



# PLUMPTON COLLEGE --- GROUP

## Complaints Policy

This policy sets out a framework for dealing complaints. The policy is applicable to all employees within the Plumpton College Group.

Any reference to Plumpton College is relevant to the Plumpton College Group, meaning any employee employed by its subsidiaries, its holding company or any subsidiary of its holding company.

SMT Assigned Owner	Jeremy Kerswell
Document Author	Jeremy Kerswell
Approved by	Corporation
Date of Approval	April 2021
Date of minor amendments approved by SMT	March 2022
Frequency of review	Three years
Date of next review	March 2024

The SMT is delegated to approve minor changes to the policy in response to legal changes and best practice.

## 1. Policy Statement

1.1 The Complaints Policy and Procedure provides the framework within which anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with College services can raise their concerns. This includes complaints from students, parents, customers, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors, consumers of products/ancillary services and others.

1.2 Whilst it is the College's aim to have few or no complaints about any aspect of its activity, when complaints do arise, the College will ensure that they are dealt with in a positive spirit. As a College we are committed to providing excellent education and training and are looking for continuous improvement in everything we do.

1.3 Complaints are deemed to involve an expression of dissatisfaction, grievance or fault finding about the College.

1.4 All issues are logged, whether dealt with as a formal or informal complaint, to ensure fairness and to mitigate any further complaint.

1.5 The College is keen to ensure this policy is operated in a consistent, fair and non-discriminatory way. To this end, we will aim to resolve complaints:

- Effectively (in making changes if and where needed)
- Speedily (particularly with regard to the impact on learning; but not at the expense of thoroughness)
- By keeping the stress to a minimum for all involved
- With consistency and fairness
- With mindfulness that dealing with a complaint may itself have an educational value for all involved which we should not lose

## 2. Application and Scope

2.1 The College will thoroughly investigate any complaint, whether informal or formal, relating to the day-to-day operation of the College and the standards of service we provide.

2.2 Areas excluded from the policy are:

- Curriculum content or examination results where other forms of redress are more appropriate such as the examining body or the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and, in this case, complainants should be referred to the appropriate body.
- Employment issues which are covered by staff Grievance Procedures.
- Any matter that is the subject of legal action.
- Any complaint which is deemed to be vexatious or malicious following investigation.

## 3. The Procedures

There are three main areas of the Complaints Policy and Procedures: informal complaints, formal complaints, and appeals:

### 3.1 Informal Complaints

3.1.1 There can be instances when a complainant may wish to remain anonymous or request that the issue be dealt with informally. Such individuals should be directed to the person who is directly concerned or best suited to resolve that issue. The details can be emailed to the relevant person if preferred. For students, this is likely to be the Personal Tutor or Programme Manager. In circumstances where these individuals are the source of the complaint then the relevant Manager should be contacted. The Complaints Administrator should be informed so that details can be logged as 'informal' on the Complaints Log.

3.1.2 For those individuals who are unsure whom to initially contact, please contact the College Complaints Administrator (Principal's PA) who will direct the complaint accordingly: [complaints@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@plumpton.ac.uk).

3.1.3 Responsibility for the prompt follow up of informal complaints will lie with the respective member of the College Management Team. The manager should endeavour to resolve the complaint but should refer it if it is evident that a resolution is not likely to be met. This should be done to prevent it becoming a more serious matter.

3.1.4 At this informal stage complaints may be made in person, by phone or by email. The complainant must be kept informed of progress at all stages, with a written or verbal response to the complaint provided within 10 working days.

3.1.5 Where no informal resolution can be achieved within ten working days of the initial complaint being raised, the complainant may choose to progress their complaint by using the Formal Complaints Procedure below.

## 3.2 Formal Complaints

3.2.1 Formal complaints should be submitted in writing and addressed to the Complaints Administrator (Principal's PA), or by email and sent to [complaints@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@plumpton.ac.uk).

3.2.2 Any other member of staff receiving a formal letter of complaint must forward a copy of the complaint to the Complaints Administrator, using the email address, on the day of receipt together with any additional information they may hold on the matter. This may help to speed up the response time.

3.2.3 A written acknowledgement to the complainant will be sent by the Complaints Administrator within three working days and the details logged on the Complaints Log for monitoring and reporting purposes. All correspondence will be filed securely.

3.2.4 The complaint submitted should clearly set out the circumstances of the complaint, any individuals or witnesses involved and any relevant dates or times. It is also helpful if they can be submitted in a timely fashion.

3.2.5 Complaints will be investigated fairly and quickly by the relevant member of the College Management Team who will ensure that a detailed response, with evidence, is sent to the Complaints Administrator within the prescribed timescale where appropriate.

