



Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF EDUCATION

Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Australian International Academy of Education (**AIAE** or the **School**) is committed to fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment where all members of the AIAE community feel respected, valued, and safe. We recognise that concerns, complaints, or grievances may arise from time to time, and it is important to address these promptly and effectively. Where possible AIAE encourages such concerns to be identified and resolved speedily and informally; the *Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures* is designed to apply in circumstances that prove more difficult and where formal processes are required.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles, guidelines and procedures governing AIAE's approach to the resolution of complaints and grievances.

In an effort to establish a fair and transparent process for addressing and resolving complaints and grievances within the School community, this policy aims to provide a framework for handling concerns promptly, professionally, and with sensitivity.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers, visitors, parents/carers, students, Board members, and other members of the School community. It applies across all School settings and locations, both during and outside school hours and within and outside the physical school environments, including online.

This *Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures* does not apply to:

- Concerns regarding child abuse – reference will be made to AIAE's *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns Policy* for guidance on child safety reporting procedures.
- Protected disclosures covered by AIAE's *Whistleblower Policy*.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Appeal	A review initiated by the complainant to reconsider the decision made by a higher authority.
Complainant	The person making the complaint.
Complaint	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Australian International Academy of Education (AIAE), related to services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
Due Process	The principle that both the complainant and the respondent have the right to a fair, impartial and consistent process that governs all complaints and grievances. This process ensures that the complainant is provided with information about the complaint, and given adequate opportunity to respond.
Formal Complaint	A complaint that has been escalated to the Head of Campus, Executive Principal or the Chair of the School Board.
Grievance	A cause for complaint regarding either real or perceived unfair treatment.

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Informal Complaint	A complaint that may be addressed by a classroom/subject teacher, Head of Department, Team Leader/Student Management Coordinator, Programme Coordinator and /or Deputy Head of Campus.
Natural Justice	A process that involves the avoidance of an initial judgment being made, ensuring that the respondent is provided with an opportunity to present their case before a determination is reached.
Procedural Fairness	Acting fairly in administrative decision making. It relates to the fairness of the procedure by which a decision is made, and not the fairness in a substantive sense of that decision.
Respondent	The person (or organisation) about whom a complaint is made. The respondent is required to respond to the complaint and must be provided with a fair and reasonable opportunity to do so.

Responsibilities

AIAE Board

AIAE Board is responsible for:

- Approving this policy and reviewing it on a biennial basis.
- Responding to any formal complaint raised that relates to the Executive Principal and Head of Campus.
- Responding to an appeal relating to the application of the complaints and appeals process by the Executive Principal.

Executive Principal and Head of Campus

The Executive Principal and Head of Campus is responsible for:

- Determining the complaints procedures and ensuring that they are implemented in a way that is consistent with this policy.
- Ensuring the *Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures* is communicated to staff, parents and the wider school community and external community via the website with copies also available from the School office.
- Responding to a formal complaint brought under this policy, where requiring the Head of Campus or Executive Principal to be involved.
- Assembling an Appeals Committee where required, which may involve recruiting an impartial external member, and if necessary, referring unresolved appeals to an external authority.
- Retaining a register of formal complaints (listing the date, subject and resolution) for reporting to the AIAE Board on an annual basis and to be available to the VRQA as required.

Members of Staff

Members of staff are responsible for:

- Responding to and resolving concerns and complaints raised informally.
- Responding to concerns raised by students.

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AIAE Community Members

AIAE community members are responsible for:

- Raising issues promptly as they arise or as soon as feasibly possible.
- Acting in good faith and in a courteous manner, in alignment with the *Parent Code of Conduct Policy*, available on the AIAE website.
- Ensuring complaints do not give rise to victimisation or reprisal.

Guiding Principles

AIAE is committed to child safety and has a zero tolerance for child abuse. In the context of this *Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures*, the response to a complaint relating to child safety, particularly any in relation to Indigenous children, children with disabilities, children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and children who are vulnerable, will be given the highest priority and attention.

AIAE understands that staff, parents and students are committed to working closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for every child. AIAE is committed to the development of professional, trusting and cooperative relationships between all members of the School community. The School is dedicated to providing a process that:

- aligns with AIAE's values, vision and mission
- ensures fairness, transparency, and equity, upholding the principles of natural justice
- ensures all parties are treated with dignity and respect
- enables all parties to express their concerns with confidence, knowing that they will be formally addressed and resolved
- provides opportunities for feedback and so form the basis for future improvements.

