



Feedback, Suggestions, Concerns and Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

Seymour College is committed to providing good practices through efficient, fair and accessible mechanisms to seek feedback and suggestions, and to handle concerns and resolve complaints. The College encourages members of the community to offer feedback and raise issues as it provides the opportunity for continuous improvement in services and efficiencies, and overall effectiveness.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a fair, consistent and structured process for members of the Seymour College community to give feedback, offer suggestions and express concerns or make complaints.

Seymour College values feedback and suggestions and wants to ensure members of the Seymour community are easily able to raise concerns and complaints should they arise. This policy is intended to ensure that the College has a structured approach to capture feedback, consider suggestions, and handle concerns and complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

The College Feedback, Suggestions, Concerns and Complaints Policy is intended to:

- strengthen relationships with our community;
- provide information that can be used by the College to deliver quality improvements;
- address complaints efficiently and effectively;
- increase transparency and accountability to our community;
- track feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints to generate quantitative reports for leadership and the Board on hotspots within the College, and be agile in responding to opportunities; and
- provide data from the feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and use it to inform improvement in services, efficiencies and overall effectiveness.

Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- fairness – all feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints will be treated with procedural fairness, impartiality and transparency at all stages;
- responsiveness – taking into consideration the complexity of the matter, all matters raised will be resolved in a timely manner; and
- efficiency – those involved in the management of this policy will have the required skills, knowledge and resources to manage the process.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff receiving or managing feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints made to, or about, the College regarding services, staff and procedures.

Organisational Commitment

Seymour College expects staff at all levels to be committed to actively seeking feedback for continuous improvement and to take all concerns and complaints seriously and seek to resolve them closest to the source of the issue. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
Principal	Promote a culture that values feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and their effective handling and appropriate resolution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular reporting on Seymour College's feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaint handling.• Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for actioning feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints.• Regularly review reports on feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and issues arising from them.• Encourage all staff to seek feedback and be alert to feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and assist those responsible for handling concerns and complaints to manage them promptly.• Encourage staff to make recommendations to continuously improve Seymour College's service culture.• Recognise and reward good handling of this policy by staff.• Support recommendations for improvements arising from analysis of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaint data.
Executive	Manage the College's feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaint management system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act as Complaints Officers when concerns and complaints cannot be resolved by teachers or other members of staff.• Provide regular reports to the Principal on issues arising from feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaint handling work.• Ensure recommendations arising out of data analysis are implemented where appropriate.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train and empower staff to handle feedback and suggestions and resolve concerns and complaints promptly, closest to the source of the issue and in accordance with policies and procedures. • Encourage staff to provide suggestions on ways to improve the College's feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints management system. • Encourage all staff to be alert to feedback, suggestions and concerns and assist those responsible for handling complaints to manage and resolve them promptly. • Recognise and reward good management of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints by staff.
All Staff	<p>Demonstrate exemplary feedback and complaint handling practices.</p> <p>Understand and comply with Seymour College's complaint handling practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage feedback and be alert to concerns and complaints. • Assist people to give feedback, offer suggestions, express concerns and make complaints, if needed. • Comply with this policy and its associated procedures. • Be alert to feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and assist staff to resolve matters promptly. • Provide feedback to Executive on issues arising from feedback and concerns. • Provide suggestions on continuous improvement at Seymour College. • Implement improvement changes arising from feedback and concerns and from the analysis and evaluation of data as directed by the Executive. • Report all feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints received using the management system. • Escalate items of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints received to the relevant member of the Executive and Principal if not able to be resolved.
Coordinator of Community Relations	Daily monitoring and delegation of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints received through the management system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints daily and delegate them to appropriate Executive staff. • Tabulate data to assist with the development of reports.

2. Terms and definitions

Feedback

Feedback is opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about the College and about the College's services.

Suggestions

Suggestions are ideas or plans put forward by the community for Seymour College to consider.

Concern

A concern is a worry which a member of the community has about a situation at Seymour College or relating to Seymour College students or members of Seymour College staff.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to, or about, the College, its services or staff, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Feedback, Suggestions, Concerns and Complaint Management System

All policies, procedures and practices used by the College in the management of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints.

