



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

Plenty River College (the College) is an independent, specialist senior secondary school and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM). It provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people aged 15-20 years who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education.

Plenty River College is a school of opportunities in which all students are empowered to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to assist students to develop life and work skills and achieve in their learning by:

- re-engaging them in education;
- fostering their social and emotional development; and
- providing a supportive and safe environment for them.

### Rationale

The College promotes open and constructive communication between all stakeholders. We believe that clear and effective processes for resolving complaints and grievances builds strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and provides students with an enhanced learning environment.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- to inform students, parents and the wider community of the College complaints process;
- to inform staff members of the College complaints handling process and their responsibilities; and
- to ensure that all complaints and grievances received by the College are managed with transparency and procedural fairness.

### Scope

This policy relates to complaints brought by staff, students and parents and the wider College community as they relate to:

- governance of the College;
- student enrolment and attendance;
- learning and teaching program;
- reporting student performance,
- care, safety and welfare of students;
- concerns about employees; or
- the general operation of the College.

The management of complaints or grievances raised in regard to child safety as defined under Ministerial Order 1359 will be made under the College's Child Safety Complaints and Concerns Policy.

Staff complaints or grievances relating to employment practices or industrial relations matters are managed by the Executive Principal through a separate process.



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

### Definitions

<b>Complaint</b>	A complaint is usually a concern or issue raised by a person who believes that a decision, action, inaction, or process at College is wrong or has been mishandled.
<b>Complainant</b>	A person making a complaint or expressing a concern.
<b>Complaints Register</b>	A document which records all complaints received at the College and details of the complaint resolution.
<b>Grievance</b>	A grievance is a complaint that has usually built up over time and may be more general or relate to more than one concern. In the workplace a grievance refers to a formal complaint made by an employee against another employee, or against their employer.
<b>Parents</b>	Includes parents, guardians, step-parents and/or carers as listed in the College Enrolment Form.
<b>Resolved</b>	A complaint is considered to be resolved when all parties agree on an appropriate response or course of action.
<b>Serious complaint</b>	<p>A serious complaint is any complaint which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requires urgent action, especially health or safety concerns;</li> <li>• relates to child abuse or neglect (dealt with by a separate policy)</li> <li>• could have serious consequences for those concerned and the wider College community;</li> <li>• concerns a breach of legislation or College policies;</li> <li>• is complex or raises wider concerns across the College;</li> <li>• is unlikely to be resolved informally, or may escalate, or is vexatious; and</li> <li>• a complaint made against the Executive Principal</li> </ul>
<b>Student Support Group</b>	A Student Support Group is normally made up of the relevant teachers and education support staff, and on occasions, Assistant Principal, Members of External Support Services, Wellbeing Team Leader. If appropriate, the Student Support Group can seek family involvement and support from specialist consultants
<b>Student Support Care Team</b>	The Student Support Care Team comprises youth welfare workers and education support workers. Other specialists such as the College psychologist or external case managers may also be included or consulted.
<b>Investigating Officer</b>	A person with the responsibility of investigating a complaint or grievance. Depending on the nature of the complaint, this can be Executive Principal, the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader or the Chair of the Board or such person/sub-committee assigned by the Board.



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

<b>Support person</b>	A person who assists the complainant during the complaints process.
<b>Unresolved</b>	A complaint is unresolved when agreement cannot be reached by the parties concerned on an appropriate response or course of action.
<b>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)</b>	<p>The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is a statutory authority of the Victorian Government responsible for the provision of the VPC or VCE VM curriculum and assessment for Victorian students.</p> <p>For details on how to make a complaint, please refer to <a href="https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Contact/Pages/Complaints.aspx">https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Contact/Pages/Complaints.aspx</a></p>
<b>Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)</b>	<p>The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) is Victoria's education and training regulator.</p> <p>For details on how to make a complaint, please refer to <a href="https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/making-a-complaint.aspx">https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/making-a-complaint.aspx</a></p>
<b>Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)</b>	<p>The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) a statutory authority whose task is to recognise and regulate members of the teaching profession in Victoria, Australia.</p> <p>The Institute registers teachers working in all schools in Victoria</p>

