



# GRIEVANCE POLICY

## 1. OBJECTIVES

FPMT and its affiliated centres, projects and services in Australia is committed to promoting a cooperative, positive, harmonious and open environment and the culture of wisdom through emphasizing harmony and family feeling whilst providing appropriate mechanisms to resolve grievances. All students, members and staff have the right to appeal over a grievance with another person within any FPMT affiliated centre, project or service, or over a failure to follow due process.

It is the aim of this policy to:

- promote the resolution of grievances with a preference for an informal process, only involving third party intervention when absolutely necessary
- achieve a satisfactory outcome with the focus on the problem and not the individuals involved
- ensure that when necessary a grievance is resolved impartially and independently through investigation and or mediation using one or more mediators

**NB:** This policy is to be executed in conjunction with the Ethical Policy and Grievance Procedure guidelines outlined in the Affiliates Area on the FPMT website. Grievances covered by legislation are addressed in other policies or the relevant federal, state or territory laws.

## 2. CONFIDENTIALITY

In order to ensure the ongoing promotion and practice of harmony and goodwill it is essential that discussion of grievances be confined to those who can assist in the resolution.

In any dispute or grievance resolution process it is vital that:

- All persons involved in the grievance process maintain strict confidentiality in relation to that grievance and its process.
- The problem is not discussed with other members of the community. This is simply gossip and it will often escalate the problem rather than helping to resolve it — and it could even be construed as slander.

However, it is recognized and accepted that people involved in a dispute/conflict/ grievance may wish to exercise their right to consult with and/or be supported/accompanied by a neutral third party in any of the processes undertaken to find resolution.

### 3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Grievance Dispute Procedure will emphasise and promote the following principles:

- Fair and equitable treatment for all parties
- A safe environment
- Strictly confidential treatment of all grievances
- Access to the grievance resolution process for all parties
- Timely resolution of grievances
- Resolution by an authorised delegate, facilitator/ mediator where necessary
- Non-adversarial resolution to be sought
- Open and honest discussion
- Open communication and consultation with all stakeholders if deemed appropriate and necessary to ensure accurate and honest processes and outcomes
- A process of resolution based on compassion for all concerned parties

### 4. APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY

The appropriate authority to deal with resolving a grievance is dependent upon the nature of the grievance and the number and position of the people involved:

**Where the grievance involves an individual** - the grievance should be resolved informally with this individual.

***NB:** Where the complainant genuinely feels that they cannot approach the person/s concerned to reach resolution, or they have previously tried and failed to reach a resolution, they should seek assistance from the next appropriate authority*

**Where the grievance involves a director of the centre, project or service** - the complainant should seek assistance from another member of the board/executive committee. The board/executive committee must inform the National Coordinator of any grievance raised against the director ([office@fpmta.org.au](mailto:office@fpmta.org.au)).

**Where the grievance involves the director and the board/executive of the centre, project or service** - the complainant should seek assistance from the national coordinator ([office@fpmta.org.au](mailto:office@fpmta.org.au)) who will assess and enlist the FPMTA Mediation, Resolution and Advisory Group (MRAG) as required.

**Where the grievance involves the national coordinator** – the complainant should seek assistance from the FPMTA Board of Directors and/or the FPMT Centre Services Director ([centerservices@fpmt.org](mailto:center services@fpmt.org))

**Where the grievance involves a Sangha member (anyone living in the vows of a monk or nun)** - the complainant should seek assistance from the International Mahayana Institute (IMI) ([office@imisangha.org](mailto:office@imisangha.org)), and IMI will then follow up with an appropriate senior Sangha member in the local area who can discuss with the individuals concerned.

**Where the grievance involves a Sangha member (anyone living in the vows of a monk or nun) in an official capacity i.e. director, SPC, resident teacher, visiting teacher, etc** - the complainant should seek assistance from the centre's board/executive committee who must inform the IMI director ([director@imisangha.org](mailto:director@imisangha.org)) in case the grievance relates to their vows (Vinaya) and the National Coordinator ([office@fpmta.org.au](mailto:office@fpmta.org.au)).

## 5. RESOLUTION PROCESS

Based on clean clear communication and as much as possible by all concerned on equanimity, compassion and an understanding of cause and effect, the following steps should be taken to resolve grievances that arise:

### **Step One:**

The aggrieved individual/s should discuss the issue directly with the person/s concerned as soon as possible.

### **Step Two:**

If aggrieved individual/s feel unable to communicate directly with the person/s concerned, or have tried this and failed to resolve the problem, the next step is to ask for assistance from the next appropriate authority as soon as possible — time is of the essence — ideally within one month of the initial problem.

When a grievance remains unresolved and/or when a person believes that actions, circumstances and/or procedures are practiced in such a way as to discriminate, injure, harm or grievously affect them or other persons or cause damage to the organisation, the aggrieved is required to supply a written submission clearly stating the grievance.

***NB:** From here onwards, the issue needs to be put in writing with as much documentation and information as possible.*

### **Step Three:**

Matters raised by the written grievance will be investigated by the most appropriate authority.

The appropriate authority will talk to each person involved in the dispute separately at first. This gives each party a chance to speak openly and frankly about the issue and discuss what steps they feel should be taken to help resolve the issue.

### **Step Four:**

The appropriate authority will bring both parties together focusing on resolving the issue. All parties involved should be familiar with the FPMT Ethical Policy as outlined in the FPMT Handbook and given a copy of this grievance resolution policy.

If deemed necessary, the appropriate authority can choose to arrange a meeting with the disputants and a trained, independent mediator, to try to reach a resolution.

***NB:** Any associated costs are the responsibility of the centre, project or service.*

### **Step Five:**

The appropriate authority will advise involved parties of the recommendations and actions required to rectify the matter and effect resolution.

**Step Six:**

The appropriate authority will write a final report with as much supporting documentation and information as possible. A copy of this report must be sent to the national coordinator ([office@fpmta.org.au](mailto:office@fpmta.org.au)).

**6. APPEALS**

Should the aggrieved or other relevant party in a formal resolution process be dissatisfied with the determination, they may lodge a written appeal via the national coordinator ([office@fpmta.org.au](mailto:office@fpmta.org.au)) and/or other appropriate authority.

A request for appeal shall be investigated by an appropriate authority, which may be sourced either internally or externally.

This decision will then be reported to all relevant parties. There will be no further process.