

STUDENT FE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2025-28

FURTHER EDUCATION (FE)

For completion by The Executive

Strategic Theme (7Ps)	Purpose	X	Place	X	People	X	Prosper	
	Partnership		Potential		Planet			
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Postholder Responsible for Review (job title)	Vice Principal - Quality							
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1. Purpose

This policy outlines the Colleges approach to managing and responding to internal and external complaints within Further Education (FE)

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Students studying on an FE course.
- Parents/ Guardians of student studying on an FE course (especially for learners under 18 or with an EHCP)
- Member of the public or service user

2. Policy Statement

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 Vice Principal Curriculum & Standards on all our campuses and are regularly analysed and reported on to both senior managers and the Corporation.

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.

4. Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more persons about the provider’s action, lack of action, or the standard of service, which has negatively affected the complainant’s experience

Complainant: The individual or group raising the complaint. This can be:

- A learner
- A parent/carers (especially for learners under 18 or with an EHCP)
- A member of the public or service user

Informal complaint:

A process where the complaint is addressed quickly and simply, often through direct communication with staff or tutors, without initiating the formal complaints procedure.

Formal Complaint

A written complaint submitted through the College official procedure, often requiring completion of a form and supporting evidence, which initiates a formal review process that results in a written response.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Governing Body

Ensure the policy aligns with relevant legislation and is effectively implemented.

5.2 Principal and Senior Leaders

Ensure the policy aligns with relevant legislation and guidance, with regular reviews of the policy. Oversee and ensure the policy is effectively implemented.

5.3 Staff

Comply with the policy and participate in relevant training.

5.4 Students

To follow the procedure when submitting a complaint

6. Procedures

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

Complainants are encouraged in the first instance to seek a solution with the teaching or corporate service 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 and are centrally managed and monitored by Quality.

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 the Vice Principal Quality who will decide whether to proceed with an investigation.

The incidence, outcome and resolution of formal complaints is monitored by recording the following information:

- 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 Formal Stage One, complaints must be submitted using the specified Complaint Form. You should follow the instructions on the form and submit to quality@howcollege.ac.uk for processing. The Quality Team acknowledges all formal complaints, 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 Two) and arrangements for independent investigations for appeals are also co-ordinated by the Quality Team and overseen by the Vice Principal Quality. 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 Team which is then passed to a Vice Principal for a final hearing and decision (Stage Three).

At all stages of the Complaints Procedure, notes from meetings and any correspondence are stored centrally. A representative from the Quality Team 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.

STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

We encourage you in the first instance to seek a resolution with the teaching or corporate service team principally involved in your issue. We may suggest this as a course of action, where we think this is appropriate. This is often the quickest and most efficient way to resolve any issues you may have. If, however, you are still dissatisfied then you can proceed to stage 1.

STAGE 1

You may make a formal complaint by completing the specified Formal Complaint Stage 1 form (appendix 1) below, also located on the College website: [student-fe-complaints-form-stage-1.docx](#) Once completed please submit the form to the Quality Team 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 Team** who will be kept informed throughout the investigation process.

The Quality Team 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 the complaint is unresolved, the decision can be appealed within **10 working days** to the **Quality Team** by submitting the specified Stage 2 appeal form (appendix 2) also located on the College website [student-fe-complaints-form-appeal-stage-2.docx](#) Once completed please submit the form to the Quality Team quality@howcollege.ac.uk

If an appeal is received within this timeframe, the **Vice Principal Quality** will appoint a Director of Curriculum/ Curriculum Manager or Corporate Service Manager from another Directorate/Area to undertake an independent investigation. This investigation should report back to **Quality** 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 the complainant does not accept the outcome of the appeal a formal referral can be submitted using the specified Stage 3 Referral Form (appendix 3) also located on the College website [student-fe-complaints-formal-referral-stage-3.docx](#) within **5 working days**. Once completed please submit the form to the Quality Team 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.

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.

The contact details for the Quality Team are as follows:

The Quality Team
Heart of Worcestershire College
All Saints' Building
Deansway
Worcester
WR1 2JF

E-mail: quality@howcollege.ac.uk
Telephone: 01905 743520

7. Monitoring and Review

- Procedure to be reviewed every 3 years

8. Legal and Regulatory Framework

- The Equality Act 2010.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Guidance.

9. Training and Awareness

N/A

10. Environmental Impact/Sustainability Considerations (if applicable)

We encourage the submission and handling of complaints through digital platforms to reduce paper usage and minimise environmental impact. Printed materials will be used only when necessary or requested for accessibility reasons.

11. Legal Requirements/Issues outside of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The College must comply with the **UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

12. Equality Impact Assessment Statement

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 ELT meetings in order to demonstrate compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

13. Related Policies and Documents

Equality & Diversity Policy
Fees Policy
GDPR Policy
Student Standards
Safeguarding Policy
FE Assessment Policy

14. Appendices

Appendix 1

Student FE 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 Team 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.

First Name:		Surname:	
Address Line:			
		Postcode:	
Telephone No:		Email:	
Student ID number:		Course Title:	
Student Date of Birth:		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	

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Full name (capitals):			
Signature:		Date:	

Appendix 2

Student FE 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 Team quality@howcollege.ac.uk

The Vice Principal Quality will appoint a Director of Curriculum/. Curriculum Manager / Corporate Service Manager from another Directorate/Area to undertake an independent investigation. This investigation should report back to the Quality Team **within 10 working days**

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

First Name:		Surname:	
Address Line:			
		Postcode:	
Telephone No:		Email:	
Student ID number:		Course Title:	
Student Date of Birth:		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.	

Stage 1 Investigating Officer:		Date of Stage 1 Outcome Letter:	
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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)

Full name (capitals):			
Signature:		Date:	

Appendix 3

Student FE 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 Team 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.

First Name:		Surname:	
Address Line:			
		Postcode:	
Telephone No:		Email:	
Student ID number:		Course Title:	
Student Date of Birth:		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.	

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

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

Full name (capitals):			
Signature:		Date:	