### Responsibility

1. The College Board is responsible for:
  - authorising this policy;
  - managing Appeals in relation to serious complaints or grievances that have not been resolved at the College level;
  - forming a Board sub-committee or appointing an independent consultant to undertake an Appeal for a serious complaint or grievance that has not been resolved at the College level;
  - appointing an independent consultant if a complaint or grievance is made against the Chair of the Board;
  - managing any complaints or grievances made against the Executive Principal or their handling of a complaint;
  - ensure any matters identified as Reportable Conduct are reported to the Commission for Children and Young People in accordance with the College Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy PP025
  - reviewing trends to inform and improve College complaints handling processes
2. The Executive Principal is responsible for:
  - overseeing all complaints and grievances and promoting their early resolution;
  - ensuring all complaints or grievances are implemented in accordance with this policy;



## **Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026**

- ensuring a complaint or grievance made in relation to child abuse is managed promptly and thoroughly and in accordance with the College's child safety Complaints and Concerns Policy PP023 and Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy PP025;
  - Maintaining the Complaints Register and reviewing complaints recorded and reporting trends or serious matters to the College Board.
  - determining strategies to improve internal College systems
3. The Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader is responsible for:
- managing and resolving all complaints except complaints about the Executive Principal.
  - perform the role of Investigating Officer in a formal complaint process
  - following up and managing progress as actions and outcomes are implemented in relation to the complaint or grievance.
  - informing the College staff of any complaints made against them.
  - keeping the Executive Principal informed of any serious complaints and grievances; and
  - recording complaints and grievances in the Complaints Register.
4. All College staff have a responsibility to
- Respond to concerns, complaints or grievances raised informally by students, parents or community members within their role, and to endeavour to resolve minor issues;
  - Escalate any concerns, complaints or grievances to the Assistant Principal if they are serious, complex, relate to the child safe standards or cannot be resolved informally;
  - Act with professionalism, impartiality and transparency while maintaining confidentiality during the complaint or grievance process;
  - If the complaint raises a concern that a child is in danger of child abuse, child neglect or sexual abuse to make a report to the appropriate authorities in accordance with the College's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy PP025; and
  - Follow the process identified in this policy

### **Implementation**

Plenty River College's first priority is the wellbeing and educational needs of our students, and we value and encourage open and positive relationships within our college community. We believe that an effective complaints management process will:

- enhance relationships between staff, students, parents and the wider community.
- encourage the early resolution of complaints and grievances.
- encourage a respectful and courteous resolution process.
- avoid the escalation of vexatious or frivolous complaints.
- empower our staff by providing a clear, responsive and consistent path to resolve issues;
- provide valuable feedback about where we are not meeting student needs;
- assist us to continuously improve our internal systems and controls, and comply with legal obligations; and



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

- protect and enhance the College's reputation.

All complaints and grievances will be treated by the College with a high level of confidentiality but will be balanced with the need for procedural fairness and transparency. Any person making a complaint will be guided by the College to the appropriate process and procedure to have their complaint heard. Complaints and grievances will be handled in a conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal manner. Accurate records will be maintained of the complaint in line with the College's **Privacy Policy**. All complaints and grievances will be resolved quickly and where possible informally, only drawing on the formal procedures when it has not been possible to reach an informal resolution.

### Procedural fairness

The College will ensure that all complaints are treated with procedural fairness, so that:

- all those involved in an issue have a reasonable opportunity for their voice to be heard, defend themselves, and explain their understanding of the context and any extenuating circumstances;
- the response to the complaint or grievance is unbiased and consistent; and
- the resolution of the complaint or grievance is proportionate to the issue, taking into account the impact of the issue on others and the likelihood of the complaint being raised in the future.

Actions arising from the complaint will be addressed by the College as a continuous improvement action if appropriate.

### Child Safety

The College values all opportunities to review our child safety measures. Parents and community members who have a complaint or concern relating to child safety or child abuse, are encouraged to immediately contact the Executive Principal to discuss their concerns.

There are legal obligations on all adults to report child abuse to Victoria Police once a reasonable belief is formed that a sexual offence has been committed against a child. Failure to disclose a sexual offence against a child is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and applies to all adults (18 years and over) in Victoria. Complaints involving communication with children under 16 years by teachers, staff, or any other person to prepare or 'groom' a child for future sexual activity is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958 (VIC) and must be reported to the Police. The offence of grooming applies to any person aged 18 years or over and does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

The College will ensure that all staff members who have a concern for a child's safety must report those concerns under the provisions laid out in the College's **Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy**.