Complaints and grievances raised through this process will ensure that:

- student wellbeing needs are prioritised
- high levels of confidentiality are maintained and balanced with the requirement for procedural fairness and transparency
- complaints are addressed in a conciliatory, non-adversarial, and non-legal manner
- accurate records of complaints and their resolutions are documented in accordance with AIAE's *Privacy Policy*
- complaints are swiftly resolved and, whenever feasible, informally, resorting to formal procedures only when informal resolution is unattainable
- matters are not escalated until all reasonable avenues for resolution have been explored.

AIAE acknowledges the right of complainants to maintain anonymity, in accordance with legislation.

Complaints received anonymously will be handled following the established process; however, response may be limited in such cases. The complaints procedures will be restricted to dealing with the matter raised by the complainant and not with any other matters.

AIAE will respond to all formal complaints in a timely manner. The School will acknowledge the complaint promptly and both the complainant and respondent will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint, particularly when the complaint is complex and may take time to resolve.

AIAE will ensure that the complaint procedure is responsive and flexible. In practice, this means that staff, parents, students and the wider AIAE community are able to make a complaint in person, by phone or in writing. The School will provide support for parents with specific needs (i.e. interpreters).

AIAE will endeavour to respond to each complaint in a fair, objective and unbiased manner, taking into account the School's mission and values. Anyone involved in the complaint will be required to declare any conflicts of interest.

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In dealing with the complaint, AIAE is committed to acting in a confidential manner and expects that the complainant will show similar respect for the process and for others involved by doing likewise.

The School may determine that a complaint is vexatious (where the complaint is designed to harass, annoy or embarrass the School, staff or another parent) or spurious (where the complaint has no real basis in fact or is manifestly groundless). Making a vexatious complaint may be considered a breach of the *Parent Code of Conduct*.

Procedures

Raising Complaints

Where appropriate, AIAE encourages the complainant to address the issue directly with the relevant individual or parties. Where the issue relates to a student, the class/subject teacher or Team Leader/Student Management Coordinator can be directly contacted through an email or by telephoning the School.

If the matter is not resolved informally, a formal complaint can be made by lodging the Formal Complaints Form either electronically or by contacting the relevant responsible person as listed below.

- **AIAE Executive Principal: Ms Gafiah Dickinson**
Email: ✉ di@aia.vic.edu.au
- **KKCC Head of Campus: Mr Moustafa Elakkoumi**
Email: ✉ eu@aia.vic.edu.au
- **CSPC Head of Campus: Ms Angela Florio**
Email: ✉ fl@aia.vic.edu.au
- **MSC Head of Campus, Ms Michelle Shears**
Email: ✉ ss@aia.vic.edu.au
- **CSSC Head of Campus, Mr Ali Harba**
Email: ✉ ha@aia.vic.edu.au

All formal complaints will be logged into our complaints management system and managed in accordance with the following procedure. (Appendix A)

Informal Complaints Resolution

Where possible, AIAE encourages the resolution of complaints and grievances through informal processes. This is most often achieved by speaking directly with the staff member or individual involved.

AIAE will endeavour to acknowledge any correspondence by students, parents and staff relating to a concern or issue as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours, to arrange time to discuss the matter further. AIAE aims to resolve issues as quickly as possible and as simply as possible without resorting to unnecessary processes and bureaucracy. Concerns regarding student conduct or well-being will be overseen by the designated Team Leader/Student Management Coordinator. Matters pertaining to curriculum, teaching, and learning may also be directed to the relevant Programme Coordinator. The Team Leader/Student Management Coordinator, in consultation with the Head of School and/or Deputy Head of Campus will monitor and address any concerns where necessary. Complaints unresolved informally or where the members of the parties wish to lodge a formal complaint, will be escalated to a formal process.

While the process is informal, it is important to keep a record of the complaints, (including verbal complaints) on the Compass Student Management Portal, : the steps taken to address it, and the outcome for reference.

Some matters, however, need to be escalated and require a swift response. Such matters are likely to include:

- anything to do with child safe standards that must be dealt with under the School's *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns Policy*
- matters that allege misconduct, corruption or illegal behaviour
- complaints against the Head of Campus, Executive Principal or the AIAE Board
- privacy issues that must be dealt with under the AIAE's *Privacy Policy*
- legal issues and requests for compensation or payments
- issues that have a wider school or systemic implication.

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Formal Complaints Procedure

Making a Formal Complaint

Parents, students, staff and community members are asked to discuss any concerns with individuals or parties concerned at an early stage so that the School can work together to resolve these as promptly and efficiently as possible.

