1. Purpose

The Student Complaints and Appeals Policy Expresses Sir John Crawford Institute’s reasons for maintaining an internal system of complaints. The policy establishes complaint mechanisms applicable to all areas affecting the student experience, simultaneously providing for structural divisions between academic and administrative staff to ensure students can comfortably make complaints are consistently handled in a transparent and impartial way. The policy also establishes a framework for communicating students’ right of complaint and appeal, through reference to the Information to Students Policy. In addition, it defines the uses to which student feedback and complaints may be put, ensuring that confidentiality is preserved where applicable, and shows how the data collected from student complaints will be acted upon to resolve both individual criticisms and systemic problems.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students and staff at Sir John Crawford Institute.

3. Definition and Terms

**Complainant**: is the person or persons who lodge an oral or written complaint.

**Student**: is an individual who was or is currently enrolled at Sir John Crawford Institute as an undergraduate student.

**Respondent**: is an individual about whom a complaint is informally or formally lodged. A respondent may include one or more students, staff members or departments of Sir John Crawford Institute or associated entities.

**Conciliation**: is a process in which individuals involved in a dispute meet with a conciliator individually or separately to try to resolve an issue.

**Formal complaint**: is a complaint that is written and submitted to Sir John Crawford Institute following clauses 4 of the procedures within this policy.

4. Policy Principles

At Sir John Crawford Institute, it is expected that students will from time to time have complaints and seek appeals for academic and non-academic issues. At Sir John Crawford
Institute, a complaint is an oral or written record of dissatisfaction regarding a student or member of staff in which a response or resolution is expected. It may express dissatisfaction with a student's rights, interests and/or expectations that they believe have been negatively impacted as a result of an action, decision or omission that is within control or responsibility of Sir John Crawford Institute. The subject of a complaint may include current and former staff, students, or individuals who are associated with Sir John Crawford Institute staff and who are within the control or responsibility of Sir John Crawford Institute. Any circumstance related to Sir John Crawford Institute operations, services, and decisions, or the conduct of its staff, its students, or people associated with Sir John Crawford Institute or using Sir John Crawford Institute facilities may be the subject of a complaint.

All Sir John Crawford Institute staff members are expected to follow Sir John Crawford Institute’s rules and policies fairly and without favour. All students have the right to have a complaint recognised verbally or recorded through written communications. The complainant and respondent(s) have a right to procedural fairness. This includes:

- The right to be heard;
- The right to be treated without bias or discrimination;
- The right to have a reasonable opportunity to prepare and present a case and to have the case considered justly;
- A decision that is based on the evidence;
- The right to a fair and transparent procedure when a decision is being made;
- The right to have Sir John Crawford Institute respond quickly and discreetly to resolve all complaints;
- The right to be informed of the outcome of a complaint.

If the student is enrolled at Sir John Crawford Institute, his or her current status will remain in effect during the time of the complaint lodging, resolution and/or appeal process.

5. Policy Procedures

Informal complaint resolution
Students are encouraged to initially approach the staff member or representative of a Sir John Crawford Institute entity for which they wish to make a complaint, and attempt to resolve the concern directly with that individual or department head in an informal manner. With reasonable consideration, all staff members are encouraged to attempt to find a fair resolution to the students' concern as deemed appropriate. This resolution method enables parties to consider options and make individual decisions without having third-party intervention.
Students are also encouraged to seek advice from an individual who is independent of the complaint process. This may include a Sir John Crawford Institute student advocate or an appropriate staff or faculty member. The student and the independent individual should consider the following questions:

- Is the complaint reasonable?
- What are the details of the specific event or incident, the basis for the event and the desired outcome of the complaint resolution?
- Is the complaint best resolved through informal or formal actions?

**Options to proceed with a formal complaint**

If a satisfactory resolution is not implemented through informal communications, the student has two options:

- Make an appointment with a Student Contact Officer (SCO) who will attempt to assist and facilitate the resolution process.
- Send an email with a formal complaint to the Chief Executive Officer’s (CEO’s) Office

All formally written complaints should include all available documentation to support the student’s claims.

**The formal complaint must meet the following criteria:**

- Be in writing
- Be dated and signed by the student
- Include the student number and contact information (address and phone number)
- Include a clear and detailed description of the complaint and include names of related individuals, times, dates and places so that related parties can respond
- Include information about any witnesses or supporting party and their contact information
- Include any supporting evidence that is relevant to the complaint
- Provide details regarding any actions that have been taken to date to work toward a resolution and the outcome of those actions
- Include the outcome that the student believes is fair and equitable considering the complaint

Sir John Crawford Institute will not accept a formal complaint that is submitted more than 12 calendar months after the initial action or notification of a decision that is the subject of the complaint, unless there are extraordinary circumstances as determined by the CEO’s Office. If a formal complaint is submitted, Sir John Crawford Institute will acknowledge receipt within five business days.
No new evidence should be provided during the complaint process unless:
- The information was not available during the lodging of the initial complaint, and
- The information has great bearing on the potential outcome of the resolution.

