decision or recommendations in favour of the overseas student and/or take the preventative or corrective action required by the outcomes of the external complaints and appeals process and notify the overseas student of the outcome.

6. NOTIFICATIONS TO PRISMS

If a student's appeal relates to the School's decision to defer, suspend or cancel an overseas student's enrolment, the School must wait for the internal complaints and appeals processes to be completed before the School can proceed.

However, the School must only report the overseas student for unsatisfactory course progress or attendance through the PRISMS system after:

- the internal and external complaints and appeals process and the recommendation upholds the School's decision;
- the overseas student has chosen not to access the internal complaints and appeals process within the 20-working day period;
- the student has not accessed the external complaints and appeals process; or
- the overseas student withdraws from the internal or external appeals process, by notifying the School in writing.

PRISMS means Provider Registration and International Student Management System.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

AT PRINCIPAL LEVEL

To properly implement this policy, the Principal must ensure:

- that this policy is reviewed every two years;
- ensure the School Leadership Team implements this policy and its procedures.

AT OTHER LEVELS

To properly implement this policy, all the School's employees must abide by this policy and assist the Principal and School Registrar in the implementation of this policy.

8. RELATED SCHOOL POLICIES

- E04.00 Overseas Student Deferment, Suspension or Cancellation Policy
- E05.00 Overseas Student Course Progress Policy and Procedures
- SG15.00 Grievance Policy
- SW10.00 Overseas Student Attendance Policy
- SW25.00 Student Code of Conduct and Behaviour Management Policy
- SW33.00 Student Grievances Policy

9. REFERENCES

- ESOS Act (2000) – Obligations of registered providers
- ESOS National Code Standard 10: Complaints and appeals (Fact Sheet 14 July 2022)

10. ACCESSIBILITY

This document is available on:

- Fintona Website>Overseas Students
- inFintona>Staff Services>Policies
- inFintona>Parent Services>Policies