



# Complaints Procedure

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**REF NO. INF-EXE-001**

Approved by Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

<b>Strategy/Policy Responsibility: Senior Leadership Team (SLT)</b>	
<b>Date approved</b>	September 2015
<b>Review date</b>	August 2021
<b>Next review date</b>	August 2022

# Complaints Procedure

## 1. Aims

- To ensure all complaints are handled fairly and consistently.
- All complaints wherever possible, are resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

## 2. Context

Sutton College puts learners first and in so doing we strive to ensure that all learners have a successful and enjoyable experience. We are also committed to serving the wider business and social community.

We therefore have a commitment to our students and stakeholders to ensure that any complaints they may have about our service are dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively. We also recognise that complaints can be used actively to improve our performance.

We make clear to complainants how to contact us when things go wrong and will ensure that we are sensitive to issues of confidentiality. We also set ourselves a deadline to respond to complaints. Complaints are regularly analysed and reported on to Senior Managers and to the Board of Governors.

## 3. Definition

A complaint is defined as a written expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the College's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College. You can expect the College to deal with a complaint seriously, fairly, within a reasonable timescale and, where appropriate, in confidence

## 4. Principles and Scope

- 4.1. This Procedure is for use by learners, potential learners, parents/carers of under 19s, employers, clients and the general public.
- 4.2. The policy aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved.
- 4.3. No complainant bringing a complaint under this procedure will be treated less favourably by any member of staff. If there is evidence to the contrary, the member of staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.
- 4.4. If a complaint is considered to be vexatious or frivolous then the complaint will be referred to the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality or nominee for review and a response to the student or students concerned. In addition, if the language used in the complaint is in breach of the Student code of conduct, disciplinary proceedings may be brought against the complainant.

A frivolous or vexatious complaint can be characterised in a number of ways including, but not limited to, the following:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- Insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;

- Insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
- Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value.

4.5. Anonymous complaints will be investigated. If appropriate, the results of the investigation will be used to improve our service. However, anonymous complainants may find the whistleblowing procedure more appropriate.

4.6. The College has a range of other procedures which may be more appropriate to use:

- Safeguarding.
- Staff Complaints – covered by the Grievance Procedure.
- Allegations of malpractice – covered by the Whistleblowing Policy and the Anti-Bribery, Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy within the Financial Regulations.
- Assessment procedures.

## 5. Responsibility of the College

The College will:

- acknowledge all formal complaints and aim to respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with all complaints;
- take action where appropriate;
- Welcome issues being brought to its attention to enable it to improve.

## 6. Responsibility of the Complainant

The Complainant will be expected to:

- bring their complaint to the College's attention within 6 weeks of the reason for the complaint occurring;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow the College reasonable time to deal with the matter; and
- Recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the College's control.

## 7. Stage 1

7.1. The complainant should raise their concerns with the member of staff who has direct responsibility for the matter in question to try to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

7.2. If the complainant does not feel that their concerns have been addressed by the member of staff with direct responsibility, then they should make a formal complaint to the Principal's/ Office via Your Voice system. (Stage 2)

## 8. Stage 2

8.1. On receipt of a formal complaint, the Head of Executive Support (HES) will log the complaint and acknowledge its receipt within 3 working days.

8.2. Within 21 working days of receiving a complaint the Principal and the investigating manager will provide the results of the investigation and a letter of reply for the complainant detailing the outcome and actions arising from the investigation.

8.3. In cases where the investigating manager is unable to meet the above timescale, the investigating manager will inform the Principal who, in turn, will communicate

this to the complainant.

## 9. Appeals

The complainant has the right of appeal against the response to his/her complaint. The appeal may only be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- That there is additional evidence that could not have been made available at the time the original complaint was considered.
- Proper procedures were not followed.

## 10. Procedure

The complainant should make their appeal by writing to the Principal's office within 15 days of the date of the letter. This letter of appeal should clearly state the grounds for appeal (see above).

The Principal will ask a member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to conduct the appeal. The record of the decision will be provided within 10 working days. There is no further right of appeal within the College's procedures. Complainants can contact the relevant external funding agency if they feel the College has not dealt with their complaint according to this procedure. Contact details are available from the Principal's Office.

## 11. Monitoring and Reporting

- 11.1. The Head of Executive Support (HES) will oversee the tracking and monitoring of complaints progressed through the procedure.
- 11.2. The Complaints Procedure is one aspect of the College's quality assurance procedures; therefore termly reporting will be sent to the Senior Leadership Team and used to facilitate improvements to services and facilities.
- 11.3. The Board of Governors will receive a summary of complaints as part of its oversight role and responsibility for Quality.