The College will follow the processes provided in the Child Safety Complaints and Concerns Policy to manage any complaint or grievance made against the College or any person associated with the College that relate to child abuse.



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

### What to do if you have a complaint

#### 1. Approach the person involved

In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing or explain what they had decided and why. In this way many situations can be resolved informally. Students or parents are encouraged to speak to a trusted staff at College such as the classroom teacher, Student Wellbeing Leader or the Leadership team about their concerns.

#### 2. Contact the College

Where you feel you cannot approach the person directly or you are not happy with their response or reaction, then you can contact the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader at the College. The Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader will advise you about what your options are in relation to your complaint or grievance.

### Procedure for making a complaint – informal or formal

A complaint can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by email and by completing the Complaints and Appeals form (which is available on the College's website).

Complaints should be raised promptly, or as soon as possible after the issue has occurred. The College expects that the complainant and College staff member receiving the complaint will:

- behave with respect and courtesy;
- treat the complaint seriously, and focus on the issue;
- act in good faith and cooperation;
- listen attentively and consider each other's point of view and role; and
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved in accordance with the College's **Privacy Policy**.

If the complainant's behaviour becomes unreasonable, or threatens the safety and wellbeing of staff or students, the staff member will:

- remain civil, and warn the complainant that the conversation will be terminated if the behaviour continues;
- ensure the safety of students and others;
- terminate the conversation (if necessary); and
- contact the Executive Principal or Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader for assistance and next steps.



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

### Formal complaint process

A formal complaint must be made in writing. The complainant will need to complete the **Complaints and Appeals form** (available on the College's website). The complainant may be supported by staff or a support person to complete the form if requested.

### Investigating Officer

All complaints raised will be forwarded to the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader who becomes the Investigating Officer who follows steps shown in **B - Escalation of an unresolved or serious complaint or grievance**.

### A - complaint involving the Executive Principal

Where the complaint involves the Executive Principal, then the Complaint and Appeals form and any supporting documentation must be submitted to the Chair of the Board via email [drl@prc.vic.edu.au](mailto:drl@prc.vic.edu.au)

The Chair of the Board or their nominee would be the Investigating Officer in this case.

The Investigating Officer will:

- acknowledge the receipt of the formal complaint within 24 hours of receiving the Complaints and Appeals form by email;
- contact the complainant within five working days to confirm mutual understanding of the complaint and discuss further steps in the complaint process;
- take the necessary steps or action required to resolve the problem in a timely manner with the relevant parties. The complainant will be given the opportunity to formally present his/her case. It is expected this will occur within 10 working days of acknowledging the formal complaint;
- any witnesses will be interviewed within 10 working days wherever possible of acknowledging the formal complaint. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially;
- document the necessary steps or action taken to resolve the complaint and the resolution; and
- formally advise the complainant in writing of the outcome within 20 working days.
- If a written outcome cannot be provided to the complainant within 20 working days, the complainant will be advised of an anticipated timeframe for resolution and provided with reason for the delay.

If the formal complaint is resolved, the Investigating Officer will:

- complete the Complaints Register with the details about the outcome and the resolution date;
- file the completed form and all supporting documents;
- monitor the implementation of any agreed actions or processes and
- report on the complaint and outcome to the Executive Principal at the next staff meeting or Board meeting (if the complaint is about Executive Principal).



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

If a complaint cannot be resolved following these internal procedures, the complaint would be escalated as per below.

### B - Escalation of an unresolved or serious complaint or grievance

- If the complaint is **deemed to be serious**, the complaint would be escalated to the Board to manage and investigate.
- If the complaint is deemed to be of a **non-serious nature** and the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader is the Investigating Officer and is unable to resolve the complaint, he/she will escalate the complaint to the Executive Principal.
- If the Executive Principal makes every effort to resolve the complaint and is unsuccessful, then the Chair of the Board or their nominee will take over as the Investigation Officer of the complaint.
- If a complaint is made against the Chair of the Board, the Board will establish a sub-committee who will manage the complaint or grievance.

