



Compliments, Concerns & Complaints Policy & Procedure (For Students and Stakeholders)

POLICY	COMPLIMENTS CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE (FOR STUDENTS & STAKEHOLDERS)	APPROVED BY	Executive Director, Resources & Organisational Development
VERSION	1	EFFECTIVE FROM	29 th November 2019

EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP

Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedure for Students and Stakeholders

1. Objectives

1.1 At East Sussex College, we want to provide an outstanding learning experience for our students. In addition we seek to provide an excellent service for, and develop positive relationships with, students, visitors and all other parties such as parents and carers of young people, employers, stakeholders and neighbours.

1.2 One way we can improve what we do is by listening and responding to peoples' views. The college values the feedback that you provide as a contribution to our commitment to meeting the needs of each student. We are also keen to have feedback from stakeholders, employers, visitors and neighbours to add value to our service and as a contribution to our commitment to the communities the college serves.

1.3 We also like to hear from people when we have met or exceeded expectations and will respond to the compliments we receive. Equally we recognise that sometimes things do not go as planned and there may be reason to express concern or to complain. We aim to deal with concerns and complaints quickly and put things right, or do as much as we can to improve how well we do things. All compliments, concerns or complaints about any of our services or facilities are taken very seriously. Our Compliments, Concerns and Complaints system is part of our customer service process. We use compliments, concerns and complaints to ensure we get things right, congratulate our staff on doing a good job, share best practice and identify and learn how we can do even better. Please note, complaints from students will only be considered under this policy within a period of 6 months from leaving the college or completing your course.

2. Scope

This document provides guidance on procedures for those who wish to compliment the college or who may be dissatisfied with any aspect of the college's services or facilities and who wish to raise a concern or make a formal complaint.

This procedure is not for use by college staff, who are asked to refer to the appropriate HR Policy.

3. Coverage

3.1 All incoming compliments, concerns and complaints from students, visitors and all other parties such as parents and carers of young people, employers, stakeholders and neighbours (list not exhaustive).

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for monitoring compliments, concerns and complaints made by students and stakeholders and for analysing trends and the actions we can take to improve.

4.2 The Quality Office will produce reports for the SLT and Curriculum Quality and Standards sub-committee of the Corporation (CQS), identifying the range of complaints, timescales for resolution and an analysis of underlying issues to prevent reoccurrence. An annual report will be provided to the Corporation.

5. Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Procedures

5.1 Compliments

We are committed to providing all our students, employers and people from the communities we serve with an outstanding service. Similarly we aim to be good neighbours to people who live or work close to the college. The college is pleased to receive compliments. It is always good to know that what we do is appreciated and to hear about positive experiences. This helps the college to know how well we perform, to feedback praise to our staff, to share best practice and to continuously improve.

Compliments also:

- inform us on what aspects of our work are meeting our high quality standards
- enable us to feedback to our staff the appreciation of our students/employers/community members/neighbours
- give us valuable information on excellent practice which can be cascaded across the whole college
- inform us on ways that we might adjust our policies, procedures or practices to incorporate excellent practice.

When we receive a compliment it will be logged by the Quality Office. The contents of the compliment will be fed back to the appropriate line manager. The Quality Office will analyse all compliments and judge where they can be used to inform quality improvement in the college and to give positive feedback and recognition to an individual member of staff or a team of staff, instrumental to providing excellent service.

