

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

DEFINITION OF COMPLAINT

1. A complaint is defined as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction about an aspect of a service or facility provided by the College, which is provided to learners.
2. The complaints procedure is the process by which students, employers or members of the community are given the opportunity to seek resolution to perceived injustices relating to their experience or attendance at the College, that have not been resolved as part of their normal interaction with staff at the College.

3. Anonymous Complaint

Complaints require investigation to enable resolution; where the complaint is made anonymously, it will not be possible to undertake such an investigation. For practical reasons, therefore, normally no action will be taken in the event of a complaint made anonymously. There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where the College deems it appropriate to take action or investigate a matter on the basis of a complaint that is made anonymously.

4. Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

The College may consider invoking the College's Disciplinary Procedure in those cases where complaint is found to be vexatious or malicious. A vexatious or malicious complaint is defined as a complaint which is patently unsustainable, having been put forward so as to abuse the process of the Procedure or, for example, to attempt to defame the name or character of another person.

5. Group Complaints

Where the complaint is received from a group of students, one person should be prepared to act as spokesperson and correspondent for the purposes of the Formal Procedure, and each member of the group must be able to demonstrate that they have been personally affected by the matter which is the subject of the complaints. In addition, all must agree in writing to the spokesperson acting on their behalf.

PROCEDURE

Verbal Complaints

Complaints can be made in person or over the telephone to any member of the College staff who will:

1. Take down details of the complaint and try to resolve it informally; or
2. If they are not the appropriate person to deal with the complaint, they will pass the matter on to the most suitable person to deal with it.
3. If the complaint remains unresolved and you wish it to remain informal you should take the complaint to the programme manager.

Written Complaint – formal stage

4. If you cannot resolve your complaint issue through the verbal approach you must submit a Complaint Form to the Quality Team.
5. Receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged within seven days. You will be informed who will be dealing with the matter.
6. The complaint will be investigated; the College will always try to solve the problem for you either by correspondence or meetings between the parties involved. If necessary a meeting between the student concerned (who may be accompanied by a friend or representative) and the College will be undertaken. The circumstances of the complaint will dictate which of these methods is considered most likely to result in a satisfactory outcome for all parties.
7. It is anticipated that the investigation will normally be completed, with a response in writing from an appropriate Senior Manager within 14 working days of the receipt date of the completed Complaint Form. This timescale may need to be extended during College holidays.
8. If it takes more than 14 working days, you will be contacted and given an estimated completion date or a date by which you will receive a further update.
9. Where appropriate the member of the College staff dealing with your complaint will notify the Quality Team of the steps being taken.
10. If you require further help or advice at any stage of the feedback process, you can contact the Quality Team for advice on 01302 558371.

Appeal Stage

If the student is not satisfied that the formal stage of the Customer Complaint Procedure has been followed correctly they may appeal against this decision in the following way.

1. By a request in writing, within ten working days from the date of the outcome of the Formal Stage. The request should be addressed to Assistant Principal Curriculum Quality outlining why they believe that the process was not followed correctly of the Formal Stage was not satisfactory. Taking into account the substance of the complaint and the previous attempts to solve the problem, the case will then be reviewed. A decision on whether it is appropriate to refer the matter to a complaint Appeal Hearing will then be determined.
2. Should a complaint Appeal Hearing be necessary it will be arranged by the Assistant Principal Curriculum Quality. The panel will consist of 3 members of management who have not previously been involved in the complaint. All panel members shall be independent having had no dealings with the complaint previously. The student may be accompanied by a friend or representative at this meeting and the College may be represented by up to two members of staff.
3. If the complaint relates to the actions of an individual member of the College staff, that individual has the right to be informed of the substance of the feedback and to attend and be represented.
4. The Complaint Appeals Panel will meet, normally, within one calendar month (excluding College holidays) of the request in writing for an appeal. Decisions made by the Complaint Appeal Panel shall be communicated to the learner and the College within one calendar month of the Complaint Appeal Panel hearing. The Chair will keep all parties informed of progress and will explain reasons for any necessary extension of the timescale.
5. Following the appeal if the complaint is still not satisfied that the procedure has been adhered to them may take their complaint to the funding authority. Details of how to make a complaint to the funding authority are available from the Quality Team on 01302 558371.