Organization Name	St. Catharines Rowing Club
Document Title	SCRC General Complaint Policy and Procedure
Approved by	SCRC Board of Directors
Effective Date	July 7, 2026
Review Date	July 2029 or otherwise as needed

Background

In 2022 Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) required that all member rowing clubs adopt and put in place the Safe Sport Policy. The primary goal of the Safe Sport Policy was to address athlete maltreatment by persons in authority across the country. The adoption of the Safe Sport Policy and its Code of Conduct and Ethics component by the St. Catharines Rowing Club (SCRC) replaced a Board-approved SCRC Code of Conduct (July 2015) and removed a process for individuals to make a general complaint regarding coaching decisions and actions that did not fall under the purview of Safe Sport.

This procedure is applicable to all categories of membership as defined in the Club's Bylaws as well as individuals engaged in activities with the Club, including but not limited to: athletes (and their parents), coaches, volunteers, officials, Directors and Officers of the Club.

Definitions

"Club" means the St. Catharines Rowing Club.
"Assigned Coach" means the coach who is designated by the organization to have primary responsibility for the coaching, supervision, and welfare of a specific athlete or crew during training and competition.
"Program Lead Coach" means the coach designated by the organization to have primary responsibility for the leadership and management of a rowing program, including oversight of coaching staff, athlete development, training standards, and operational decision-making.
"Head Coach" means the Head Coach of the St. Catharines Rowing Club.
"Rowing Committee" means the Rowing Committee established annually by the SCRC Board of Directors and chaired by the VP Rowing.
"Junior" athlete means an athlete who has not yet reached the age of majority.

Procedure Statement

1. Purpose

The St. Catharines Rowing Club is committed to maintaining a respectful, transparent, and supportive environment for all athletes, coaches, parents, and volunteers. This policy provides a clear and structured process for raising concerns or expressing opinions regarding coaching decisions and actions in a constructive and orderly manner.

The intent of this policy is to:

- Encourage open and respectful face to face communication between parties
- Resolve concerns in a timely manner and at the appropriate level of decision-making
- Ensure fairness, consistency, and accountability of athletes, parents, coaches, volunteers and others involved in the complaint process
- Maintain positive working relationships within the club

2. Scope

This policy applies to all athletes (and their parents), coaches, staff members, officials, volunteers, directors and officers of the Club participating in programs operated by St. Catharines Rowing Club, including youth, junior, senior and masters programming.

- For senior and master athletes, complaints should be raised by the athlete.
- For youth and junior athletes, complaints may be raised by the athlete or by a parent or legal guardian on behalf of the athlete.

This policy covers concerns related to coaching assignments, coaching decisions, equipment assignments, training practices, crew selection decisions, regatta entries, and communications. It does not replace safeguarding, protection, disciplinary, misconduct and maltreatment policies, which are to be managed under the Safe Sport Policy.

3. Guiding Principles

- Complaints should be raised respectfully, constructively, and in good faith
- Complainants should be respectful of the environment/situation in which a complaint is made. There will be situations where a coach or other individual is not available to receive a complaint and provide an immediate response, such as just before or after practices, during a coaches meeting, a social event, or during a busy regatta. A 'cooling off' period is advised, after which a face to face meeting should be scheduled
- Issues should be managed on a timely basis and dealt with at the lowest possible level of decision-making authority. Involved parties are encouraged to meet face to face to discuss the complaint. If the parent(s) is involved, any meeting(s) with the coach to manage the complaint must include both the athlete and parent(s) to ensure clarity in communication is maintained.
- As per the SCRC Confidentiality Policy and the SCRC Safe Sport - Social Media Policy, confidentiality will be maintained by all parties involved in the complaint
- Retaliation against any athlete or parent raising a concern will not be tolerated

4. Complaint Management Process

Complaints must follow the steps below in order. Skipping steps will only occur where appropriate (e.g., conflict of interest or safeguarding concerns). All parties involved in a complaint must consider the matter as confidential, and adhere to the SCRC Confidentiality Policy and the Safe Sport – Social Media Policy.

Step 1: Athlete's Assigned Coach

The complaint must first be raised with the athlete's Assigned Coach.

- The concern should be raised after careful consideration of the circumstances and **within 7 days** of the decision or issue occurring
- For junior athletes, this step can be initiated by the athlete or by a parent or legal guardian
- Written communication combined with a face-to-face meeting is encouraged and must comply with the "Rule of Two". Both the athlete and parent (if involved) should attend the meeting.
- All participants of the meeting are expected to listen openly and respond professionally

Most concerns are expected to be resolved at this level.

Step 2: Program Lead Coach

If the concern is not resolved at Step 1, or if the athlete or parent feels uncomfortable addressing the issue directly with the assigned coach, the complaint may be escalated to the Program Lead Coach.

- The Program Lead Coach may consult with the athlete and parent (if involved) and with the athlete's assigned coach. Face to face communication is recommended.
- The goal is to gather information, mediate, clarify decisions, and seek resolution in a timely manner

Step 3: Club Head Coach

If the concern remains unresolved, it may be escalated to the Club Head Coach.

- The Club Head Coach will review the matter objectively and provide a resolution to the matter in a timely manner.
- This may include face to face meetings with the involved parties
- A written summary of the complaint and action(s) taken to this point may be requested from both parties by the Head Coach

Step 4: Rowing Committee

If the complaint is still unresolved, the complaint may be submitted to the Rowing Committee.

- Complaints must be submitted in writing and a face to face meeting with all parties is recommended
- The Committee may request additional information or clarification
- The decision of the Rowing Committee will be determined in a timely manner and immediately communicated to all parties.

Step 5. Appealing a Decision of the Rowing Committee
If either the complainant or the respondent involved in the complaint wants to appeal the decision of the Rowing Committee, a written appeal must be submitted to the Club President within 7 days of the decision notification. The SCRC Board of Directors will establish an ad hoc committee to review the matter. The ad hoc committee will consist of three Directors, selected by the Board to objectively rule on the appeal. None of the three Directors shall be members of the Rowing Committee.

6. Communication and Professional Conduct Expectations
All parties involved in the complaint process are expected to:

- Communicate respectfully and professionally, ideally in a face to face environment
- Public discussion or social media commentary about complaints shall not be permitted before, during or after the complaint is managed.
- A timely resolution to complaints is desirable, but all parties should allow reasonable time for responses and resolution

7. Policy Review
This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Directors to ensure it remains effective and aligned with Club values, and the SCRC Code of Conduct and Ethics.

Attachments: none

Links to Other Documents	SCRC Code of Conduct and Ethics (2026) SCRC Safe Sport Policy Manual (2026) SCRC Confidentiality Policy (2026)

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