5.2 Concerns

- **In the case of a student or group of students** most concerns can be resolved by discussing the issue with the person directly involved without delay. Groups of students or an individual may raise a concern about their course with their course representative. Individual students may also raise a concern with their Tutor, Teacher or via Student Services. Individuals or groups should always try to resolve their concern informally in the first instance.
- **In the case of a partner/carer or parent of a student under the age of 18** who is concerned about any aspect of their experience at college, they should initially bring it to the attention of the Teacher or the Tutor who will then take into account all relevant facts, needs and interests of all concerned and use their discretion to resolve the matter with due sensitivity. They will provide feedback to the parent/carer on actions and outcomes normally within 15 working days. If this relates to a safeguarding matter, the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure will be triggered.
- **In rare instances where learners over the age of 18** wish their partner, carer or parent to take up their concern on their behalf, they will be required to sign a letter of authority and submit this to the Quality Office before any concern is progressed.
- **In the case of an employer** who has a concern with any aspect of their employee's course of study at the college, they should initially bring it to the attention of a member of the Work Based Learning team. The appropriate person will then take into account all relevant facts, needs and interests of all concerned and use their discretion to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of employee and employer. They will provide feedback to the employer on the actions and outcomes.

5.3 Complaints

If a concern cannot be resolved informally and only after the recommended avenues have been exhausted, a formal complaint should be made directly to the Quality Office. The complaint will be analysed by a member of the Quality team and then logged, you will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your complaint normally within 3 working days of receipt.

The Quality Office will ensure the complaint is passed to the Director of the relevant area to carry out an investigation by contacting staff who are involved in the complaint or who are responsible for the student or individual concerned. The Quality Office will ensure that the complainant is advised of the outcome of the investigation and actions to be taken by the College. We aim to ensure that this will take place within 15 working days. Should this take longer you will be informed of progress.

The investigating Director will take into account all relevant facts, needs and interests of all parties concerned and propose action that is needed to resolve the matter in the form of a written response to the complainant. This may include action to seek to ensure the matter does not re-occur to the complainant or another student in the future.

You can contact the Quality Office either by:

Completing a Feedback Form.

These forms are available and prominently displayed in each campus reception and on our websites at:

- www.escg.co.uk
- www.sussexcoastcollege.ac.uk
- www.sussexdowns.ac.uk

By writing to the relevant campus:

East Sussex College Eastbourne
Cross Levels Way
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 2UF

East Sussex College Lewes
Mountfield Road
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2XH

East Sussex College Hastings
Station Approach
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 1BA

Email:
complaints@sussexdowns.ac.uk

Email:
complaints@sussexdowns.ac.uk

Email:
quality@sussexcoast.ac.uk

5.4 Appeals

Stage 1

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their complaint they can appeal, in writing, to the Quality Office at the relevant campus.

Appeals must be received within 7 working days from the date of the letter or email sent informing the complainant of the original decision on their complaint.

An acknowledgement of receipt of your appeal will normally be sent within 3 working days.

In order for an appeal to be considered it must:

- Provide new information or information/evidence not considered during the investigation of the original complaint and/or
- Identify where the written response to the complaint is inaccurate or incorrect and/or
- Identify concerns about the conduct of the investigation

The appeal will be reviewed by the relevant Executive member who after reviewing the case; will normally aim to provide a response within 15 working days of receipt of appeal. Appeals may require a meeting with the complainant.

Stage 2

In the event of an appeal having met the criteria above being heard by an Executive member and if the complainant is able to justify that the appeal points raised were not satisfactorily resolved, there is a further point of appeal at the relevant campus Principal's discretion. The second appeal will be heard by the Principal and a nominated Executive Director and a response will normally be given within 15 working days of receipt of second appeal.

Stage 3

Finally, there exists a right to complain to the Education & Skills Funding Agency or other appropriate statutory bodies:

The Complaints Team,
Education & Skills Funding Agency,
Cheylesmore House,
Quinton Road,
Coventry,
CV1 2WT

or by email to: complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

The Education & Skills Funding Agency will check that published procedures are adequate and have been followed.

Stage 4

For Higher Education learners only

From September 1st 2015 the College joined the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) Scheme.

The OIA looks at complaints about the acts and omissions of its members. This includes complaints about service quality, course provision, academic appeals, disciplinary and fitness to practice procedures. In reviewing a complaint, the OIA will consider whether the provider has followed its own regulations and procedures, and whether it has acted in all the circumstances. The OIA cannot review complaints about academic judgement, admissions or student employment matters.

