

It is intended that this policy is 'fair to all'. Where any part could potentially lead to unequal outcomes, the policy then justifies why this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

SWINDON COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Title: Compliments & Complaints Procedure

Date: August 2019

Review Date: August 2021

Owner: Assistant Principal Planning & Quality

We welcome feedback from all of our students (FE and HE), apprentices, employers and members of the public and take feedback seriously. We want you to let us know when we get things right and when we don't. When things go wrong we want to have the opportunity to put things right and improve. Our aim is to respond quickly and positively and to reach an outcome that is satisfactory and fair for all.

The College views all feedback as positive and aims to resolve complaints quickly and effectively within set time limits. Feedback received will be dealt with promptly and fairly even if the outcome may not be to the customer's satisfaction.

1.0 Responsibilities

The Assistant Principal Planning & Quality is responsible for monitoring compliments and complaints and will analyse trends and actions annually.

2.0 Stage 1 – Informal Concerns

- Customers should bring complaints to the attention of the College as soon as possible and within 20 working days of any alleged incident.
- In the first instance individuals should discuss their concerns with the member of staff directly involved at a mutually convenient time and appropriate action should be agreed.
- If there is no satisfactory outcome or agreed action after the response by the member of staff, the complaint should be referred to the Personal Tutor, Course Leader, Curriculum Manager, depending on the content of the complaint.
- If the complaint still does not have a satisfactory outcome or an agreed action, the matter should be referred to the Director of Faculty or Higher Education (HE) Programme Leader
- In other areas, the staff or the manager of the service area involved will manage the concern.

3.0 Stage 2 – Formal Complaints

- If there is no satisfactory outcome or agreed action after the response has been received from stage 1, a formal complaint (stage 2) can be made via the Assistant Principal Planning & Quality within 10 working days of the response being received.
- A letter or e-mail detailing the complaint should be directed to the Assistant Principal Planning & Quality.
- An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to the complainee within **5 working days***
- The Assistant Principal Planning & Quality may review a complaint and give a decision without formal investigation where it is considered to be deliberately repetitious or vexatious. The College reserves the right to refer any matter to the College solicitors.
- Where a complaint is fully or partially upheld, the College will take positive action to put things right, make every effort to prevent the same thing happening again. If a complaint is not upheld, the customer will be notified accordingly.
- In order to address and contain complaints, the Assistant Principal Planning & Quality will contact any complainee to discuss concerns and, if appropriate, negotiate an acceptable solution.
- Where possible, a formal response will be sent within 10 days after the acknowledgment* of the complaint. If the matter is particularly serious or complicated it may take longer to provide an adequate response. We will communicate this to you.
- In the case of Higher Education (HE) complaints, the relevant HEI may need to be kept informed and, on occasion, further advice sought.

4.0 The outcome of any complaint investigation will be classified in one of three ways:-

- **Substantiated** – complaint was fully justified and will result in corrective action being taken.
- **Partially substantiated** – certain aspects of the complaint were considered justified and will involve some corrective action to be taken.
- **Not substantiated** – the complaint was not found to have sufficient grounds for further action.

5.0 Stage 3 – Escalated formal complaints

- If the complainee is not satisfied with the conclusion from the Assistant Principal Planning & Quality, the complainee has the right, in the case of academic disputes, to appeal to the appropriate awarding body or in the case of an HE complaint, to escalate it to the appropriate university.

6.0 Complaints for Higher Education Courses at Swindon College

- Swindon College offers Higher Education students a range of ways in which to raise concerns relating to their time at college through both formal and informal mechanisms. The Complaints Procedure recognises the Core Practices of the QAA UK Quality Code and aims to provide fair and transparent procedures which are accessible to all students. The outcomes and monitoring of complaints will be used to improve quality of provision and student experience.

- Informal concerns will be dealt with and recorded under the processes highlighted in Sections 2-4 above.
- Swindon College HE students submitting a complaint who are enrolled on an HE programme such as HNC/HND will have their complaint dealt with within this policy
- All HE complaints will be reviewed by members of the HE management team in the first instance. Thereafter, other members of the Curriculum staff and other Senior Management Team members may become involved as appropriate.
- The student will receive a written response detailing the college's decision. If the complaint is **not upheld** a letter entitled 'Completion of Procedures' will be issued which denotes that the college has exhausted the internal complaints procedure.
- Students attending Swindon College who are also enrolled on a partner University's programme will have their complaint progressed through the procedures outlined in this document in the first instance. Where a student feels that their complaint has not been dealt with appropriately by Swindon College they may refer the complaint to the University by writing to the Student Disputes Officer and enclosing the college 'Completion of Procedures' letter.
- Once internal College procedures have been exhausted, or in the case of a student enrolled with a partner University, the College **and** University procedures have been exhausted, and if the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant, the student can refer their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. This OIA must receive the complaint within 12 months of the issue date on the Completion of Procedures letter. The OIA operate an independent review scheme acting as an appeal body. Further details and information for students can be found at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

7.0 Retention of Data

- 7.1 All correspondence relating to any complaints or appeals will be retained in an electronic form by the College for a period of no more than 2 years from the end of the academic year in which it was received.
- 7.2 All hard copies relating to any complaint or appeal will be scanned electronically and the hard copy destroyed

8.0 Compliments

The Assistant Principal Planning & Quality will ensure all compliments are passed onto the staff/teams to whom they are directed and recorded.