### Outcome of the investigation of the complaint or grievance

Parties will be advised of the outcome of the investigation within 20 working days or as soon as possible thereafter.

If the complaint is substantiated, immediate steps will be taken to ensure that the behaviour is not repeated and appropriate action is taken.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, there may be a recommendation for an apology, clarification, mediation, disciplinary action (i.e. expulsion, suspension, termination of employment), additional training, or a commitment to cease the behaviour. Disciplinary action will be commensurate with the seriousness of the matter.

If the complaint is not substantiated (i.e. there is insufficient evidence) but some issues arise from the investigation that need to be addressed, possible outcome may include:

- targeted training;
- monitoring of behaviour;
- counselling or mentoring;
- mediation at the local level.

If a complaint is proved not to have happened at all or there is evidence the complaint was made with a purpose to cause distress, possible outcome may include:

- an apology;
- commitment to changed behaviours;
- counselling and/or additional training;
- an official warning for behaviour to cease.



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

### Appeals

- If complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or any decision made by the College about the complaint, they have seven working days to lodge an Appeal. An additional Complaints and Appeals Form must be completed and identified as an 'Appeal' in the appropriate box on the form. Any additional relevant documents must be attached to the form and submitted to the College as per the procedure for making a complaint above. The Appeal documents will be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt by the College. The complainant will be contacted within 5 working days by the Investigating Officer who will explain the Appeals process. Appeals will be managed by individuals not involved in the initial complaint.
- It should be noted that the College's Appeal process is not to listen to the complainant's evidence again but to make sure that the investigation was carried out fairly and consistently.

### Avenues of appeal

Appeals at College level:

- The Board has the responsibility of hearing any Appeals in relation to serious complaints or grievances. The Board may establish or delegate this responsibility to a sub-committee depending on the nature of the Appeal.
- The Executive Principal has the responsibility of hearing any Appeals in relation to non-serious complaints and grievances if they were not involved in the initial decision.

### Key Aspects of the VCAA Appeal Policy (School-based Assessments):

- A student can appeal penalties imposed by the school regarding breaches of VCAA rules (e.g., Cheating, Plagiarism, failure to follow authentication rules)
- A student does not have a provision to appeal a teacher's academic judgment on the marks awarded for a School-Assessed Coursework (SAC) task or the, "S" or "N" outcome for a unit.
- Where the Scholl assessed Course work outcome is "N" then PRC will provide multiple opportunities to students to resubmit their work to demonstrate "S" outcome
- Eligible students may apply for an extension of time to complete the prescribed course work

### Internal Assessment Appeals

*(This section applies to students undertaking their VET studies through the Plenty River College RTO.)*

- Students have the right to appeal an assessment decision if they believe it is incorrect or unfair. Internal assessment appeals must be submitted in writing to the Curriculum Leader /Assistant Principal within ten (10) working days of receiving the assessment outcome. The appeal must clearly outline the reasons for disputing the assessment decision and include any relevant supporting information.
- Plenty River College will provide the student with a written acknowledgement of the appeal with in ten (10) working days



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

- The Assistant Principal/Curriculum team leader will arrange for the assessment to be reviewed and, where required, Plenty River College may appoint an independent and suitably qualified assessor to conduct the review.
- Students will be advised of the outcome of the assessment appeal in writing, usually within fifteen (15) business days. If additional time is required due to special circumstances, the student will be informed. If a student requests a reassessment after receiving the outcome of the assessment appeal, the reassessment will be conducted at the student's own expense.
- Staff involved in dealing with appeal will record the details of appeal in the complaints and appeals register

### Appeals to an external body

If the complainant is unhappy with the way their complaint has been dealt with by the College, the complainant may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance. They may take their complaint to the external agency at any stage in the procedure if they are unhappy with the progress in dealing with the complaint. The agencies that would most likely have jurisdiction are:

