



## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2022/2025 HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)**

<b>Purpose of Policy/Document</b>	To document the Colleges approach to managing and responding to internal and external complaints within Higher Education (HE).
<b>Target Audience (staff/students/visitors/contractors)</b>	Students
<b>Particular Legal Requirements/Issues outside of EDD</b>	N/A
<b>Links with Other Policies/Documents</b>	Equality & Diversity Policy HE Fee Policy GDPR Policy HE & Professional Admissions Policy Student Standards
<b>For completion by The Executive</b>	
<b>Policy/Document Reference No.</b>	PRO111a
<b>Category</b>	QUALITY
<b>Owner (job title)</b>	Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards
<b>Issue Date</b>	August 2022
<b>Review Date</b>	August 2025
<b>Postholder Responsible for Review (job title)</b>	Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards
<b>Authorised By: (SLT/Corporation)</b>	SLT
<b>Communicated via/Location: (Policy Acceptance software/website/portal etc)</b>	Website, Portal
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Statement</b>	The Equality Act 2010 does not require public authorities to carry out EIAs by law. The College does however, carefully consider the impact, when creating or amending its policies, on all concerned parties regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and records this at SLT meetings in order to demonstrate compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).



## STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2022/2025 HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

### 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 regard 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

We value feedback and expect to use it to help us to:

- get things right in the future
- be more open and accountable
- act fairly and proportionately
- seek continuous improvement

When we get things wrong we will act to:

- accept responsibility and apologise
- explain what went wrong and put things right
- learn lessons from mistakes and change policies and practices where proportionate to do so

- We conduct a “Lessons Learnt” review from every issue raised and then summarise this annually, to aid our improvement plans

Please note that the College [HE Assessment Protocol](#) should be used where you wish to challenge academic or decisions or allegations of academic misconduct.

### **Informal**

In the first instance we encourage you to seek a resolution with the academic or support team with the problem exists. 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 Corporate Service Team. 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 1).

### **STAGE 1 (Formal)**

You may make a formal complaint by completing the specified HE Formal Complaint Stage 1 form (appendix 1) below, also located on the College website [student-he-complaints-form-stage-1.docx](#) Once completed please submit the form to the Quality Office [quality@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@howcollege.ac.uk)

You will receive an acknowledgement within **5 working** days upon receipt of your complaint.

The complaint will be investigated by the department/area with the aim to respond to the issue raised within **10 working days**. The outcome of the investigation is to be recorded and forwarded to the Quality Office who will be kept informed throughout the investigation process.

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

### **STAGE 2 (Appeal)**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 response, you may appeal, by submitting the specified HE Stage 2 appeal form (appendix 2) also located on the College

website [student-he-complaints-form-appeal-stage-2.docx](#), within **10 working days** of receipt of the outcome. Once completed please submit the form to the Quality Office [quality@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@howcollege.ac.uk)

If an appeal is received within this timeframe, the **Vice Principal Curriculum & Standards** will appoint the CRQ Leader for Higher Education or Curriculum Manager to undertake an independent investigation. This investigation should report back to the **Quality Office** within **10 working days**

The outcome of the appeal will be sent to the complainant in writing within **5 working days** of the conclusion of the review.

### **STAGE 3 (Formal Referral)**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal a formal referral can be submitted using the specified HE Stage 3 Referral Form (appendix 3) also located on the College website [student-he-complaints-formal-referral-stage-3.docx](#) within **5 working days**. Once completed please submit the form to the Quality Office [quality@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@howcollege.ac.uk). 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.

### **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

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

## **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.*

## Appendix 1

### Student HE Complaints Form (Stage 1)

We encourage you in the first instance to seek a resolution with the teaching or corporate service area principally involved with your issue. This is often the quickest and most efficient way to resolve any issues you have. If, however, you are still dissatisfied, then please complete this form and submit to the Quality Office [quality@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@howcollege.ac.uk)

#### YOUR DETAILS

In this section we ask for your information to help us communicate with you about your complaint.

Our default method of communication will be via email. If you would prefer to receive correspondence via post, please tick this box.

By leaving the box unticked you are agreeing to receive correspondence from us via email.

<b>First Name:</b>		<b>Surname:</b>	
<b>Address Line:</b>			
		<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone No:</b>		<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Student ID number:</b>		<b>Course Title:</b>	
<b>Student Date of Birth:</b>		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 prior to the commencement of any investigation.	

<b>Have you tried to resolve the issue informally?</b>
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>If 'yes' what has been the response to your complaint? If 'no', you are encouraged to seek a resolution with the teaching or corporate service area principally involved with your issue.</b>

<b>Please give a complete and thorough account of your complaint. Please include details of the services or staff members involved, what happened and when, and reference any supporting evidence that you would like to provide (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</b>

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<b>Full name (capitals):</b>			
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

## Appendix 2

### Student HE Complaints Form Appeal (Stage 2)

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 response, you may submit an appeal by completing this form, outlining your grounds for appeal, **within 10 working days** of receipt of the outcome. Please complete this form and submit to the Quality Office [quality@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@howcollege.ac.uk)

If an appeal is received within this timeframe the CRQ Leader for Higher Education or a Curriculum Director will be appointed to review the appeal and carry out an independent investigation.

This investigation should report back to the Quality Office **within 10 working days**. The outcome of the appeal will be sent to the complainant in writing **within 5 working days**.

<b>First Name:</b>		<b>Surname:</b>	
<b>Address Line:</b>			
		<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone No:</b>		<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Student ID number:</b>		<b>Course Title:</b>	
<b>Student Date of Birth:</b>		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 prior to the commencement of any investigation.	

<b>Stage 1 Investigating Officer:</b>		<b>Date of Stage 1 Outcome Letter:</b>	
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#### Grounds for Appeal - please select as appropriate:

New evidence has come to light that was not or could not have been available during the Stage 1 investigation

There is evidence that the Stage 1 investigation has not been conducted properly e.g. administration

There is evidence that the judgement reached at Stage 1 was biased or unfair

**Please provide an explanation for your grounds for appeal. Please attach any supporting evidence. (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)**

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<b>Full name (capitals):</b>			
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

## Appendix 3

### Student HE Complaints Formal Referral (Stage 3)

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 response, you may submit a formal referral by completing this form, outlining your grounds, **within 5 working days** of receipt of the outcome. Please submit completed form to the Quality Office [quality@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@howcollege.ac.uk)

A **Vice Principal** may then arrange a hearing and a final decision will be made. 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.

<b>First Name:</b>		<b>Surname:</b>	
<b>Address Line:</b>			
		<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone No:</b>		<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Student ID number:</b>		<b>Course Title:</b>	
<b>Student Date of Birth:</b>		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 prior to the commencement of any investigation.	

<b>Stage 2 Investigating Officer:</b>		<b>Date of Stage 2 Outcome Letter:</b>	
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<b>Grounds for Formal Referral - please select as appropriate:</b>
New evidence has come to light that was not or could not have been available during the Stage 2 investigation <input type="checkbox"/>
There is evidence that the Stage 2 investigation has not been conducted properly e.g. administration <input type="checkbox"/>
There is evidence that the judgement reached at Stage 2 was biased or unfair <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Please provide an explanation for your grounds for a formal referral. Please attach any supporting evidence. (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</b>

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<b>Full name (capitals):</b>			
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	