



Complaint and Appeals Procedure Manual

Introduction

At Colégio Atlântico, we are committed to maintaining an environment of respect, fairness, and clear communication among students, families, faculty, and staff. We recognize that concerns or conflicts may arise and require structured procedures for resolution. This manual outlines our policy for managing complaints from parents, legal guardians, and students, covering general complaints related to school policies, staff, and educational matters, as well as specific appeals processes for decisions made concerning the IB Diploma Programme.

Our objective is to handle complaints and appeals promptly, transparently, and fairly. This document ensures that all members of our community are aware of their rights to voice concerns and the steps involved in addressing them.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All complaints from parents, legal guardians, or students concerning the operation, staff, or services provided by the school.
- Appeals regarding decisions specifically related to the IB Diploma Programme, including decisions on student assessments, discipline, and academic support.

General Principles

Colégio Atlântico is dedicated to:

1. Encouraging open communication.
2. Ensuring complaints are handled confidentially.
3. Promoting fairness by giving all parties the opportunity to present their perspectives.
4. Aiming for resolution at the earliest possible stage through respectful dialogue.

1. Complaint Procedures

1.1 Initial Informal Complaint Stage

In many cases, complaints can be resolved informally. Parents, guardians, and students are encouraged to speak directly with the relevant staff member (e.g., teacher, department head, or class coordinator) as the first step.

- Who to contact: The complaint should initially be directed to the staff member most closely associated with the issue.
- Resolution time frame: We aim to address informal complaints within five (5) school days.

1.2 Formal Complaint Procedure

If an informal approach does not resolve the complaint satisfactorily, a formal complaint can be lodged in writing. The formal procedure is as follows:

Step 1: Submit a Written Complaint

- To whom: Formal complaints should be addressed to the School Director or the designated school official overseeing complaints.
- Content of complaint: The written complaint should include the complainant's name, relationship to the student (if applicable), a detailed description of the issue, and any steps already taken to resolve it.

Step 2: Acknowledgment and Initial Review

- The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three (3) school days.
- The school will assign a staff member to investigate the matter thoroughly, which may include meetings with relevant parties.

Step 3: Investigation and Resolution

- The investigation process aims to conclude within ten (10) school days from the date of acknowledgment.
- The assigned investigator will review relevant information, conduct interviews as necessary, and document findings.
- A written response, including any proposed resolution, will be provided to the complainant.

1.3 Escalation of Complaints

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial resolution, they may escalate the complaint to the School Board.

- To whom: Escalation requests should be directed to the School Board Secretary in writing.
- Review process: The School Board will review the case and may invite the complainant for a discussion.
- Final decision: The Board aims to deliver a final decision within fifteen (15) school days from receiving the escalation request.

2. Appeals Process for IB Diploma Programme Decisions

Colégio Atlântico is an IB World School and is committed to upholding the standards of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO). The following process addresses appeals related to IB-specific decisions, such as assessment outcomes, academic support, and disciplinary actions.

2.1 Grounds for Appeal

An appeal can be made if a student or parent believes:

1. Assessment decisions do not reflect the student's performance due to procedural errors.
2. Disciplinary actions affecting the IB programme were unfairly applied.
3. Academic support decisions were inadequate, leading to potential negative effects on the student's IB performance.

2.2 Appeal Submission Process

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the IB Diploma Coordinator within five (5) school days following the decision that is being appealed.

- Appeal content: The written appeal should clearly outline the grounds for appeal, include any supporting documentation, and suggest a preferred outcome.

2.3 Review and Investigation

- Coordinator's role: The IB Diploma Coordinator will acknowledge the appeal within two (2) school days and will then review the decision, involving relevant faculty as needed.
- Timeline for resolution: The coordinator aims to resolve the appeal within ten (10) school days from acknowledgment.
- Response: A written response detailing the outcome of the review will be provided.

2.4 Further Escalation

If the student or parent is dissatisfied with the coordinator's decision, they may escalate the appeal to the Head of School.

- Final review by Head of School: The Head of School will conduct a final review, with a written outcome provided within seven (7) school days of receiving the escalation.

3. Access and Communication of Procedures

To ensure that all members of the school community understand these procedures, the following measures are in place:

- Publication: The Complaint and Appeals Procedures are available for consultation both on the school's website and Toddle for students and parents.
- Orientation sessions: At the start of each academic year, Colégio Atlântico conducts orientation sessions for students and parents, which cover the complaint and appeal processes.
- Support services: The school's Psychology Department, known as "A Bússola," is available to offer guidance to students throughout the complaints and appeals processes, ensuring their concerns are expressed and understood in a supportive environment.

4. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

All complaints and appeals will be handled confidentially, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis to facilitate resolution.

- Record maintenance: Records of complaints and appeals will be kept securely in the administrative office for a period of five years. These records include written complaints, investigation reports, and resolutions.

5. Commitment to Improvement

Feedback from complaints and appeals is valuable in enhancing school policies and practices. Periodic reviews of complaints and appeals data will be conducted by the School Board to identify trends and areas for improvement within Colégio Atlântico.

6. Contact Information

For any questions about this policy or to submit a formal complaint or appeal, please contact:

- School Deputy Head and IB Administrator: vtorpereira@colégioatlantico.pt
- IB Diploma Coordinator: patriciacosta@colégioatlantico.pt