- **The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV)** is a free dispute resolution and mediation service funded by the Victorian Government and may be able to assist in the resolution of any outstanding complaint or issue. Further information can be found at [www.disputes.vic.gov.au](http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au) or via phone 1300 372 888
- Consumer Affairs Victoria: - <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/contact-us>
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Federal): <https://humanrights.gov.au/>
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission: <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/>
- Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT): Complaints about a teacher may be made to the VIT. You should also notify Plenty River College of the complaint. For further information please refer to the VIT Conduct reporting guide for members of the community at: <https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/conduct/reporting-guide/public>
- Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA): Complaints investigated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). The VRQA is required to investigate a complaint alleging a breach of obligations by a school in relation to the democratic principles, the availability of information about the school's performance or the right of a parent or student to access information about the student's achievement. The VRQA can also investigate complaints alleging a breach of the minimum standards for school and RTO registration. A complaint must first have been raised with the school. <https://www2.vrqa.vic.gov.au/make-complaint>

### Recording Keeping

The College will record all complaints in the Complaints Register. All documents relating to the complaint including the Complaints and Appeals Form, and any supporting documents will be kept at the College in lockable drawers or cabinet. If the complaint is about a person, documents will be placed in restricted access cabinet or digital file.



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

### Communication

1. This policy will be communicated to the College community either through the College website, newsletter or via request.
2. College staff will be informed of the College’s Complaints and Grievances processes through:
  - attending the College induction program for new staff;
  - the College Teacher Handbook (for teachers);
  - training in complaints procedures, active listening, negotiation skills, conflict resolution or similar; and
  - staff meetings and communications.

<b>Related Form and Register</b>
Complaints and Appeals Form -FT080 Complaints Register
<b>Related Policies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying and Harassment Prevention</li> <li>• Child Safety and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Child Safety Complaints and Concerns Policy</li> <li>• Child Safety Reporting Obligations</li> <li>• Camps and Excursions</li> <li>• Duty of Care</li> <li>• Enrolment</li> <li>• Supervision Policy External Providers Procedure</li> <li>• Health Care Needs</li> <li>• Privacy</li> <li>• Student Behaviour Management</li> <li>• Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Legislation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</li> <li>• Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)</li> <li>• Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)</li> <li>• Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)</li> <li>• Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)</li> <li>• Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</li> </ul>



**Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026**  
**Complaints and Appeals Form -FT080**

1. By filling out this form, you will be making a formal complaint.
2. Plenty River College will treat your complaint as confidential and will adhere to privacy requirements in state and federal legislation.
3. **Your complaint will be acknowledged within 24 hours of the College receiving this form and you will be contacted within 5 working days to confirm details and discuss the next step of the complaint or appeal.**
4. This form and any supporting evidence will be kept securely on file.

<b>Name</b>			
<b>Mobile</b>		<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Email</b>			
<b>Date</b>			

**Tick as appropriate**

This is a complaint       This is an appeal

Please provide details of your complaint or appeal – include dates and times or supporting documents where possible, and add extra pages if necessary

Signature of complainant	
--------------------------	--

<b>OFFICE USE ONLY</b>			
<b>Staff Name/Signature:</b>		<b>Date received:</b>	



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

### Complaints Register

This register must be maintained by the Executive Principal and be used to evaluate the effectiveness of college complaint handling processes.

<b>Complaint Date</b>	<b>Complainant Name</b> <i>Include contact details</i>	<b>Complaint Details</b> <i>Include details of staff involved, requested resolution and how College was notified</i>	<b>Outcome</b> <i>Include all actions, meetings and communications</i>	<b>Resolution Date</b> <i>Include date complainant was notified</i>



## Complaints and Grievances Policy-PP026

<b>Document Number:</b>	PP026	<b>Developed by:</b>	Compliance
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Executive Principal	<b>Approver Name &amp; Role:</b>	PRC Board
<b>Evidence of Approval:</b>	Board Meeting	<b>Version No:</b>	V2026.02
<b>Review Due To:</b>	Internal review	<b>Date Approved:</b>	16/03/2026
<b>Next Review Due:</b>	16/03/2029		
<b>Department:</b> Compliance and Governance		School Standards: STD-Care,Safety and Welfare of Students	
		RTO Standards: Guideline 4 – Delivery of training and assessment services	

### Revision Record:

Date	Version	Revision description
10/03/2023	V2023.01	Initial Policy
16/03/2026	V2026.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re written the purpose</li> <li>• Updated the Responsibilities section</li> <li>• Added school assessment appeals information</li> <li>• Added VET assessment appeal Process</li> <li>• Added the details of external bodies</li> <li>• Removed the Diagram to avoid confusion</li> <li>• Updated and version controlled the complaint and appeals form</li> </ul>