If the concern or complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant through the informal process, the formal complaints procedure may be followed as set out in this document.

The formal complaint should be made in writing using the Formal Complaint Form and should be addressed to the Head of Campus.

Where complaints are made about the Executive Principal or the Head of Campus to the AIAE Board, the complaint should be made in writing using the Formal Complaints Form and addressed to the Chair of the AIAE Board.

The complainant may choose to make the complaint in person or by phone, in which case they are asked to make arrangements to meet or speak to the Head of Campus at a convenient time.

If the complainant arranges to meet with the Head of Campus in person, they may choose to have someone to support them. The support person could be a relative or a friend but it is not appropriate for that person to be a legal representative.

If the complainant arranges to meet with the Head of Campus in person or by phone, it is important that, as set out in the policy, the conversation is respectful and constructive. If either the Head of Campus, Executive Principal or the complainant is of the view that the conversation has become confrontational and is no longer conciliatory, either party may ask for the conversation to be temporarily halted and re-scheduled for completion at another time.

If the complainant decides to make the complaint in person or by phone, the School may use the Formal Complaint Form to record the complaint.

It is helpful if the complaint is clearly identified before contacting the School. If there is more than one problem, the complainant is advised to list the issues concisely and clearly so that the extent of the problem is clear to AIAE. If more than one complainant or a set of complainants raise the same or a substantially similar problem, each complaint will be managed separately.

The complainant is also asked to indicate how, if legal, possible and practicable, they would want the complaint to be resolved.

If a complaint is determined in due course, to be vexatious or spurious in nature, the complaint will be dismissed with no further action. When this is the case, the complainant will be informed in writing of the decision.

Finally, the School will ensure any actions, outcomes and the resolution of a complaint are well documented, kept on file and that the complainant concerned have a copy or be informed of the of the final decision in writing.

Investigating Complaints

Some complaints can be resolved through discussion but others require that the problem or allegation be investigated before coming to a resolution.

The Head of Campus may appoint a delegate to investigate the issue. The delegate will be one who has not previously been involved in the matter. The investigation may take the form of interviews with others involved, reviewing documentation, etc. If it is thought advisable and necessary, the Head of Campus may appoint an external advisor as investigator.

In carrying out an investigation, the School will be mindful of the need for confidentiality. The complainant will be informed in advance of any decision to speak to others during the course of the investigation.

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The investigator will be asked to prepare a brief written report outlining their findings. The investigator's report is confidential to the School.

The Complaints Meeting

The Head of Campus will normally chair the complaints meeting. The complainant may choose to have someone to support them. The support person could be a relative or a friend, but it is not appropriate for that person to be a legal representative.

The meeting will discuss the matter thoroughly, ideally using the following steps:

- a clear description and understanding of the issue
- the claimed impact and whom it impacts
- what is claimed will happen if the issue is not resolved
- what action(s) is requested in order to resolve the complaint.

These steps will be summarised briefly and will be included in the documentation of the process.

At each step of the process, all those attending the meeting will have the opportunity to put forward their point of view and will be treated with dignity and respect. It may not be possible to agree the way forward in just one meeting; in this case further meetings will be scheduled until all those involved agree the issue has been considered as thoroughly as needed.

At any stage in the process, the Head of Campus may decide that it would be helpful to seek either informal or formal mediation in order to resolve the complaint.

The Complaints Resolution

Where a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part and a resolution has been agreed upon, AIAE will offer an appropriate response. This may include, but not be limited the following:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- mediation, counselling or other support
- an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- to change its decision
- to change its policies, procedures or practices
- to cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- a fee refund.

All those involved should agree when the complaint (or an aspect of the complaint) is considered resolved. If agreement cannot be reached, the complaint procedures should continue until a resolution is found, even if the resolution is to agree that the complaint is dismissed or that no further action should be taken.

In resolving the issue, the following steps should be followed:

- a statement confirming that those involved consider the complaint (or an aspect of the complaint) is resolved
- how the complaint is resolved
- a description of each specific action or decision, including a note as to who is responsible for the action and by when.

These steps will be summarised briefly and will be included in the documentation of the process.

When the complaint is resolved (or dismissed), a follow up meeting or conversation should be scheduled to ensure that the agreed actions have been implemented and that there are no further matters outstanding.

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Complaints to the AIAE Board

If the complaint is in relation to the Executive Principal or the Head of Campus, the complaint should be made in writing using the Formal Complaint Form and should be addressed to the AIAE Board Chair at board@aia.vic.edu.au.

