

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2016/17 FURTHER EDUCATION (FE)

PURPOSE OF POLICY/ DOCUMENT

The college places significant emphasis on customer feedback and views all complaints as a valuable tool to drive improvements in the quality of our services. The college complaints procedure is clear and sensitive to issues of confidentiality. Complaints are strictly monitored by the Assistant Principal (Standards) on all our campuses and are regularly analysed and reported on to both senior managers and the Corporation.

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

In cases where a student is over 18 years of age, the college will request the student's permission to pursue the complaint when parents/guardians (or other third parties with a close connection) make a complaint on the student's behalf. Permission must be received from the student in writing.

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 end date will be 31st July of each academic year.

At Stage One, complainants are encouraged in the first instance to seek a solution with the teaching or business support team where the problem exists. This is often the quickest and most efficient way to resolve any issues (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 Two**) and are centrally managed and monitored by the Quality Department .

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.

The incidence, outcome and resolution of formal complaints is monitored by recording;

- Complainant details
- Date complaint received
- Date complaint acknowledged
- Department
- Brief details/nature of complaint
- Deadline for outcome of the investigation
- Date outcome sent to the complainant

At Stage Two, the Quality Coordinator acknowledges all formal complaints in writing, arranges for an investigation to take place, and ensures that an outcome is reached within the specified timeframe and that this is communicated to the complainant in writing.

Actions arising from appeals (**Stage Three**) and arrangements for independent investigations for appeals are also co-ordinated by the Quality Coordinator and overseen by the Assistant Principal HE and Standards. The progress of all investigations is monitored to ensure an outcome is reached within the specified timeframe and that this is communicated to the complainant in writing. If the complainant is unhappy with this outcome, a formal referral can

be made to the Quality Coordinator which is then passed to the Vice Principal for a final hearing and decision (**Stage Four**).

At all stages of the complaints procedure, notes from meetings and any correspondence are stored centrally. A representative from the Quality Department may attend meetings as part of the investigation process. The Governing Body receives annual reports on complaints and information regarding complaints is used to inform the quality review and self-assessment process.

STAFF AND STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE 2016/2017

STAGE 1

We encourage you in the first instance 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 however, you are still dissatisfied then move to stage 2.

STAGE 2

Complaint is received by the **Quality Coordinator** (quality@howcollege.ac.uk) via telephone/email/in person or in writing. If the complaint is received in writing or in person notes of the call/meeting will be recorded.

A letter/email of acknowledgement detailing who is undertaking the investigation will be sent to the complainant within **5 working days** of receipt of the complaint. Copies of this sent to relevant members of staff.

The complaint will be investigated by the department/area with the aim to resolve the issue within **10 working days**. Notes from meetings and outcome of the investigation to be recorded and forwarded to **Quality Coordinator** who will to be kept informed throughout the investigation process.

The **Quality Coordinator** will ensure that the outcome of the investigation is communicated in writing within **3 further working days**. Copies of this sent to the relevant members of staff.

STAGE 3

If the complaint is unresolved, the decision can be appealed within **10 working days** to the **Quality Coordinator**

If an appeal is received within this timeframe, the **Assistant Principal (Standards)** will appoint a Curriculum/Business Support Manager from another Directorate/Area to undertake an independent investigation. This investigation should report back to the **Quality Coordinator** within **10 working days**

The outcome of the appeal to the complainant in writing within **5 working days**

STAGE 4

If the complainant does not accept the outcome of the appeal a formal referral can be submitted within **5 working days** to the **Quality Coordinator** a **Vice Principal** may then arrange a hearing and a final decision will be made

- **Final decision**

The **Vice Principal** will send the outcome of the formal referral to the complainant in writing within **10 working days** of the appeal hearing. The complainant will be informed at this stage of further avenues of appeal if dissatisfied with the outcome of the college process.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied having exhausted this procedure, they can then escalate their complaint to the Awarding Organisation, and should they still remain unhappy, they can then escalate their complaint to the Qualifications Regulator.