



# KESSER TORAH COLLEGE

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## KESSER TORAH COLLEGE GUIDELINES FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

1. Kesser Torah College (**KTC**) aims to maintain a happy and productive environment, one in which our whole community (our staff, students and the families of students) can work together towards the education of our students.
2. One element in achieving this kind of environment is an effective complaints resolution process; a process which gives members of the KTC community confidence that their issues of concern – which might also be called grievances or complaints – are properly dealt with. We believe that an effective complaints resolution process is consistent with KTC's objectives and core values of Derech Eretz and a Nurturing Environment, as well as our obligations under Halacha and Australian law.
3. These guidelines are intended to provide assistance to members of the KTC community who wish to bring a complaint to the attention of KTC, by providing an understanding of:
  - a. what you can do if you have a complaint (including any concern, grievance or problem) about something that has happened at KTC; and
  - b. how a complaint might be resolved.
4. These guidelines are not intended to be definitive, or prescriptive. They do not form part of any contract. Instead, they give some guidance about options and processes that might be used.
5. If a KTC staff member wishes to bring a complaint, he/she should refer to the Staff Guidelines for Resolving Complaints at KTC.

### What does KTC aim to do?

1. KTC aims to address all concerns/complaints, and to treat these as expeditiously, fairly and confidentially as possible.
2. We are particularly concerned about any issues which might relate to a breach of the law. Particularly relevant are KTC's legal obligations, and the obligations of the KTC community more generally, in respect of:
  - a. discrimination (including harassment and vilification);
  - b. workplace health and safety (including bullying);
  - c. child protection; and
  - d. the duty of care that KTC has to its students.
3. We also want KTC community members to feel comfortable to raise other concerns or issues. These guidelines apply to all types of issues of concern which community members might raise.

## Who to see for what:

### *Educational matters, or matters in general (other than complaints related to fees)*

1. **Please note:** Educational and operational concerns/complaints are referred to the **College Principal** and the **professional staff** and not the President of the Board or members of the Kesser Torah Board. If a concern is “subject-specific”, you should generally first contact the class teacher (Primary School) or Subject Teacher (High School). If the concern is “social” in nature or wider than a specific subject, you should contact the STAV/Year Convenor/Head of Welfare (High School) or Head of the Primary School.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at this level, or if it is inappropriate to go to the teacher (for example if the complaint is about the teacher and/or you do not feel comfortable discussing it with her/him), you should contact the relevant member of the Senior Management Team:
  - For ECC/ CRELS concerns: Director of Early Learning: Virginia Aghan
  - For ECC/CRELS Jewish Studies concerns: Mushky Chaiton
  - For Primary School General Studies concerns: Head of Primary School, Noelene Bellingham.
  - For Primary School Jewish Studies/Informal Jewish Education concerns: Head of Primary School Jewish Studies, Rabbi Levi Milecki.
  - For High School General Studies concerns (Boys and Girls), Head of General Studies: Michele Hanwell-Short.
  - For High School Jewish Studies/Informal Jewish Studies concerns (Boys and Girls), Head of Jewish Studies, Rabbi Yaacov Chaiton.
  - For Student Management in High School: Firstly, the Year Coordinator, then Head of Student Management: Rabbi Berel Light.

If the concern cannot be resolved at this level, please make contact with College Principal, Roy Steinman. It may be necessary to set out your complaint/concern in writing, stating clearly the nature of the issue, and providing any supporting documentation.

3. Only if you think that the College Principal has engaged in unlawful or inappropriate conduct, or if he has refused to hear your complaint, would it be appropriate to raise this with the President of the KTC Board. Any complaint to the President in these circumstances should be in writing, and should contain specific details of the matter or incident concerned. The President would then raise the matter with the College Principal, or appoint a delegate to conduct an investigation into the matter on his/ her behalf. Any findings from such an investigation conducted by the President, or his/ her delegate, will be deemed to be the final decision of Kesser Torah College.

### **Complaints relating to fees:**

1. If you have a complaint relating to the determination made by the Bursar (currently Mrs Sara Benjamin) in relation to your fees, you are entitled to contact the Chairperson of the KTC Fee Committee (Chairperson) within two (2) weeks of such determination. You must provide your request for review in writing to the Chairperson, via the KTC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (currently Mr Saville Abramowitz), detailing the basis for the review,

including the nature of the issue, and providing any supporting documentation. If your request for review is not provided in writing to the Chairperson within the specified period, then your request will be deemed invalid under these Guidelines and it will be at the Chairperson's sole discretion whether to accept the review. It is requested that you provide the details of your request for review in no more than one (1) or two (2) pieces of correspondence (not including supporting documentation).

