

*The College is committed to the equality of opportunity and to a proactive approach to equality, which supports and encourages under-represented groups, promotes inclusivity and values diversity.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. We aspire to excellence in all aspects of our work with students and are committed to the continuous improvement of the education and service we provide. We aim to listen carefully to the views of our students and others and to be a College which is self-critical and willing to learn.
- 1.2. We do recognise, however, that from time to time, an individual may feel that the College has fallen short of these high standards of education and service. When concerns or issues arise, we will treat these concerns and issues seriously, respond promptly, and investigate fully so as to resolve the matter in a fair, timely and appropriate way.
- 1.3. We recognise too that complaints are an important source of feedback. Complaints will be monitored and analysed, and we will use this feedback to help bring about continuous improvement in our work.
- 1.4. Under this procedure, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction concerning the College's provision of teaching, learning support or other services the College provides and the purposes of this procedure are:
  - To make it as easy as possible for someone to tell us of his or her dissatisfaction
  - To investigate and address any potential shortfall or deterioration in the service we provide
  - To help us improve services and provide a means of feedback
- 1.5. This procedure sets out the process by which complaints will be handled and is designed to ensure a fair, consistent and open approach.
- 1.6. This complaints procedure can be used by students, parents/carers and other users of the College's facilities or services.
- 1.7. The following types of complaint will not be dealt with under the attached complaints procedure.
  - a) Staff complaints
  - b) Complaints about student disciplinary issues
  - c) Safeguarding / Prevent related complaints
  - d) Whistleblowing complaints

- 1.8. Regardless of the nature of the complaint raised, we will normally provide details of the complaint to any person who is the subject of the complaint and we will inform and involve the appropriate manager(s).
- 1.9. The College will not normally deal with anonymous complaints but may do so exceptionally where it considers that there are good reasons for doing so. Unsigned complaints will normally be logged but no further action taken.
- 1.10. The College will not consider malicious, vexatious or frivolous complaints. The College may take disciplinary action against any student or member of staff whom it considers has made such a complaint.
- 1.11. The College will not normally deal with a complaint if it is raised more than twelve months after the date of the issues complained about or, in the case of a student complaint, more than three months after the student has left the College. Nonetheless, where it is appropriate to do so, information provided may still be used to identify future improvement.
- 1.12. Where a complaint relates to the Principal or the Clerk to the Corporation, it should be sent to the Chair of the Corporation who will be responsible for deciding how it should be dealt with
- 1.13. As a student, if you find the process of making a complaint difficult you should discuss this matter with your personal progress mentor. A student will be entitled to be accompanied by a parent/carer or by a friend of the student at any meetings at any stage of the procedure. As this is an internal process, legal representatives will not normally be permitted.
- 1.14. A complaint against the Corporation, a Board Member (including the Principal if the complaint relates to their role as a Board Member) may be made by an individual or an organisation in relation to their/ its dealings with the College. Any such complaint should be referred to the Clerk to the Corporation under the College's Procedure for Complaints Against the Corporation, Board Members and the Clerk.

## **2. WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN**

- 2.1. If you have a concern, you should in the first instance take it up with the member of staff or person responsible for the area concerned. In most instances we should be able to resolve your concern swiftly, informally and locally through this means. As a student, if you find this difficult you should discuss this matter with your personal progress mentor.
- 2.2. Every effort will be made to resolve the concern to your satisfaction. Issues or problems that are resolved in this way will not be logged as formal complaints.
- 2.3. If the issue is not resolved in this way then you may wish to refer the matter to Stage Two as a formal complaint. There may also be instances where it is appropriate for a complaint to be referred directly to Stage Two without first going through Stage One, for example where the matter complained about is complex or sensitive in nature.

### **3. FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

#### ***Stage Two***

- 3.1. Formal complaints can be made either by letter or by using the complaints form. This form can be obtained from reception or can be downloaded from the website. Formal complaints should be addressed to the Associate Principal – Learning and Improvement.
- 3.2. When a complaint is received it will be recorded in the complaints file and passed to a senior member of staff, normally an Associate Principal. The Associate Principal may investigate and/or determine the complaint or may nominate a manager who will be responsible for investigating and/or determining the complaint.
- 3.3. We will send written acknowledgement of a formal complaint within five College working days of receipt and will undertake to provide a full response as far as possible within ten College working days of its receipt. Should there be a delay, we will notify you and give reasons. You will be notified in writing of the identity of the manager who will deal with and determine the complaint.
- 3.4. In dealing with the complaint, the Associate Principal and/or any manager nominated under section 3.2 may wish to talk to you and/or to other individuals, and/or to call for other information, to clarify their understanding of the issues and in order to reach a determination of the complaint.
- 3.5. The outcome of the complaint will be given to you in writing by the relevant manager. This will provide information on the outcome of any investigation and, if appropriate, what action the College intends to take to resolve the issue. Information relating to the outcome may also be provided to any individuals who have been the subject of the complaint.

#### ***Stage Three***

- 3.6. If you are unhappy with the response to your complaint under Stage Two, then you may request an appeal of the Stage Two decision by writing to the Principal within ten College working days of the date of the written Stage Two decision.
- 3.7. An appeal may be requested on one or more of the following grounds, that:
  - new material information is available which was not previously reasonably available
  - the complaints procedure was not followed
  - the decision reached under Stage Two is unreasonable.
- 3.8. A written statement outlining the reasons for the appeal should be submitted to the Principal. The Principal may nominate another member of the senior management team to deal with and determine the appeal. (If the complaint was determined under Stage Two by the Principal, the appeal will be passed to the Chair of the Corporation who will be responsible for deciding how it should be dealt with.
- 3.10. In dealing with the appeal, the Principal (or other relevant person where the Principal is not dealing with the appeal) may wish to speak to you and/or to other individuals, and/or to call for other information, to clarify their understanding of the issues and in order to reach a determination of the appeal.

- 3.11. The Principal (or other relevant person where the Principal is not dealing with the appeal) will determine whether or not the appeal is upheld (in whole or in part) and the outcome following that determination. You will be provided with a written decision, with reasons, normally within ten College working days of receipt of your letter requesting an appeal. The outcome of the appeal will be final. Where the appeal is upheld (in whole or in part), the Principal (or other person, as relevant) may substitute their own decision for the decision made under Stage 2, refer the matter back to Stage Two to be reviewed or considered afresh, and/or make recommendations to the appropriate College manager.

#### ***Stage Four***

- 3.12. If you remain dissatisfied with the College's handling of your complaint, you may refer your concerns to the Education & Skills Funding Agency. The ESFA advises that anyone sending a complaint to them should have exhausted the College's own complaints procedure, including any appeals process first before contacting them.

Their contact details are:

Education & Skills Funding Agency  
53-55 Butts Road  
Earlsdon Park  
Coventry  
CV1 3BH

E-mail: [complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk).

Member of staff responsible for this policy  
Date Approved by the Corporation:  
Date when the Policy will be reviewed:

The Associate Principal – Learning and Improvement  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021  
Spring term 2024