

VCAL Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure (QMS:701)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an outline of the complaints process at the IMVC so that students, parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising while engaged in the VCAL program
- Ensure that all complaints regarding the IMVC are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner

Scope

This policy is made available on the IMVC website and in the VCAL student and parent handbook and relates to complaints brought by parents/carers, students or members of the community and applies to all matters relating to the IMVC VCAL program.

Complaints made under this policy may be regarding the following issues:

- Issues related to learning and teaching
- Issues related to student discipline procedures
- Damage/loss of personal property
- Bullying, discrimination and harassment

Policy

The IMVC welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our VCAL community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and the IMVC.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is a clear communication of a concern, dispute or grievance, including an expression of frustration or dissatisfaction. The communication may be oral or written, formal or informal.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- Raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- Acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- Act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- Recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

The IMVC encourages parents/carers, students or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- Carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- Remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- Think about how the matter could be resolved
- Be informed by checking the policies and procedures set by the IMVC

Responsibilities

The Executive Officer is responsible for providing leadership in demonstrating commitment to the resolution of complaints made to the IMVC. The Executive Officer will refer complaints to the IMVC VCAL staff member most appropriate for handling specific complaints, such as the VCAL Coordinator, and may be involved in making final decisions regarding complaints.

The Executive Officer is responsible for administering the **QMS:630 Complaints and Appeals Register**.

Managers and Coordinators are responsible for exercising primary responsibility for receiving and resolving formal complaints. They are also responsible for receiving and resolving informal complaints and any conflicts in a timely and fair way. This includes advising students, parents/carers, members of the community of their right to make a complaint where appropriate and providing advice and assistance.

VCAL teachers are responsible for exercising primary responsibility for receiving and resolving informal complaints and conflicts in a timely and fair way. This includes advising students of their right to make a complaint where appropriate and providing advice and assistance to students who have a complaint.

Students, parents/carers and members of the community are responsible for providing clear and honest accounts of their concerns and their expectations for the outcome of their complaint. This includes providing all relevant information and documents to assist in the investigation and/or resolution of the matter.

Students, parents/carers and members of the community are also responsible for engaging openly during the complaint handling process and participating in discussions with other parties to resolve concerns where appropriate. Students, parents/carers and members of the community must show respect for all people involved in the process and provide further information in a timely manner.

Consideration for persons of a Culturally Diverse, Family Diverse or Linguistically Diverse Background, or with a Disability/Learning and Access Need: The IMVC understands and respects the diversity of the IMVC VCAL and wider community and understands that a range of issues may affect a complainant which means the IMVC needs to make allowances for or provide assistance with the process as set out in this policy. For example, an interpreter may be required to ensure that facts are accurate, and the exchange of information is fairly represented. The IMVC will endeavour to honour due diligence in this area and make every effort to accommodate diverse needs to ensure equality of process.

Respondents are the people who a complaint is made about. Respondents are responsible for providing clear and honest accounts of their concerns and their expectations for the outcome of their complaint. This includes providing all relevant information and documents to assist in the investigation and/or resolution of the matter.

Respondents are also responsible for engaging openly during the complaint handling process and participating in discussions with other parties to resolve concerns where appropriate. Respondents must show respect for all people involved in the process and provide further information in a timely manner.

All complaints and appeals lodged will be referenced to the **QMS:612 Continuous Improvement Policy**.

The following procedure outlines how students, parents/carers and members of the community will have their complaints and appeals processed.

Procedure

The IMVC is always happy to discuss with students, parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed in writing to a member of the IMVC VCAL Team or Executive Officer. Where possible, IMVC VCAL staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Complaints process

If you would like to make a formal complaint you can use the **QMS:600-20 Complaints and Appeals Form**. In most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, the IMVC will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

- **Complaint received:** Please either email or contact the IMVC to arrange a meeting with a member of the VCAL Team, such as the VCAL Coordinator or the Executive Officer, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone. If the complaint is against the Executive Officer the email should be forwarded to the Chair of the IMVC Board.
- **Timelines:** The IMVC will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering (refer to following point) and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, the IMVC will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.
- **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the VCAL team member may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
- **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the VCAL team member to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the IMVC Executive Officer may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

Resolution

Where appropriate, the IMVC may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- An apology or expression of regret
- A change of decision
- A change of policy, procedure or practice
- Offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- Other actions consistent with the IMVC values that are intended to support the student, parent and guardian relationship, engagement, and participation in the IMVC VCAL community

In some circumstances, the IMVC may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

Escalation

If a student, parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the IMVC, then the complaint should be referred to Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

Level 4, Casselden

2 Lonsdale Street

Melbourne, VIC 3000

Phone: 03 9637 2806

Website: www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

The IMVC may also refer a complaint to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

Associated documents

- QMS:600-20 Complaints and Appeals Form
- QMS:630 Complaints and Appeals Register
- QMS:612 Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure

Version control details

Revision history

Date	Version	Author	Change Reference
13/11/2020	1.0	M. Van Looy	Initial release – VCAL Program specific Complaints and Appeals

Reviewers

Date	Version	Approved By	Next Review Date
13/11/2020	1.0	P. Vakakis	13/11/2022