

General Complaint Policy

I. Purpose

Highland Academy Charter School takes seriously all concerns or complaints by students, employees, parents or other persons. If a specific complaint procedure is provided within any other policy of Highland Academy Charter School, the specific procedure shall be followed in reference to such a complaint. If a specific complaint procedure is not provided, the purpose of this policy is to provide a procedure that may be used. The following complaint procedure should be employed to ensure that complaints receive full consideration.

II. Use of the General Complaint Process

Highland Academy's complaint process should be used as follows:

- A. to deal with complaints and concerns pertaining to the educational environment, employment arrangements, or interpersonal conflicts
- B. to allege violations of federal or state law, or of the school's charter

III. Confidentiality

All documentation and information related to an investigation conducted as a result of a complaint is considered confidential and is not to be revealed or discussed by any participant with persons not involved with the complaint or decision-making process.

IV. Informal Complaints

Because most difficulties can be resolved by communicating a concern to someone, complainants are encouraged to discuss their concern or complaint promptly and candidly with their immediate supervisor, student's teacher, or school administrator. The complainant is not required to discuss his/her complaint with the alleged harasser or perpetrator in any manner or for any reason prior to initiating a formal complaint.

V. The Formal Complaint Process

- A. Fill out a Complaint Form, available at the school's front office or on the website. In the Complaint Form, complainants should describe the nature of the complaint and any steps taken so far to resolve the issue. The Complaint Form should be submitted to a member of school administration in the front office. Complaint Forms must be submitted within 15 days of encountering the issue that is the subject of the complaint.
- B. The school will form a 3 person panel consisting of a school administrator, a classified staff member, and a certificated staff member. All panel members must be neutral and cannot be a part of the complaint. When necessary, a member of the Board can be a part of the Panel in lieu of a person listed in this section.
- C. The Panel will initiate an adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of the complaint. This will include interviewing witnesses, obtaining any relevant documents, and allowing parties to present evidence. *All documentation related to the investigation is considered highly confidential and is not to be revealed or discussed by any participant with persons not directly involved with the complaint or decision-making process.*

- D. The investigation will be concluded within 10 school days of receiving the complaint unless “exceptional circumstances” justify a more expedited response. The amount of time granted for an exceptional circumstance will be determined on an individual case basis.
- E. The Panel will prepare a final report that will be submitted to (1) The Director and (2) The Board of Directors. The final report will give the name of the party bringing the complaint, the nature of the complaint, a of summary of the investigation, and recommended action (if any) to be taken against the employee as spelled out in the school’s Employee Progressive Discipline Policy.
- F. The Panel will also prepare a letter for the complainant notifying them in writing that the complaint was investigated, handled appropriately, and the matter is closed. The Panel cannot divulge the findings or what action was taken, if any, because doing so would violate the employee's privacy rights.
- G. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Panel’s response, he/she may file an appeal to the entire Board of Directors. All appeals must be in writing and include the reason for appeal. Appeals must be submitted within 10 school days of receiving the response.
- H. The Board of Directors will conduct their own investigation upon receiving the appeal. This process may include an interview with the Panel members to discuss the rationale and an invitation for the complainant to meet with the Board to discuss why they feel the Panel erred in their original findings.
- I. The Board will issue a final written resolution within 10 school days of receiving the appeal.

VI. Prohibition Against Retaliation

Highland Academy will not retaliate against any person who files a complaint in accordance with this policy, or any person who participates in proceedings related to this policy. In addition, Highland Academy will not tolerate any form of retaliation against any person who makes a good faith report or who cooperates in an investigation of a complaint. Any person who is found to be engaging in any kind of retaliation will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

VII. Modification

Highland Academy may approve modification of the foregoing procedures in a particular case if the modification is for good cause and does not violate the due process rights or the complainant or any policies of Highland Academy.

VIII. Contact Information

The contact information for the school Director and Board President can be found on the school’s website.

IX. Other Remedies

This complaint process does not bar complainants from filing claims in other forums to the extent permitted by state and federal law.

HIGHLAND ACADEMY
CHARTER SCHOOL

Complaint Form

Section 1 - General Information

Name of Complainant:	Date:
Best way to contact you: (phone and/or email)	

Section 2 - The Complaint

Please outline the general nature of your complaint providing as many details as possible including locations, dates, times, and names of people involved. Continue on a separate piece of paper if necessary.

I understand that investigation and resolution of this complaint will follow the Formal Complaint Process found in the school's General Complaint Policy.

Signature:	Date:
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