The AIAE Board Chair will assemble a complaints sub-committee to deal with the issue. The composition of the committee will be decided by the Chair and approved by the AIAE Board. The complaints committee, acting on behalf of the AIAE Board as a whole, will decide how to proceed and will make recommendations for any action to resolve the matter to the whole AIAE Board.

When a complaint or appeal is made to the governing board, AIAE Board's decision will be final.

Appeals

Making an Appeal

If the complainant believes that their complaint is not resolved or that the resolution provided by the Head of Campus is unsatisfactory, they may appeal the decision to the Executive Principal.

If the complainant wishes to appeal the appeals decision made by the Executive Principal, then the appeal must be made to the AIAE Board.

The appeal must be made in writing within [14] days of finalising the complaint resolution and should be addressed to the Executive Principal or AIAE Board Chair.

The grounds for the appeal should be clearly identified. The grounds could include the following:

- the complaints policy and procedures were not followed
- the resolution of the complaint is claimed to be insufficient, unfair, biased, unreasonable and/or disproportionate.

The appeal will use the record of the complaint as agreed and will not normally re-hear the complaint itself. The complainant will also be asked to indicate how, if legal, possible and practicable, they would want the appeal to be resolved.

Responding to the Appeal

The Executive Principal or AIAE Board Chair will constitute an appeal sub-committee to deal with the issue. The composition of the committee will be decided by the Executive Principal and where the appeal is in relation to the Executive Principal, the Chair of the AIAE Board.

The appeal committee, acting on behalf of the Executive Principal or AIAE Board as a whole, will seek to resolve the complaint within 28 days from the date of referral, and in any event, no later than 45 days after the original complaint was received. They will decide how to proceed and will make recommendations for any action to resolve the matter.

The appeal committee may approve the appointment of an external consultant to conduct an investigation, mediation and/or arbitration. Furthermore, the appeal committee has full delegated powers to resolve the issue and will make recommendations to the Executive Principal/AIAE Board as to the actions required to resolve the issue.

The decisions of the appeal committee and/or AIAE Board are final.

External Complaints and Referrals

In certain instances, it might not be feasible to address the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction through these procedures. If the issue persists unresolved, either the individuals involved or AIAE may opt to escalate it to the appropriate authority, such as VIT, VRQA Consumer Affairs Victoria, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission for complaints about compliance with the Minimum standards.

However, the School encourages its community to raise any concerns and grievances, and work to resolve such matters in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

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International Students

If an international student isn't satisfied with the outcome of the School's internal complaints handling process, they may lodge an external appeal through the Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO), which investigates complaints about problems that international students or intending international students may have with private education and training in Australia. The services of the OSO are free. The contact details for the OSO are as follows:

- Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
- Call: 1300 362 072 within Australia. Outside Australia call +61 2 6276 0111
- Postal: Commonwealth Ombudsman, GPO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601.
- Website: International Student Complaints

AIAE agrees to be bound by the OSO's recommendations and will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report.

Record Keeping

A full record of the complaint and where applicable the appeal will be made following a similar structure to that outlined in this Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures. The complainant will be provided with a copy of or informed of the final decision of the complaint or appeal in writing.

The management of these records will be compliant with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards. Except where dictated otherwise by law, the School will retain all records of appeals for a minimum of one year after the family or student has left the School and then will be destroyed. The records will be kept secured by the Head of Campus, Executive Principal or the Chair of AIAE Board (in the case of a complaint made against the Executive Principal) as is appropriate.

Legal and Regulatory Basis for Compliance

- Child Safe Standards Ministerial Order 1359
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations (2017)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's (Vic DET) Guidelines
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards

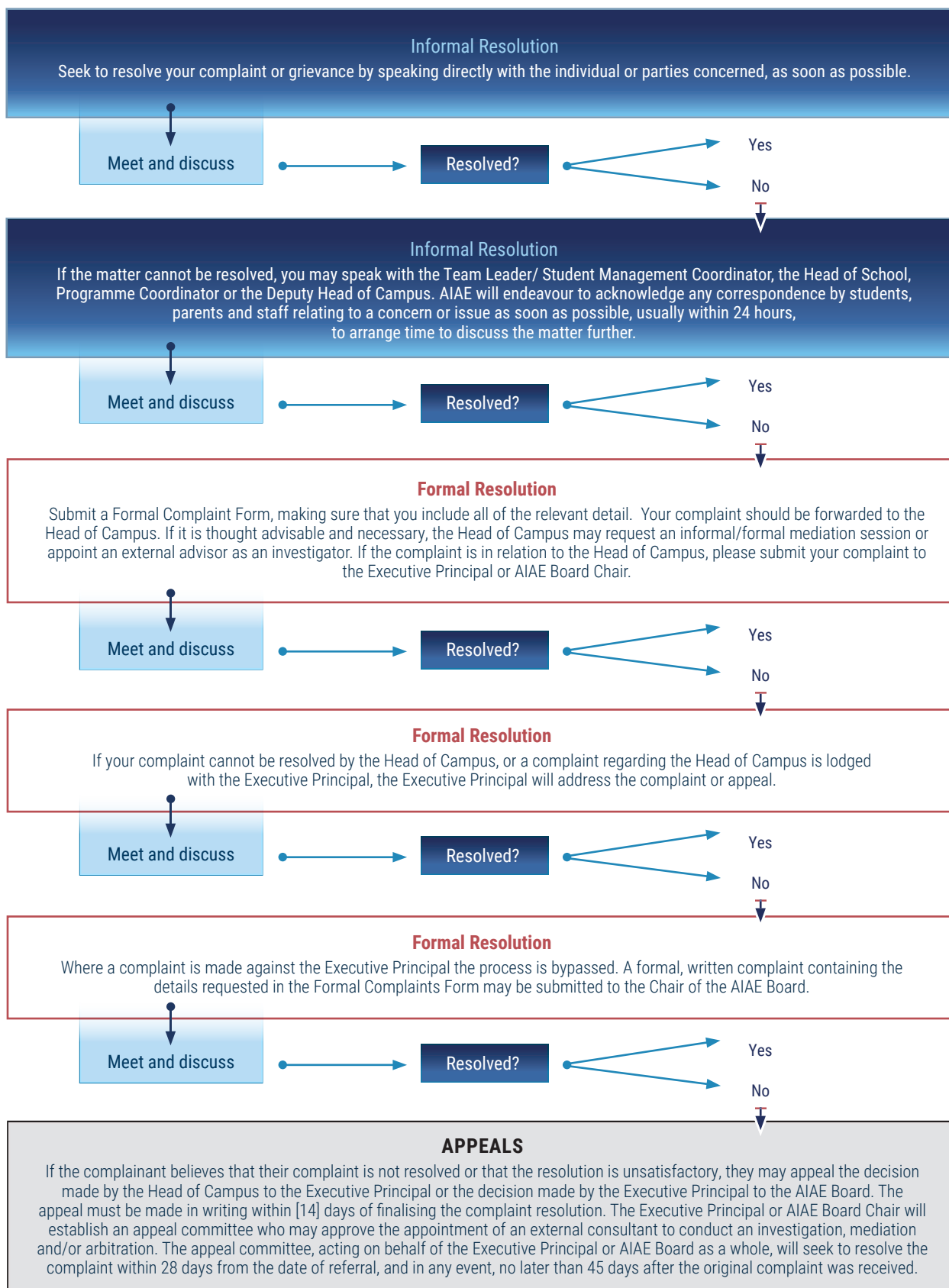
Related Policies

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct Policy
- Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Record Keeping Policy
- Student Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Student Management and Code of Conduct Policy
- Whistleblower Policy

Communication

This policy is available to staff, parents, students and the wider AIAE community via the School's public website and by request from the School office. It will also be available on the Compass Parent Portal, Compass Staff Portal and the AIAE policy platform for staff, CompliSpace.

Appendix A: Complaints Procedure Flowchart





**ADVANCEMENT
DETERMINATION
FAITH**

aia.vic.edu.au

Australian International Academy of Education

AIAE HEAD OFFICE | MELBOURNE SENIOR CAMPUS | 56 Bakers Road, Coburg North, VIC 3058.
Phone + (613) 9350 4533 | Email msc@aia.vic.edu.au

KING KHALID COBURG CAMPUS 653 Sydney Road, Coburg, VIC 3058.
Phone + (613) 9354 0833 | Email kkcc@aia.vic.edu.au

CAROLINE SPRINGS SENIOR CAMPUS | 183 - 191 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs, VIC 3023.
Phone + (613) 8372 5446 | Email cssc@aia.vic.edu.au

CAROLINE SPRINGS PRIMARY CAMPUS | 5 Stevenson Crescent, Caroline Springs, VIC 3023.
Phone + (613) 9117 9252 | Email cspc@aia.vic.edu.au