Dispute

An unresolved matter regarding feedback, a suggestion, concern or complaint escalated to the Principal.

Service Request

The definition of a service request will vary; however, it is likely to include:

- requests for approval;
- requests for action;
- routine inquiries about the College's business;
- requests for the provision of services and assistance; and
- requests for explanation of policies, procedures and decisions.

Policy

A statement of instruction that sets out how the College should fulfil its vision, values and purpose.

Procedure

A statement or instruction that sets out how the College's policies will be implemented and by whom.

3. Managing Feedback, Suggestions, Concerns and Complaints

3.1 Facilitate feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints

Community focus

The College is committed to seeking and receiving feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints about the College's services, systems, practices and procedures.

Members of the College community who give feedback, offer suggestions, express concerns and make complaints will be:

- provided with information about the College's policies;
- provided with multiple and accessible ways to offer feedback and suggestions, express concerns or make complaints;
- listened to, treated with respect by staff, and actively involved in the process where possible and appropriate; and
- provided with reasons for the College's response, decision(s) and any options for redress or review.

No detriment to people giving feedback, offering suggestions, expressing concerns and making complaints.

The College welcomes all feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and expressly forbids adverse treatment of any community member, student or member of staff who provides feedback, makes a suggestion, expresses a concern or lodges a complaint. The College will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people giving feedback, offering suggestions, expressing concerns and making complaints are not adversely affected by their actions.

Anonymous complaints

The College accepts anonymous feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

Accessibility

The College will ensure that information about how and where feedback is given, suggestions are made, concerns are expressed, and complaints are put to, or about the College, is well publicised. The College will also ensure that systems to manage feedback, suggestions and concerns are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them, the College will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone identified by a person giving feedback, offering a suggestion, expressing a concern and making a complaint may be represented by another person with their consent (eg advocate, family member, legal or community representative).

3.2 Respond to feedback, suggestions and concerns and complaints

Early resolution

Where possible, feedback suggestions, concerns and complaints will be received, responded to and resolved at first contact with the College.

Responsiveness

The College will promptly acknowledge receipt of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints.

The College will access and prioritise feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter creates an immediate risk to safety or security, the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

Timeframes are dependent on the complexity of the feedback, suggestion, concern or complaint, with an initial response expected within 48 hours and a resolution, if required, within 30 days of receipt. Complainants will be advised upfront of the likely timeframe required to investigate a matter and updated on progress where necessary. Timeframes may change as matters progress.

The College is committed to managing our community's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints process;
- the expected timeframes for College actions;
- the progress of the issue and the reasons for any delay;
- their likely involvement in the process; and
- the possible or likely outcome of their feedback, suggestion, concern or complaint.

Objectivity and fairness

The College will address each item of feedback, suggestion, concern or complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

The person handling the matter will be different from any staff member involved. Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints are managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Responding flexibly

The College staff are empowered to respond to feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and with as little formality as possible. The College will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints and/or their representatives.

The College will assess each matter on its merits and engage people involved and/or their representative in the process as far as practicable.

Confidentiality

The College will protect the identity of people making feedback, suggestions or expressing concerns and complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed, or used by the College as permitted, under the relevant privacy laws.

3.3 Manage the parties involved in feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints

Feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints involving multiple agencies

Where feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints involve other organisations, the College will work with the other organisation(s) where possible, to ensure that communication with the person(s) and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between the parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response.

Where the issue involves multiple areas within the College, responsibility for communicating with the person(s) and/or their representative will also be coordinated.

When the College services are contracted out, the College expects contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive feedback management system. The College takes feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints, not only about the actions of College staff, but also the actions of the service providers.

Feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints involving multiple parties

When feedback, suggestions, concerns or complaints are made by related parties, the College will endeavour to arrange to communicate with a single representative of the group.

