

HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2016/19

INTRODUCTION

Heart of Worcestershire College is committed to providing quality services to all its users, and to responding in a timely and fair manner to any complaints raised. This procedure is designed to ensure an accessible, clear, accurate and fair process in which to raise a complaint. All complaints are carefully and fully considered. The procedure takes into consideration the 'Good Practice Framework' of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Competition and Markets Authority's advice for UK higher education providers.

This procedure is intended for all students enrolled on a higher education or professional award (at Level 4 or above).

This procedure applies to all complaints within Higher Education (HE) at the College. Please refer to the Further Education (FE) Complaints procedure for complaints relating to FE.

During holiday periods, in particular the extended break during the summer, it may not be possible to adhere to the timescales set out in the procedure below. In such cases, the complainant will be informed of any possible delays and will be updated in regards to any progress made and a planned timescale for resolution. The college will endeavour to resolve any complaints received during these periods as quickly as possible.

Complaints must be registered within the academic year in which they take place. In the majority of cases the deadline for submitting a complaint will be 31st July of each academic year. Where courses run across academic years it will be one calendar month after the registered end date of the course.

The college will not normally investigate any complaints made more than three months after the incident. Any complaints received outside of this timeframe will be reviewed by a Vice Principal who will make a decision whether or not to proceed with an investigation.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

The **complaints procedure** is designed to address issues including (but not exclusively):

- Dissatisfaction with tuition or student support
- Standard of College services
- Actions or omissions of the College or its staff
- Incidents of discrimination, harassment or abuse including those based on the 'protected characteristics' of the Equality Act 2010

The College **HE Assessment Regulations** should be used where you wish to challenge academic or decisions or allegations of academic misconduct.

STAGE 1 (Informal)

In the first instance we encourage you to seek a solution with the teaching or support team with which you have a problem. This is often the quickest and most efficient way to resolve any issues you may have. If the complaint relates to a specific individual, you should attempt to approach this individual in the first instance. Alternatively, you may approach the Curriculum, Resources and Quality, CRQ, Leader or CRQ Manager of the relevant curriculum area or the College Learner Services. Any such issues at this informal stage should be raised no later than 6 weeks after the incident occurred) should these issues not be resolved informally, they become formal complaints (Stage 2). Contact can be made by:

- Telephone
- Email
- Making an appointment

STAGE 2 (Formal)

A written copy of the complaint should be sent to the College Quality Coordinator. Letters can be posted, emailed, or dropped off at the main Reception of any campus.

A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to you within **5 working days** of receipt of the complaint. Details of the complaint will be forwarded to the investigating officer who will attempt to resolve the issue involving all relevant parties within **10 working days** of receipt of the complaint. Notes from meetings and the outcome of the investigation will be recorded.

A letter summing the outcome will be sent in writing to you within **3 further working days**.

The contact details of the Quality Department are as follows:

Quality Department,
Heart of Worcestershire College
All Saints' Building
Deansway,
Worcester WR1 2JF
E-mail: quality@howcollege.ac.uk
Telephone: 01905 725566.

STAGE 3 (Appeal)

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 response, you may submit an appeal, outlining your grounds for appeal, within **10 working days** of receipt of the outcome.

The CRQ Manager for Higher Education and Professional Studies will review the appeal and carry out an independent investigation.

You will receive a written response from the Quality Department with the outcome of the appeal, including reasons for the outcome, within **10 working days** of receipt of your appeal letter.

STAGE 4 (Referral)

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal a formal referral may be submitted to within **5 working days**. The Vice Principal with responsibilities for Higher Education may arrange a hearing within **10 working days** of the appeal and provide a final decision.

The outcome of the hearing, including reasons for the outcome, will be communicated in writing to the complainant within **5 working days** of the referral hearing.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Students have a right of access to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator at the end of the internal review process. More information can be found at: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL BODY PROCEDURES

Students enrolled on a higher education course validated by or franchised from a University partner should consult the University regulations. Where the University stipulates that students should follow the College complaints procedure in the first instance, then the above procedure must be followed.

Students enrolled on a professional award should consult the regulations of the professional body as above.

Where the University or professional body complaints procedure is to be followed in the first instance, that procedure supersedes the College procedure contained within this document.

Questions and Advice

If you have any questions about the complaints procedure, you should contact:

- A member of staff from within the academic team
- The College Customer Services Team
- The Quality Department

Additional Notes

The Academic Board of the Worcestershire Higher Education Institute, within the Heart of Worcestershire College has oversight of all complaints. The committee will review progress of all Higher Education complaints and oversee changes to College policy which result from the complaints process.

The timeframes set out above represent the optimum and expected response times for the majority of complaints. At times where it is necessary to gather the views of external agencies or individuals outside of the college, timeframes may be affected. Complainants will be informed of these delays and provided with new expected timeframes.