3.2.6 The Complaints Administrator will send the response in writing within ten working days from the date of the receipt of the complaint, detailing the outcome of the investigation. If the investigation is going to take more than ten working days, the Complaints Administrator will send a further holding letter. There may be occasions whereby the Complainant is offered a meeting/telephone call to discuss the outcome of the investigation (in such instances, this can be followed by a formal outcome in writing).

3.2.7 Where complaints are received within ten working days of a holiday period, or during a holiday period, it is expected that the complaint response will take longer than ten working days due to the absence of appropriate staff to investigate. This will be confirmed in writing.

3.2.8 Any complaint received six calendar months after the complainant's last date of attendance at Plumpton College must be able to show sufficient evidence that they lodged a formal or informal complaint during their period of their study, for the College to be able to investigate under this Policy.

### 3.3 Appeals

3.3.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision made or reasons given, they may appeal against the decision. A complainant has ten working days in which to submit an appeal. The reason for the appeal should be clearly stated in writing and sent to The Appeal Panel via the Complaints Administrator at the address below.

3.3.2 A written acknowledgement will be sent by the Complaints Administrator within three working days.

3.3.3 The Appeal Panel will consist of at least two members of the Senior Management Team who were not involved in dealing with the original complaint. They will consider all the documentation available relating to the issues raised. The Appeal Panel will respond within fifteen working days from the date of the receipt of the appeal. If the review of the complaint is going to take more than fifteen working days, the Complaints Administrator will send a further holding letter. The decision at the end of this stage is final and will be confirmed in writing.

3.3.4 If the College cannot settle the complaint to the satisfaction of the person involved, then a complaint may be referred to:

- The Skills Funding Agency if the complaint relates to Further Education:  
[complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk)  
Complaints Team Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

- Ofsted if the complaint relates to any service in relation Further Education:  
<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>
  - The Office of the Independent Adjudicator if the complaint relates to Higher Education:  
[Office of the Independent Adjudicator](https://www.oia-uk.org/)
  - Or direct to the appropriate Secretary of State. If the complaint is justified, the Secretary of State can insist that things are put right.
- 
- UK Border agency if complaint relates to a Tier 3 or Tier 4 visa
  - +44 (0)300 790 6268 or if you cannot contact UK 0300 numbers, use +44 (0)203 875 4669.
  - <https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk>

3.3.5 The Complaints Administrator will produce a report for the Senior Management Team at the end of each academic year giving a summary of any complaints. Any structural or strategic issues raised by this report will be discussed and, if necessary, incorporated in the appropriate/relevant College's Quality Improvement Action Plan. This report will also inform the College's appropriate/relevant Report.

#### 4. Complaint against the Corporation

4.1 A complaint against the Corporation, a member of the Corporation or the Clerk to the Corporation may be made by an individual, business or an organisation.

4.2 Complaints against the Corporation or a member of the Corporation should preferably be made in writing and addressed to:

The Clerk to the Corporation  
 Plumpton College  
 Ditchling Road  
 Plumpton East  
 Sussex  
 BN7 3AE

If you require assistance making a complaint, please let us know.

4.3 Complaints against the Clerk should be addressed to the Chairman of Corporation, please refer to point 4.9 for details.

4.4 The complaint should state clearly the nature of the complaint and, if appropriate, provide copies of any related documentation. The complainant should also state the remedy they are seeking.

4.5 The Clerk to the Corporation will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint without delay
- investigate the complaint
- endeavour to provide a response to the complaint within four weeks and, if this is not possible, provide the complainant with an interim statement.

4.6 The written response of the Clerk to the Corporation will include details of any arrangements for pursuing the matter with an independent body (see paragraph 4.11 below).

4.7 The Clerk to the Corporation will keep the Chair informed of the situation and will provide the Corporation with a written statement of the nature of the complaint and the response at the next Corporation meeting. Such a report shall be circulated to members within ten working days of the response of the Clerk to the complainant so that members are aware of the situation.

4.8 When carrying out an investigation of a complaint against the Corporation or an individual member of the Corporation the Clerk to the Corporation will have the authority to refer issues to the Corporation's auditors (external and/or internal) or other appropriate advisers.

4.9 A complaint against the Clerk to the Corporation shall be forwarded to the Chair of the Corporation for investigation and response. Letters for the attention of the Chair of the Corporation should be addressed to:

The Chair of the Corporation  
Plumpton College  
Ditchling Road  
Plumpton  
East Sussex  
BN7 3AE

4.10 The approach to be adopted by the Chair of the Corporation in investigating and responding to a complaint will be the same as that outlined above with regard to complaints against the Corporation and individual members of the Corporation.

4.11 The response will include details of any arrangements for pursuing the matter with any relevant external body (e.g. Secretary of State for Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency), should the complainant not be satisfied with the outcome.