The student has the right to withdraw a complaint at any time.

Complaint investigation
A Sir John Crawford Institute conciliator will then investigate the complaint. If warranted, the CEO’s office may:
- Interview the student who lodged the complaint
- Interview any related and/or relevant staff, students and other individuals
- Hold a meeting with the parties involved
- Seek advice from other appropriate staff or students

The Sir John Crawford Institute conciliator has the right to assess the complaint and determine that it is without warrant, is frivolous or is vexatious and dismiss the complaint. The complainant will be notified in a timely manner if the complaint is dismissed. In any meetings, discussions or interviews in which a student participates during the complaint review process, the student may be accompanied by another individual whom he/she designates as a support person. A support person cannot be an individual who is involved or alleged to be involved in or has any association to the subject matter of the complaint.

If a student is required to be present during any meeting, the student must be notified at least ten working days in advance. The notification must include the following:
- Place, date and time
- Any required documentation or other materials that the student needs to bring to the meeting
- Any other materials or other matters that the student will be expected to present or address during the meeting

If the student or other individuals scheduled for an interview or meeting do not attend at the notified time, the complaint review process will proceed. The process begins within ten business days of the formal lodgment of the complaint or appeal. If the complaint relates to a charge of discrimination or harassment, the conciliator is required to seek advice from the CEO’s office. A decision does not preclude the student from seeking a review of the complaint by an external individual or entity. The decision and any resulting actions must be made allowable by the staff member who has reviewed the complaint or another staff member who has the authority.

Notification of the determination or outcome or resolution
The decision regarding the complaint or appeal is recorded in a written statement of outcome that includes the following information:

- The process that was used to fairly and efficiently resolve the complaint
- The final determination of the complaint and the reasoning that was used to support the determination
- Any agreement that was made by the complainant and the respondent
- State any specific actions that were or will be taken as a result of the complaint

Results of all complaints and appeals are communicated in writing to related individuals in a timely manner. A copy of the communication is kept on file in the complaints register and the student’s individual file.

The appeal process

If the student is dissatisfied with a decision related to the code of conduct, attendance or discipline, he/she may refer the matter to Student Administration. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision or there is no decision made by conciliator, he/she may bring the matter to the attention of the CEO’s office. In the case of receiving a warning letter relating to attendance and academic progress or payment that a student disagrees with, a student may appeal the decision.

All appeals must be lodged within 20 working days of the date on the initial complaint-finding letter. The letter must include the following:

- The exact determinations which are being appealed;
- All relevant evidence;
- A clear description of why the student believes the process used by the conciliator or his/her finding is procedurally flawed or unjust;
- An appeal statement prepared by the student must not exceed 10 pages in length.

The responsible officer must acknowledge receipt of the statement in writing in a timely manner. If the statement fails to adhere to the procedures outlined in sections of this policy, it may be returned to the complainant. The complainant has ten working days to provide a revised appeal.

The responsible officer is required to prepare a set of documents related to the initial determination and deliver said documents in a timely manner to the conciliator and/or appeal committee for further examination.

The appeal committee will consider the initial complaint finding, the student appeal statement and any supporting documents or new evidence that has been supplied.
If the appeal committee determines that the student has a case that requires further consideration, it will take reasonable steps to further investigate the matter before making a final conclusion regarding the complaint.

The appeal committee has the option to uphold the consideration or to change the decision and take further action against the respondent.

The appeal committee will document their opinion regarding the validity of the complaint and outline actions it deems necessary to address and or resolve the complaint within 10 working days of the decision. The statement of findings will include:

- A clear explanation of its decision and reasons for the finding;
- A clear explanation of any actions that were or will be taken as a result of the findings;
- A clear explanation of any procedural changes that the committee deems necessary at Sir John Crawford Institute.

**Complaint withdrawal rules**

A student is allowed to withdraw a complaint at any time during the resolution process. A complaint must be withdrawn in writing and delivered to the relevant Sir John Crawford Institute staff member who is overseeing the process. Upon receipt of the written communication, the complaint will typically be discontinued.

Complaints that are deemed malicious or provoking

If repeated complaints from the same student are found to be malicious or vexatious, action may be taken against the student resulting in suspension of enrolment.

**Additional complaint resolution steps**

All students are encouraged to follow the procedures outlined in the policy to resolve issues they have with fellow students or staff at Sir John Crawford Institute. Students have a right to access and utilise any appropriate external organisation to resolve their complaint. If any external processes are initiated by the student, the complainant must notify Sir John Crawford Institute of their decision to take the complaint to an external body. In this case, Sir John Crawford Institute will immediately terminate the internal complaint process. If there is a cessation of proceedings before a resolution is determined, all decisions and agreements resulting from these procedures will be void. The cessation will be noted in all records.
6. Policy Review

The Student Complaints and Appeals Policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Corporate Governance Board in consultation with the Academic Board. This policy may be updated more frequently should the need arise.

7. Appendix

Sir John Crawford Institute provides a statistical tabulation and non-identifying information regarding the total number of complaints and appeals received, and the types and outcomes in its Annual Report.