



Complaints Policy and Procedures

Introduction

1. The College welcomes comments from students, parents, staff and the wider community on the quality of the service it provides. Constructive positive and negative feedback provides a key role in reviewing our work so that we can improve our provision in the future and so that we can ensure that the individuals involved are treated fairly.

2. Students and clients have the right to expect the college to consider complaints fairly and quickly, and whenever possible the issue should be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction. Where possible issues and complaints should be resolved informally (Stage 1).

3. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times, although all parties will need to accept that some information may need to be shared if the complaint is to be fully investigated.

4. All those involved, the complainant and others involved in the complaint including members of staff interviewed must be treated fairly and have the opportunity to state their case. Individuals involved should be offered support in making a complaint or in dealing with a complaint.

5. The college will maintain a record of formal complaints in the College Complaints Register. The college will receive an annual summary evaluation of the number and general character of complaints, compliments and suggestions and subsequent resolution/planned action. This will be reported to the Directors

Definition / Scope

The College has defined a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response'. Complaints about College activity can come from any source. Possible sources of complaints could be:

Students:	concerning their programme of study, the resourcing, delivery and final outcome.
Parents:	as for students but in addition how the College has dealt with them as parents.
Directors	concerning the service provided by the College
Members of the public:	concerning the impact of the College on the locality through for example, student behaviour or traffic management.



This procedure applies to general concerns and complaints. Some complaints / disputes are subject to statutory or alternative procedures. Issues which cannot be considered as 'in scope' for the Complaints Policy include:

- Complaints which are made more than 15 working days after the original incident causing concern (unless there are special circumstances justifying a delayed complaint);
- Matters which are subject to legal action or concern employment issues;
- Contractual disputes;
- Matters not within the College's control or responsibility,
- Examination results (subject to appeals process with the relevant awarding body)
- Complaints of a vexatious or malicious nature.

In these situations, where possible the complainant should be directed to other courses of action.

Stages of the Complaints Procedure

These are described in detail in the Complaints Procedure Flowchart below. In summary these are:

Stage		
1	Informal Procedure	Initial stage in which the complainant is supported in resolving the concern to their satisfaction without recourse to formal procedure. All concerns/ complaints in writing or by email and resolved at the informal stage will be logged on the College Complaints Register as 'Resolved at Stage 1 (Informal). The complainant should attempt to resolve the matter directly with any member of staff.
2	Formal – Investigation and Report	The Complainant completes the College Complaint Form. From this point the complaint should proceed within the stated timeframes. An Investigating Officer is appointed and following an investigation a summary report is shared with all involved. The complainant will be requested to complete the College Complaint Response Form. If the complaint is resolved at the end of this stage then it should be logged on the College Complaints Register as 'Resolved at Stage 2 (Formal – Investigation and Report)
3	Formal – Internal Appeal	The Complainant wishes to appeal against the outcome of the investigation or about the way in which the complaint has been investigated. The complainant must clearly state their case for an internal appeal in writing.

		<p>The Operations Manager or a member of the College Leadership Team (other than the original investigating officer) will carry out a review of the evidence and the complainant's written statement. If appropriate, the Operations Manager</p> <p>Operations Manager will meet with the complainant and may carry out further enquiries focusing on the unresolved issues. The complainant will be notified of the outcome. The internal College Complaints Process ends at this stage. If the complaint is resolved at the end of this stage then it should be logged on the College Complaints Register as 'Resolved at Stage 3 (Formal- Internal Appeal).</p>
4	Formal – External Appeal	<p>If the complainant remains unsatisfied then they will be directed to the appropriate external body to make a formal external appeal. The complaint will be logged on the College Complaints Register as 'Stage 4 (Formal – External Appeal). Provided Stages 1,2 and 3 have been completed, the complainant may request a hearing with the directors to lodge their remaining concerns prior to a decision to appeal to an appropriate external body.</p>



Formal Complaint Form

Please return in a sealed envelope marked 'Complaint – For the Attention of the Operations Manager by hand to the College reception or by post.

Your Details:

Name		Address	
Telephone No			
Mobile No		email	

Nature and Details of the Complaint:

Please explain the problem as clearly and specifically as possible – give dates, locations and the names of others involved. Use additional sheets if required

What reasonable steps do you believe should be taken to address this problem:

Complainants Signature:

Date Complaint Submitted:



Formal Complaint Response Form

Please return in a sealed envelope marked 'Complaint Response – For the Attention of the Operations Manager by hand to the College reception or by post.

Your Details:

Name		Address	
Telephone No			
Mobile No		email	

Complaint Reference Number:

We will be grateful if you could complete this response form concerning the above complaint

Did the college respond in a timely fashion at each stage of the process?

Was the complaint resolved to your satisfaction?

