

# Disclosures, Complaints and Investigations Policy

## Sancta Sophia College

### 1. Introduction

Sancta Sophia College is home to a vibrant community of people from across Australia and the world.

Each of us is entitled to live, study and work in a safe and supportive environment - and to respect and safeguard the right of others to do so.

In a residential community such as Sancta, conflict and disagreement can arise. Support is available from Sancta's pastoral team (Principal, Vice Principal, Dean of Students and Resident Assistants) when things go wrong, be it to help you resolve conflict and disagreements, or to raise complaints about serious matters.

This *Disclosures, Complaints and Investigations Policy* outlines pathways for seeking advice when problems arise, and for informally or formally reporting matters of concern. It is a guide to what you can expect when making a complaint, or if a complaint is made about you. It also details consequences for breaches of Sancta's policies.

In responding to disclosures and complaints, the College is committed to procedural fairness and just outcomes. All parties - complainants and respondents - will receive support and guidance through what can be a stressful time.

### 2. Purpose

This policy:

- defines disclosures and informal reports
- defines complaints and formal reports
- explains how disclosures or complaints can be made
- explains what to expect in an investigation
- explains support options

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the College community, including students, staff, Council members, contractors, visitors and entities undertaking activities on our behalf.

### 4. Preliminary note: matters relating to sexual harm and gender-based violence

While this policy applies to complaints about any breach of Sancta rules or policies, there are additional supports and policy requirements in cases of sexual harm or gender-based violence. If you wish to make a disclosure or complaint, or are in need of support, regarding a matter of sexual harm or gender-based violence, you may wish to read Sancta's *Sexual*

*Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy*, or talk with a member of Sancta's pastoral care team. Alternatively, the Safer Communities Office of the University of Sydney can provide support and advice.

#### **4. Defining disclosures and informal reports**

At Sancta, the terms 'disclosure' and 'informal report' mean the same thing. A disclosure or informal report occurs when a person shares information about a policy or rule breach with Sancta. A disclosure or informal report may be made:

- to seek help or advice
- to explore options or seek information when considering a complaint or formal report
- to make Sancta aware of an issue or incident

You can make a disclosure or informal report:

- using RespectX (select 'informal report')
- in person to your RA, Principal, Vice Principal or Dean of Students
- by email to the Principal ([principal@sancta.edu.au](mailto:principal@sancta.edu.au)) or Vice Principal ([viceprincipal@sancta.edu.au](mailto:viceprincipal@sancta.edu.au))

Disclosures can be made anonymously using RespectX.

When you make a disclosure or informal report, you can talk over the issues that are concerning you, seek advice as to what to do next or how to get the help you want or need, obtain information about options if you are considering making a complaint or formal report.

Generally speaking, disclosures and informal reports are not investigated. Exceptions are made when:

- the College is required to do so by law or regulation
- there is an apparent risk to the health or safety of any person

If you make a disclosure, you can later make a complaint or formal report about the same matter.

#### **5. Defining complaints and formal reports**

At Sancta, the terms 'complaint' and 'informal report' mean the same thing. A complaint or formal report is made when you are asking Sancta to take action in response to a rule or policy breach involving someone at Sancta.

You can make a complaint or formal report:

- using RespectX (select 'formal report')
- in person to the Principal or Vice Principal
- by email to the Principal ([principal@sancta.edu.au](mailto:principal@sancta.edu.au)) or Vice Principal ([viceprincipal@sancta.edu.au](mailto:viceprincipal@sancta.edu.au))

Complaints and formal reports can be made anonymously using RespectX.

When making a complaint or formal report, the Principal or Vice Principal will seek your views on how you would like the matter handled, and what outcome you are hoping for. This will be taken into consideration.

You can withdraw a complaint once it is made, however, the Principal or Vice Principal may deem it necessary to continue with an investigation for your safety, the safety of others or the good order of Sancta.

## **6. Deciding whether to make a complaint or disclosure**

There is no right or wrong when deciding to make a complaint (formal report) or disclosure (informal report). If you are unsure about making a complaint or a disclosure, it might be a good idea to start with a disclosure (informal report). This way you can get any support you need, and talk over what a complaint or investigation might involve. At any time you can ask for your disclosure to become a complaint.

## **7. Accessible and anonymous reporting, and RespectX**

In 2025, the Australian Government introduced the *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (National Code)*. The Code requires that higher education providers must ensure disclosures and complaints can be made anonymously.

Sancta supports anonymous disclosure and complaints regarding all matters, not only those pertaining to gender-based violence and sexual harm. One way in which this is possible is through RespectX.

RespectX is a reporting platform to which Sancta subscribes. Students, staff and others can make disclosures (informal reports) and complaints (formal reports) through the platform, and also confidentially raise concerns about your own or another person's wellbeing. Reports made on the platform can be made anonymously if preferred.

When a report is made through Respect X it is seen only by the Principal and Vice Principal. You can expect a response from them on the next business day. The RespectX platform supports text conversation to happen, even when a report is anonymous. RespectX is a highly secure system, and your identity cannot be revealed if you do not wish to disclose it.

When making a report on RespectX, you will be asked for your name. You can simply skip this question when wishing to remain anonymous.

## **8. What happens once a disclosure or complaint is made**

Whether you make a disclosure or complaint, Sancta's first concern will be for your wellbeing. The Principal or Vice Principal will contact you to:

- make sure you are okay and talk about support options if needed
- make sure they understand the issues you have raised
- assess if there are risks to you or anyone else, and take steps to keep you safe
- discuss options of what to do next
- confirm if you would like the matter treated as a disclosure/informal report or complaint/formal report

Following this, in consultation with you, a plan will be formed outlining the next steps.