As a classic ombudsman scheme, the OIA is a complaints handler of last resort. Normally, students must exhaust a provider's own internal processes before complaining to the OIA.

Students at the University's Partner Colleges studying for University of Brighton validated awards who wish to make a complaint **should use the procedures of the Partner College**. Thereafter the College will issue a "Completion of Procedures" letter enabling the student, if still dissatisfied, to take their complaint

about the College to the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (“OIA”) without the involvement of the University. Full details are available from the OIA website: www.oiahe.org.uk.

Where the complaint relates to provision by the University, links to the decision of an Examination Board, or concerns academic standards, the student must, in the first instance, **use the complaints procedures of the Partner College**. Once the Partner College’s complaints procedure has been exhausted, then if a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may proceed to submit a Stage 3 Request for Review to the University. (Please note that Stages 1 & 2 are not applicable to students at Partner Colleges). This is the final stage of review and thereafter a “completion of procedures” letter will be issued within 28 days enabling the student, if still dissatisfied, to bring their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (“OIA”).

6. Additional matters

6.1 Only those directly involved in the complaint would normally be aware of the details of a complaint. Complainants will not be treated adversely because they have complained - on the contrary. Complaints will be dealt with positively to seek a remedy. However all complaints are logged and general information is provided to relevant managers and Governors in order to monitor complaints and improve our performance. In some instances we may be required to provide information about complaints when required to do so by law and/or to protect the complainant or others from harm.

6.2 If a student who is subject to disciplinary procedures makes a complaint, which relates in any way to the allegation against him/her, then this matter may be taken into account as part of the Disciplinary Process and not as part of the Complaints Procedures.

6.3 Complaints about a member of staff will be investigated by their Line Manager, at Director level. The Line Manager will normally be expected to share the complaint with the individual member of staff concerned.

6.4 If a complaint investigation identifies justifiable concerns about staff performance/conduct, the Director concerned will notify the Director of Human Resources to agree the appropriate actions to be followed.

6.5 All correspondence from legal representatives, or that which indicates the complainant is seeking legal advice, including compensation claims, will be forwarded for the attention of the College legal team. An acknowledgement of receipt and notification of forwarding will normally be sent within 3 working days. Further, the college's normal action times will no longer apply to this process.

6.6 Complaints that raise serious concerns about 'safeguarding' will be brought to the attention of the Principal, The Head of Student Services and/or the relevant safeguarding contact at each campus immediately.

6.7 Complaints received from Higher Education students will be investigated by the college. An appeal will be reviewed in conjunction with the procedures agreed with our university/HE partner as specified in the current student course handbook for that specific course.

6.8 For FE students, if you remain unhappy after following our own internal complaints/appeals procedures you have the right to contact the Awarding Organisation directly.

Below are contact details for some of the awarding bodies that the college works with, the list is not meant to be exhaustive as the Quality team will be available to assist with others.

- Pearson Edexcel <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/forms/complaints-form.html>
- City & Guilds 1 Giltspur Street London EC1A 9DD or Email: feedbackandcomplaints@citvandguilds.com
- OCR <http://www.ocr.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-policy/>
- Highfield Awarding Body website: www.highfieldabc.com. Alternatively please telephone 0845 2260350.

6.9 Should you address your complaint to the relevant awarding body and remain unhappy with the outcome you may then raise this with the relevant qualification regulator; Ofqual.

Ofqual deal with complaints about:

- when an organisation it regulates does not comply with its regulations
- the award of qualifications by organisations it regulates
- issues that could undermine public confidence in qualifications it regulates
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Before you complain to Ofqual, you should first use the appeal process of the organisation you want to complain about. Ofqual will not normally follow up on a complaint unless you have first been through the awarding body's full appeals process.

You can complain to Ofqual by phone, letter or email to:

Complaints
Ofqual
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

Email: public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 303 3344

7.0 GDPR

Information related to a complaint will be electronically retained for a period of 7 years. It is subject to Freedom of Information requests.

