

## HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2019/22

### Purpose of Policy/ Document

To document the Colleges approach to managing and responding to internal and external complaints within Higher Education (HE).

### Application of Policy (Range and Scope)

This procedure applies to all users of the college (including staff) but does not form part of the College Staff Grievance Policy which is dealt with under a separate policy

### Particular Legal Requirements/Issues Outside of Equality, Diversity and Disability (E.D.D)

#### Links with Other Policies/Documents

Equality & Diversity Policy  
HE Fee Policy  
GDPR Policy  
HE & Professional Admissions Policy  
Student Standards

### Equality, Diversity and Disability (Disability, Equality, Duty Impact Assessment)

Has a Preliminary Equality Analysis been completed?

\*Yes  No  Date Completed: 2019

Is a full Impact Assessment required?

\*Yes  No

If 'yes', has a copy been sent to the Equality Manager?

\*Yes  No

For Completion by the Executive:

POLICY REFERENCE	PRO111a
CATEGORY	QUALITY
AUTHOR / ORIGINATOR	VP – Information Systems and Student Experience
ISSUE DATE	September 2019
REVIEW DATE	September 2022
POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW	VP – Information Systems and Student Experience
RATIFIED /AUTHORISED BY	SLT

## HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2019/22

### 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 Protocol** 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 Advice Centre. 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 Office. 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 Office are as follows:

Quality Office  
Heart of Worcestershire College  
All Saints' Building  
Deansway  
Worcester WR1 2JF  
E-mail: [quality@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@howcollege.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 01905 743520

### **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.

A CRQ Leader for Higher Education / Curriculum Director will review the appeal and carry out an independent investigation.

You will receive a written response from the Quality Office 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**. A Vice Principal 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**

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. Heart of Worcestershire College is a member of this scheme. If you are unhappy with the outcome you may be able to ask the OIA to review your HE complaint. You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>.

You normally need to have completed the HE Complaints Procedure before you complain to the OIA. Heart of Worcestershire College will send you a letter called a "Completion of Procedures Letter" when you have reached the end of our processes and there are no further steps you can take internally. If your HE Complaint is not upheld, Heart of Worcestershire College will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter automatically. If your HE Complaint is upheld or partly upheld you can ask for a Completion of Procedures Letter if you want one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers/completion-of-procedures-letters>.

#### **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 Office

#### **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*



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*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.*