Empowerment of staff

All staff managing feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints are empowered to implement the College's management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of the College's management system.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people giving feedback, offering suggestions, expressing concerns and making complaints

The College is committed to being accessible and responsive to all community members, parents and caregivers who approach the College with feedback, suggestions, concerns or complaints. At the same time the College's success depends on:

- the ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible;
- the health, safety and security of College staff; and
- the ability to allocate the College's resources fairly.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with the College, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of the College's work. As a result, the College will take proactive and decisive action to manage any unreasonable conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects the College and will support College staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

4. Feedback, Suggestions, Concerns and Complaint Management System

While responding to feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints from the community, staff should act in accordance with this policy as well as any other relevant policies and guidelines.

The five key stages in the College's management system are set out below:

1) Receipt of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints

Unless the issue has been resolved at the outset, the College will record the details in a Register, and including any supporting information. The Register of the feedback, suggestion, concern or complaint will document:

- the contact information of the person giving feedback, making a suggestion, expressing a concern or making a complaint;
- issues raised by the person and the outcome(s) they seek;
- any other relevant information; and
- any additional support the person requires.

2) Acknowledgement of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints

The College will acknowledge receipt of each feedback, suggestion, concern or complaint promptly. Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (eg telephone, email, letter) for communicating with the person involved.

3) Acknowledgement of feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints

Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt, the College will confirm whether the issue(s) and matter(s) raised is/are within the College's control. The College will also consider the outcome(s) sought by the person and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed. When determining how the matter will be managed, the College will consider:

- how serious, complicated or urgent the matter is;
- whether the matter raises concern about people's health and safety;
- how the person involved is being affected;
- the risks involved if response and resolution is delayed; and
- whether the involvement of other organisations is required.

Addressing feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints

After initial assessment of the matter, the College will consider how to manage it. The College may:

- give the person information or an explanation;
- gather information from the person or area that the matter is about; and/or
- investigate the matter.

The College will keep the person giving feedback, making a suggestion, expressing a concern or making a complaint up to date on the progress, particularly if there are any delays.

The College will also communicate the outcome as appropriate using the most suitable medium. Which actions the College decides to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

4) Providing reasons for decisions

Following consideration of the matter, and any investigation into the issues raised, the College will contact the person involved and advise them of:

- the outcome of the response or investigation and any action the College took;
- the reason(s) for the response or decision;
- the outcome, remedy or resolution(s) that the College has proposed or put in place; and
- any options for review that may be available.

5) Closing the matter, record keeping, redress and review

The College will keep comprehensive records about:

- how the feedback, suggestion, concern or complaint was managed;
- the outcome(s), including as appropriate, whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified, and any decisions made on those recommendations; and
- any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

The College will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to those involved, including the Executive and/or the Principal, and the Board.

Alternative avenues

If the outcome of the process is not accepted and all avenues to resolve the matter, including the Principal, have been used, the matter should be raised, in writing, to the Chair of the Seymour College Board.

5. Accountability and Learning

Analysis and evaluation

The feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints information will be retrieved for reporting and analysis. Regular reports will be run on:

- the amount of feedback and number of suggestions, concerns and complaints received;
- the outcomes, including matters resolved at the frontline;
- issues arising from feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints;
- systemic issues identified; and
- the number of requests the College receives for internal and/or external review of matters and issues raised.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of the College's feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints management system and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided to the College Executive, the Principal and the College Board for review.

Monitoring of the management system

The College will continually monitor the feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints management system to:

- ensure effectiveness in responding to and resolving matters; and
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

Monitoring may include the use of audits, satisfaction surveys and other tools.

Continuous improvement

The College is committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the feedback, suggestions, concerns and complaints management system. To this end, the College will:

- support the giving of feedback, offering of suggestions, expressing concerns and making complaints and appropriate responses and resolution;
- implement best practices;
- recognise and reward exemplary handling by staff;
- regularly review the management system and data; and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of the College's analysis of data and continual monitoring of the system.

6. Items excluded from this policy

The following matters are excluded from this policy and associated procedure:

- serious misconduct, safety and child protection issues;
- complaints made by an employee of the College which relate to an issue of his or her employment;
- grievances by staff about other staff members (refer to the Staff Grievance Policy); and
- the complaint is frivolous or vexatious.

7. Communication to the Seymour College Staff

This policy is available on the Seymour College intranet.

8. Communication to the Seymour College Community

This policy is available on the Seymour College website and SOCS.

9. Related policies and documents

- Staff Grievance Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Code of Conduct