2. After receipt of all relevant specifics of your request for review to the Chairperson, the Chair person will use all reasonable endeavours to provide his/her determination within one (1) week. The Chairperson, at his/her sole discretion, may seek counsel from any individual (employee of KTC, including but not limited to the Bursar or the College Principal of KTC, (currently Mr Roy Steinman), from the KTC Fee Committee or outside KTC) but is not obliged to. The decision of the Chairperson is final and binding with the full delegated authority of the Board of KTC.
3. You acknowledge and agree there is no further 'right of appeal' once the Chairperson has made a decision regarding your request for review of fees.
4. Until a final decision is made under these Guidelines the determination of the Bursar is valid and binding on the relevant party. Fees, as determined by the Bursar, must be paid in accordance with the Bursar's determination. If fees are not up to date, as determined by the Bursar, throughout the review process as specified above, then KTC will be entitled in its absolute and sole discretion to determine the request for review to be invalid and KTC will be entitled to follow the Fees Policy (as specified in KTC's Policy Handbook).
5. You acknowledge and agree the Chairperson is not in breach of your or your children's privacy for seeking counsel from any third party in accordance with these Guidelines.

#### **Complaints relating to Halacha or Hashkafah/Ethos:**

If you have a Hashkafic concern or complaint, you should address your concern in writing to the College Principal, who will raise the matter with the College's Mechanchim (religious Ethos Committee) who meet fortnightly.

#### **In conclusion, regarding all complaints:**

1. In addressing concerns/complaints, you may prefer your concerns to be dealt with either informally, or formally.
2. **Informal resolution** is what happens when the people involved resolve the issues between themselves. Sometimes this happens through discussions, or an exchange of correspondence, or a mediated meeting between the people involved to see if the issues can be resolved between them. Informal resolution will NOT involve KTC conducting any investigation or making any formal decision about what has happened, or what the consequences should be. However, we may help the people involved with discussions or other communications, or give guidance about appropriate next steps.
3. **Formal resolution** usually happens when one of the people involved wants a formal process, or because of the nature of the complaint – for example, if it is about a very serious issue such as a potential breach of child protection laws. KTC has an absolute discretion as to whether to use a formal process. If it chooses to do so, then, KTC will:
  - i. investigate the complaint;
  - ii. make a formal decision about what has happened; and

- iii. make a determination regarding appropriate consequences (if any). These may, for example, include disciplinary action and/or the reporting of the matter to the relevant authorities, such as the Department of Community Services.
4. In general, if there is to be formal resolution, then:
    - i. KTC will ask the person with the complaint to describe it, in detail, usually in writing;
    - ii. the person(s) against whom the complaint is brought will be given details of the allegation(s) against him/her and be given a reasonable opportunity to explain his/her side of the story;
    - iii. other people (witnesses) may be interviewed;
    - iv. notes will be taken of interviews;
    - v. documents may be collected; and
    - vi. after considering the evidence, KTC will communicate its decisions about the facts and about the outcomes to everyone involved, usually in writing.
  6. There may be circumstances in which some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and KTC will determine, in its absolute discretion on a case by case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.
  7. The final outcome of either an informal or a formal complaint process may be:
    - i. a compromise between the parties involved about the issues raised;
    - ii. a decision that a complaint is correct or incorrect;
    - iii. a solution in which both parties benefit to some extent; and/or
    - iv. no action being taken.
  8. Whatever the process used, KTC will keep a confidential record of the complaint and the outcome of the process.
  9. If KTC considers that a person may have acted inappropriately, particularly if the complaint involves allegations of discrimination, harassment, vilification or bullying or other inappropriate behaviour, then KTC will take whatever action it considers appropriate. This might involve disciplinary action (including expulsion or dismissal of a student), termination of employment or work contract/s and/or the reporting of the incident to a relevant authority.
  10. It is unlawful to victimise a person who has made a complaint of discrimination, harassment, vilification or unlawful bullying. However, if a person lies about a complaint or makes a vexatious or malicious complaint, or otherwise in bad faith, KTC may take whatever action it considers appropriate, which might involve disciplinary action (including expulsion or dismissal of a student) or termination of employment or work contracts.

(updated 25 January 2018)