What, if anything, could the college have done to improve any aspect of this process?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome or the way in which the complaint has been handled, you are able to progress to stage 3 of the complaints process – Formal Appeal. Please write to the College Operations Manager explaining clearly why you are dissatisfied. If appropriate, a Director or another member of the College Leadership Team will conduct a second investigation focusing specifically on the unresolved issues.

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Complaints Procedure Flow Chart – Guidance for Complainants and Staff

	Stage	Complainant's Responsibility	College's Responsibility	Outcome
1	Informal Stage Learner, parent or student identifies an issue	Complainant discusses the problem directly with the member of staff concerned. If the complainant feels that this is inappropriate then a more senior member of staff should be contacted immediately. The complainant should describe the issue as clearly as possible. Finally, you should state what reasonable steps should be taken to resolve the complaint	Any member of staff receiving a complaint should treat the concern seriously and sympathetically. The member of staff should attempt to resolve the matter with the complainant, this may involve meeting other staff directly concerned with the issue. The member of staff should make a diary note of the concern, how they dealt with it and the outcome.	If the complainant is satisfied then the complaint is resolved. If the complainant is not satisfied then the member of staff should ensure that he/she is fully informed of the College's complaints procedure. This will include giving him/her a copy of the Complaint's procedure. The complainant should be asked if they wish to make a formal complaint. If they wish to proceed they should be asked if they require any support in completing the complaint form. If necessary the member of staff should seek specialist support independent of the complaint
2	Formal Stage - Investigation and Report	The complainant should complete the complaints form, explaining the problem as clearly as possible. The form should be posted or delivered to the College reception in a sealed envelope labelled 'Complaint for the attention of the Operations Manager'.	From receipt of the complaint, it is tracked to ensure that the timeframes below are followed. The College office will inform a member of the College Leadership Team and will start the record of the complaint in the College's Complaints Register.	Within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint, the complainant will receive a formal letter to inform them that the complaint has been logged and giving the name and contact details of the investigating officer. If the complaint is not in scope

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		<p>Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the formal written complaint should be made within 10 working days of the completion of stage 1 and within 15 days of the original incident.</p> <p>On receiving the report the complainant should complete the Complaint Response Form. One of the responses requested is an indication if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the outcome. This must be returned within 10 working days from receipt of the Investigating Officer's Report otherwise the complaint is considered to be resolved.</p>	<p>A member of the College Leadership Team will appoint an appropriate senior member of staff as the Investigating Officer.</p> <p>The investigating officer will decide if the complaint is within scope of the complaints procedure.</p> <p>The Investigating officer will collect direct evidence from all appropriate staff, student and others including the complainant. This will normally be carried out through face to face meetings with the Investigating Officer.</p> <p>The Officer will complete a summary report responding to each aspect of the written complaint.</p> <p>The complainant and appropriate staff directly involved in the complaint should receive a copy of the report and the College response normally within 10 working days from receipt of the written complaint. If the investigation requires more time, then the complainant</p>	<p>(lapsed timescale, matters that are subject to legal action, contractual disputes, matters not within the College's control or responsibility, complaint is of a vexatious or malicious nature), then the complainant should be informed in writing with an explanation. Where possible the complainant should be directed to other courses of action.</p> <p>The report will include any steps the College will take to resolve the complaint and to ensure that the problem will not occur again.</p> <p>A copy of the College Report is stored in the Complaint's Register. If resolved, the complaint is recorded as 'resolved at Stage 2 – Formal Investigation and Report'</p>
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			should be informed of the delay and given a new date for a College response.	
3	Formal Stage – Appeal	If the complainant is not satisfied with the Investigating Officers Report and or the College response or if they have a complaint about the procedure, the complainant should return the Complaint Response Form explaining their reasons for dissatisfaction and to request that the complaint moves to Stage 3 – Formal Appeal.	The Operations Manager or an independent member of the College Leadership Team will consider the nature of the complaint and will carry out a further review of the case. The Operations Manager will write to the complainant with the outcome and/or meets with the complainant. This response will normally be within 5 working days from receiving the appeal request. The complainant should be notified of the contact details of the appropriate external agency should the complainant wish to make an external appeal.	Correspondence is stored with the Complaint’s Register. If resolved, the complaint is recorded as ‘resolved at Stage 3 – Formal Internal Appeal’. The complainant receives a written response to the appeal. The internal College Complaints process ends at this point.
4	Formal Stage – External Appeal	If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the Stage 3 internal appeal outcome, then the complainant is able to appeal to appropriate external bodies. Before making the decision to proceed with an external appeal, the	The College will co-operate fully with the appropriate external body involved in an appeal.	The complaint is recorded in the Complaint’s Register as a Stage 4 External Appeal. Any subsequent report from the external body will be lodged in the register.



		complainant may request a hearing with the directors to lodge their remaining concerns.		
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