## **9. Disclosures / informal reports**

After that initial discussion, if you decide you do not want action taken, Sancta will treat the matter as a disclosure. This means:

- a record will be kept of your concerns

- any support needs you have can be discussed
- discussion can occur regarding strategies or approaches you can use (if that is what you want)
- referrals can be made for you, or details of relevant services provided

You can later ask that your disclosure be treated as a complaint.

## **10. Complaints / formal reports**

After initial discussion, if you decide you want action taken, Sancta will treat the matter as a complaint. Discussion of options for how you would like your complaint handled will take place, and your preferences will be considered.

Options may include assisted resolution or investigation. Both options have pros and cons, and these will be discussed with you

## **11. Assisted resolution**

Assisted resolution is an informal process whereby options such as the following can be considered:

- the Principal or Vice Principal having a discussion with the person against whom the complaint is made. This is not a formal process, but can be useful in supporting learning and insight about how unwanted behaviours are experienced by others
- facilitated discussion between both parties, if agreed to by both parties
- agreement between both parties to avoid further incidents

Assisted resolution is not always appropriate, especially in cases of serious misconduct, where someone is at risk, or where it has been used before and failed to result in behaviour change. It is also not appropriate where one or other party is unwilling to participate in such a process.

## **12. Investigation**

If your complaint suggests a breach of Sancta rules or policy by someone at Sancta, investigation may take place. Factors considered in determining if an investigation is required relate to:

- the wishes of the complainant
- the nature and seriousness of the allegation
- the level of risk to any person
- legal or regulatory requirements

An investigation will generally be led by the Principal, Vice Principal or member of Sancta's executive team.

The investigator will provide the respondent with:

- enough details of the allegation/s to ensure they have a reasonable opportunity to respond
- reasonable time to respond

The investigator may choose to interview or seek further information from other sources. The investigator may impose confidentiality requirements on all parties to an investigation.

The investigator assesses all information and makes a finding. Findings are made on the balance of probabilities (whereby the investigator is satisfied that the alleged conduct is more - or less - likely to have occurred than not).

Following the conclusion of an investigation, the complainant and respondent will be advised in writing of the:

- finding of the investigation
- any disciplinary consequences emanating from that finding
- details of any right to appeal

In some cases it may be necessary or preferable for the University to investigate the same matter that has been raised at Sancta. In such cases, so as to avoid the same matter being investigated twice, Sancta will cooperate with the University's investigation and use the University findings to base decisions on.

### **13. Timeliness**

Timeliness is an important principle of any investigation. Every effort will be made to provide a speedy resolution to the matter, notwithstanding challenges that may arise in the collection of evidence (for example, availability of a witness to provide testimony). Both complainants and respondents will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and advised of any issues that may arise.

### **14. Disciplinary action**

Where an allegation is upheld, disciplinary action is determined on the basis of the seriousness of the allegation, the past conduct and behaviour of the respondent, the impact on the complainant, and principles of natural justice.

Disciplinary action includes, but is not limited to:

- reprimand
- warning
- removal or rights or privileges
- moving of rooms
- suspension
- expulsion

### **15. Appeals**

If a respondent or complainant disagrees with a finding made through investigation, or with any disciplinary action taken, they may appeal, in writing, to the Chair of the Sancta Sophia College Council Ms Beth Boustead, at: [bethboustead@gmail.com](mailto:bethboustead@gmail.com)

### **16. Vexatious complaints**

People must not make a vexatious or malicious complaint.

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint will be considered vexatious or malicious if it is found that the complaint has been made by someone:

- i. knowing it to be false; and
- ii. for the primary purpose of damaging Sancta or the person against whom the complaint is made.

Making a vexatious complaint will result in disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the College.

Complaints made in good faith will not be considered vexatious, even if mistakenly made.

### **17. Complaints or grievances regarding a member of staff**

If the complaint relates to a staff member of the College, the matter should be raised directly with the Principal.

Should the complaint relate to the College Principal it should be put in writing to the Chair of the Sancta Sophia College Council, Ms Beth Boustead, at: [bethboustead@gmail.com](mailto:bethboustead@gmail.com)

### **18. Record keeping**

All records collected, generated or used as part of the resolution or determination of a complaint under these procedures will be stored confidentially.

### **19. Complaints regarding people outside of Sancta**

If a person alleges conduct by a person over whom Sancta has no jurisdiction, Sancta will support the complainant to find the appropriate avenue of complaint.

### **20. External assistance and advice**

Sancta will make every effort to resolve complaints internally.

Sancta may support a complainant to raise their concern with the University or other college or agency if their complaint relates to a person over whom Sancta has no authority or conduct that is not related to Sancta.

The Sancta portal includes a 'Supports and Services' link that contains contact details for a broad range of relevant support services. Alternatively, a member of Sancta's pastoral support team can assist you find the right support for your circumstances.

Students or staff covered by this policy may also elect to contact any of the following for advice (if applicable):

- (a) [National Student Ombudsman](#)
- (b) [Fair Work Commission](#)
- (c) [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
- (d) [NSW Anti-Discrimination Board](#)
- (e) [SafeWork NSW](#)

### **21. Related documents**

- *Sancta Sophia College Code of Conduct*
- *Sancta Sophia College Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy*
- *Sancta Sophia College Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Hazing Policy*
- *Sancta Sophia College Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy*
- *University of Sydney Resolution of Complaints Policy and Student Complaints Procedures 2025*
- *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence*