



## **COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **PROCEDURE**

Document reference	2533
Version number	042
Owner	Adrian Walker
Department/Area	Quality & Standards
Date of review	19.07.24
Date of approval	24.07.24
Approved by	SLG
Next review date	23.07.26
Date of EIA if appropriate	29.07.24
Status (delete as appropriate)	Internal/Website

## SCOPE

Written and/or verbal complaints, compliments and suggestions from students, employers, members of staff, parents, visitors, local residents, related organisations or any other stakeholder relating to all aspects of College business (but specifically excluding issues relating to employment as this is dealt with elsewhere).

## Introduction

This procedure is approved by the College's Senior Leadership Group and informed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals.

Students enrolled on a course awarded by a partner university are referred to the relevant university's policies and procedures, which can be found at:

- University of Wolverhampton - [Current students - University of Wolverhampton \(wlv.ac.uk\)](http://wlv.ac.uk)
- University of Worcester - [University policies and procedures - University Of Worcester](#)
- Coventry University - [Key Information | Coventry University](#)

## Purpose

To ensure that due consideration is given to all feedback received about any aspect of the College's performance around its core purpose of providing education and training, that a constructive approach is applied and maintained, and that, wherever possible, there is a positive resolution to any complaint and dissemination of compliments and suggestions.

## COMPLAINTS

### Procedure

For this procedure, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students or stakeholders about something the College has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College. All complaints are taken seriously, and students or stakeholders will not be penalised for making a genuine complaint.

Examples of issues that might be raised include:

- The College not meeting obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks or a student charter misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the provider.
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration including, where applicable, delivery by a partner provider.
- Poor quality of learning resources or facilities.
- Poor quality services.

- Events causing significant disruption to the normal delivery of a course, service or other aspect of the student experience, such as industrial action or a public health emergency.
- Concerns about policies or procedures relating to financial support, immigration processes or welfare support.
- Concerns about a service delivered by other organisations or contractors on behalf of the provider that the complainant feels have affected the learning experience.

Examples of issues that are not handled as complaints include:

- a concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding student progression, academic assessment and awards, which would normally be considered under the academic appeals process.
- a concern raised by a student about the outcome of their own disciplinary process or other specific processes. Instead, if desired, the student should contact the relevant external regulatory body.
- matters relating to the Student Loans Company, which has its own complaints procedures.

Advice and guidance are available from the student representative body (Students' Union). All parties involved in a complaint have the right to be accompanied by a representative at each stage of the procedure. Neither party can be accompanied by legal representation.

### **Early resolution**

Before raising a formal complaint, and within 30 calendar days of the issue, you are expected to try to resolve concerns locally with the relevant staff member(s) as most problems can be resolved quickly and informally in this way. This activity of addressing informally should not exceed a timeline of ten working days.

If you cannot or do not want to talk to the person directly concerned, you can:

- Talk to a personal tutor.
- Discuss the matter with the student representative body (Students' Union). The Students' Union (SU) can help act as a mediator to help resolve complaints informally and can accompany you to a meeting.
- If the issue is around a member of staff and you would like to be accompanied when this meeting takes place, you can ask for someone to come with you. That person will support you in getting your points across as clearly as possible and help where possible to enable you and the person concerned to resolve the problem informally.

You should keep a record of any action taken to resolve an issue and keep copies of all relevant correspondence. If the concern(s) cannot be resolved locally, or there are exceptional circumstances where it may not be appropriate to raise the matters locally, you can raise a formal complaint.

### **Formal Complaints**

Any customer wishing to make a formal complaint should complete the "Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions" form [QS/090](#) available from [CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk](mailto:CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk), College receptions, the College intranet, or by sending a letter or e-mail of complaint. If a student requires support, the SU can help put together and write a formal complaint.

The completed form, complaint letter or e-mail should be given/forwarded to the Standards

Assurance Co-ordinator ([CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk](mailto:CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk) or handed in to reception) within 3 calendar months of the date of the event or when the issue of complaint occurred. The Standards Assurance Co-ordinator will register, appropriately number and acknowledge the complaint within five working days. The complaint will be forwarded to the relevant College senior manager who will investigate the complaint.

In the case of a complaint against the Chief Executive Officer & Principal, Director of Corporate Governance or a governor other than the Chair of the Corporation, the complaint will be forwarded to the Chair of the Corporation for investigation. In the case of a complaint against the Chair of the Corporation, the complaint will be registered by the Director of Corporate Governance and forwarded to the Chair of the Audit Committee who will be responsible for investigating the complaint. The Director of Corporate Governance will maintain a register of these complaints indicating who is responsible for investigating the complaint and the area of concern and the outcome of the complaint.

A full complaints register will be maintained by the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator for monitoring and review purposes.

Any complaints addressed directly to the Chief Executive Officer & Principal will be acknowledged by the Chief Executive Officer & Principal's Office, copied to the relevant senior manager or governor and logged with the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator in the same way.

Each complaint will be investigated fairly, and the College will endeavour to respond fully to the complainant's satisfaction within 10 working days. If a full response is not possible within this timescale the complainant will be advised of the situation by the senior manager or governor investigating the complaint

Once the complaint is investigated, you will receive a written response from the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator and the investigating officer may **uphold / not uphold / partially uphold** the complaint (appendix 1). If appropriate the senior manager or governor who has investigated the complaint will instigate an action plan to minimise, or remove, the risk of the situation recurring in the future.

Should the complainant's issue relate to the facilitation of a qualification accredited by an awarding organisation, then once the College has completed its internal complaints investigation, if the complainant is still not satisfied, then they may contact the appropriate awarding organisation. Details of how to contact the awarding organisation are available from the Examinations office. Subsequently, if the complainant wishes to take their issue further than the Awarding Organisation, they will be supplied with the contact details for the appropriate regulatory authorities.

All complaints received in the College will be graded 1 – 3 by the Standards and Assurance Co-ordinator with three being the most serious. Records will be retained for three academic years.

### **1. Blue – Minor/Insignificant Complaints**

Typically, these are complaints related to administration, cleanliness, customer service, advertising, course information, internal/external communication, resources, refectory,

timetabling, student accommodation, car park and environment.

This will be where a complaint is a result of a minor failing or failure but has no tangible/long lasting effect on the student/College or both.

The overall risk to College business will be insignificant or minor, having little risk to the student/College or both.

Following investigation of the complaint a letter will be sent to the complainant thanking them for bringing their concerns to the attention of the College. The letter will address any issues raised, apologise for any failings on our part and will inform the complainant that their concerns have been forwarded to the relevant manager or governor for any relevant action.

## **2. Amber – Moderate Complaints**

Typically, these are complaints related to enrolment, quality of teaching/learning, course content, staffing, finance, personnel matters, course delivery/mode of attendance and additional support or whereby complaints identified in category 1 are not fully addressed.

This will be where a complaint is a result of a moderate failing or failure resulting in some effect on the student/College or both.

The overall risk to College business will be a moderate effect on the student/College or both.

Following investigation of the complaint a letter will be sent to the complainant thanking them for bringing their concerns to the attention of the College. The letter will address any issues raised, apologise for any failings on our part and will inform the complainant that their concerns have been addressed. Where necessary this will be followed up by an action plan produced by the individual manager or governor with responsibility and deadline dates which will be copied to the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator.

## **3. Red – Major Complaints**

Typically, these are complaints related to bullying and harassment, allegation of corruption, dereliction of duty, discrimination on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age, child protection, invigilation/examinations or loss of accreditation, assessments/assignments/certification, awarding body, equal opportunities and health and safety or complaints in category 2 which are not fully addressed.

This will be where a complaint is a result of a major failing or failure resulting in a very serious or severe effect on the student/College or both.

The overall risk to College business will be critical where punitive measures could be imposed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency/Ofsted, Higher Education Funding Council for England/Office for Students, Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), Health and Safety Executive or other relevant body. For example, if no action were taken the complaint could risk injury or death and where the College could receive headline news, national press coverage, TV or radio.

This complaint will warrant a full investigation of the complaint with statements from relevant managers/governors/staff/students/visitors, etc. A letter of response keeping the complainant informed will be sent at regular intervals and once the complaint is concluded a

final letter of response will be sent outlining the action taken. Where necessary a full action plan with deadline dates and identified responsibility will be drawn up by the relevant senior manager or governor and a copy will be sent to the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator who will monitor that the corrective actions have been implemented and risk of a repeat complaint/incident is minimal.

## **MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS**

Managers will receive an e-mail each term from the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator identifying any outstanding complaints. Each term the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator will produce an analysis of all feedback received which will be reported to the Senior Leadership Group on a termly basis and to the Corporation.

The complaints process flowchart in appendix 4 shows how the complaints system operates within Dudley College of Technology.

### **Appeal - Dissatisfaction with the action taken in respect of a complaint.**

If the complainant wishes to take a complaint further because they are dissatisfied with the action taken, or response made, they can appeal the complaint decision. The appeal must be submitted within 15 working days of receiving the written response to the complaint.

An appeal can be requested under the following grounds:

- A review of the procedures followed at the formal complaints stage.
- A consideration of whether the complaint outcome was reasonable; or new material evidence which the complainant was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

The complainant should write to the Chief Executive Officer & Principal, except where the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer & Principal then the appeal should be made to the Chair of the Corporation. Where the complaint is against the Director of Corporate Governance or a governor other than the Chair of the Corporation or the Chair of the Audit Committee, the complainant should write to the Chair of the Audit Committee, clearly stating reasons for the continued dissatisfaction.

Once the appeal is received, an appeal manager will be appointed from the Senior or Executive leadership team. They will review the procedures followed at the formal complaints stage, including:

- Reviewing the procedures followed at the formal complaints stage.
- Considering whether the complaint outcome and investigating officer response was appropriate and in line with this procedure.
- Considering new information and material evidence which was unable or not considered at the formal complaint stage.

The review of the complaint investigation and outcome will be completed, and a response (appendix 2) sent to the complainant within 10 working days of the complaint appeal being received.

The College's internal procedures finish at the end of the appeal stage. If the complainant is

not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they can refer to the relevant external agencies:

- Further Education: Education and Skills Funding Agency  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-post-16-education-and-training-provision-funded-by-esfa>  
For Further Education students, if you are not satisfied with the final response from the ESFA, you have the right to complain to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, through your local MP.
- For Access to HE courses: <https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/contact-us/concerns>
- Higher Education: Office of the independent Adjudicator (OIA):  
<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/can-you-complain-to-us/>  
For Higher Education students, if your complaint is within OIA rules, the College will issue a Completion of Procedures letter (appendix 3) within 28 days of the completion of the appeal stage.

## COMPLIMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

Compliments or suggestions can be made on the official “Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions” form [QS/090](#), which is available from [CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk](mailto:CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk), at receptions, and on the College intranet, by ticking the form as appropriate. All forms should be submitted to the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator; via receptions or email at [CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk](mailto:CCS@dudleycol.ac.uk).

Compliments will be logged for reference, with copies circulated to relevant staff and managers affected by their content. We encourage the identification and acknowledgment of compliments and suggestions in the review and evaluation process, in supporting and sharing best practice.

All compliments will be graded in relation to good practice regarding standards and performance in the College. The grading of the compliments will be in line with good practice, numbered 1 – 3 with 3 being the highest accolade. The grading of compliments will be as follows:

### 1. Bronze ★

Where an internal or external compliment is made regarding an individual member of staff or department with relation to their knowledge of the subject/topic or individual attention given to the customer.

The compliment is acknowledged and logged by the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator and forwarded to the relevant manager. A copy of the compliment will be kept on the compliments system and a copy attached to the compliment record for review purposes.

### 2. Silver ★★

Where an internal or external compliment is made regarding an individual member of staff or department with relation to their knowledge of the subject/topic or individual attention given to the customer is very good. This could be someone or a department who provides very good customer service by responding quickly and effectively

to a situation with regard to equality and diversity or staff service.

The compliment is acknowledged and logged by the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator and forwarded to the relevant manager. A copy of the compliment will be kept on the compliments system and a copy attached to the compliment record for review purposes.

### **3. Gold \*\*\***

Where an internal or external compliment is made regarding an individual member of staff or department with relation to their knowledge of the subject/topic or individual attention given is exceptional to the customer. This could be someone or a department who offers exceptional customer service which is beyond their normal duties regarding teaching and learning, health and safety (safe learner concept), additional support and supporting vulnerable students.

The compliment is acknowledged and logged by the Standards Assurance Co-ordinator and forwarded to the relevant manager. A copy of the compliment will be kept on the compliments system and a copy attached to the compliment recorded for review purposes.

Every department has a duty to consider and review all suggestions received from internal and external customers. They should debate on the practicalities, costs and benefits of implementing suggestions. Suggestions implemented and acted upon must be reviewed annually to measure impact and benefit to College business.



## Appendix I - Formal Complaint Investigation Report

Dear [Name of complainant],

A formal complaint was submitted on (date). In summary, the points raised in the complaint were:

1.

2.

3.

etc.

During the complaint manager's (name) investigation, they

(add in details, including any meetings and witness statements. Attach as appendices and list them)

Following investigation, the complaint manager's findings regarding the above points are as follows:

(response to each point raised in the complaint)

1.

2.

3.

etc.

The complaint manager therefore finds that the complaint is **upheld / not upheld / partially upheld** (delete as appropriate).

As a result of the above finding, the complaint manager makes the following recommendations:

(Add details of any recommendations and/ or redress to the student)

Yours sincerely

(Authorised signatory)

## Appendix 2 - Formal Complaint Appeal Report

Dear [Name of complainant],

An appeal was submitted on (date). In summary, the grounds raised for the appeal were:

1.

2.

3.

etc.

During the appeal manager's (name) investigation, they

(add in details, including any meetings and witness statements. Attach as appendices and list them)

Following investigation, the appeal manager's findings regarding the above points are as follows:

(response to each point raised in the complaint/review)

1.

2.

3.

etc.

The appeal manager therefore finds that the original decision is **upheld / not upheld / partially upheld** (delete as appropriate).

As a result of the above finding, the appeal manager makes the following recommendations:

(Add details of any recommendations and/ or redress to the student)

Yours sincerely

(Authorised signatory)

## Appendix 3 - Completion of Procedures Letter (HE Student)

Dear [Name of complainant],

### Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of Dudley College of Technology in relation to your complaint / appeal etc\* regarding [please describe] have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your complaint / appeal etc\* were [details].

The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your complaint / appeal etc was / were\*: [brief summary of the complaint etc].

The final decision of Dudley College of Technology is\* [detail] because [reasons].

Dudley College of Technology subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may be able to apply for a review of your complaint / appeal etc\* to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint you have made is eligible under its rules.

When making a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA on or before [insert date - e.g. if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 9 December 2023, this date should be 9 December 2024].

[You should include here any factors which you are aware of which mean that it is particularly important for the student to bring the complaint promptly.]

Guidance on completing and submitting a complaint to the OIA can be found on the OIA's website <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>. The OIA also publishes an Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students on the same link. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. **You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Complaint Form.** You may also wish to seek advice from [refer to students' union or advice service if any] about taking your complaint to the OIA.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

**[HNC/D Pearson awards:** Your qualification is awarded by [name of awarding body], which has some responsibility for considering complaints about the overall quality or standards of your qualification. [name of awarding body] is not a member of the OIA Scheme.

If you submit a complaint to the OIA, it will consider your complaint to identify whether it relates to: (1) an act or omission of [name of higher education provider] relating to the service provided which falls within the OIA's remit; or (2) the overall quality or standards of the qualification itself. Complaints relating to the design, delivery of assessment, moderation

and awarding of the qualification are likely to fall into (2). However, this will be for the OIA to determine.

If the OIA considers that your complaint relates to the overall quality or standards of the qualification itself, it will refer the complaint to [name of awarding body].

Yours sincerely

(Authorised signatory)

## Appendix 4 Formal Complaints Procedure Flow Chart

