



PLUMPTON

COLLEGE

Complaints Policy

This policy sets out a framework for dealing complaints. The policy is applicable to all employees, students and customers of **Plumpton College**.

SMT Assigned Owner	Jeremy Kerswell
Document Author	Jeremy Kerswell
Approved by	Corporation
Date of Approval	March 2024
Date of minor amendments approved by SMT	July 2026
Frequency of review	Three years
Date of next review	March 2027

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.
- Matters that are subject to a specific procedure, review route or appeal process under another College policy, including decisions relating to external speaker and event approval under the Freedom of Speech Policy, Procedure and Code of Practice.

2.3 Complaints or concerns relating to the application of the College's Freedom of Speech Policy, Procedure and Code of Practice may be considered under this policy where they

concern the way in which the College has handled a matter, service or decision. This policy should be read alongside the College's Freedom of Speech Policy, Procedure and Code of Practice, which sets out specific arrangements for external speakers, events, informal resolution of concerns before an event, and any related appeal process.

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.

3.1.2 The Complaints Administrator should be informed so that details can be logged as 'informal' on the Complaints Log.

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

3.1.4 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.

3.1.5 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 15 working days.

3.1.6 Where no informal resolution can be achieved within 15 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. If the nature of the complaint is not initially clear or it would be helpful to ascertain further information, regardless of whether you have raised informally or the resolution you are looking for, we may ask you to complete the form in Appendix 1.

3.2.1.2 Concerns regarding a proposed speaker or event under the College's Freedom of Speech Policy, Procedure and Code of Practice should normally be raised

in accordance with that policy's process, including the informal route set out there, before being considered under the formal stages of this Complaints Policy where appropriate.

3.2.2 Any other member of staff receiving a formal letter of complaint/formal complaint form must forward a copy of the complaint to the Complaints Administrator, using the email address complaints@plumpton.ac.uk 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. Refer to point 3.2.1.

3.2.5 On receipt of your complaint, an investigating officer (who is a member of the College Management Team) will be allocated to review the case. Their role will be to investigate fairly and quickly and ensure that a detailed response with clear evidence is sent to the Complaints Administrator within the prescribed timescale, where appropriate.

3.2.5.1 The investigating officer must provide the complainant with an opportunity (in person, online meeting or by phone) to discuss the issue, gain a clear understanding, and clarify the specific nature of the complaint. The investigating officer will ensure, where appropriate, that relevant parties are spoken to, evidence reviewed, and a robust review of the complaint is undertaken.

3.2.5.2 Where an investigative report indicates wider college culture, the Senior Management Team will be given an opportunity to consider this, to understand the learning required.

3.2.5.3 If a formal complaint relates to a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), the Principal will act as the investigating officer. The Principal will conduct a thorough investigation and share the findings with external panel members or independent representatives. These external members, alongside Governors, may also be involved in handling any subsequent appeals to ensure impartiality and transparency in the process.

3.2.6 The Complaints Administrator will send the response in writing within 15 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 15 working days, the Complaints Administrator will send a further holding letter. The 15 working days do not include holiday periods or annual leave.

3.2.7 There may be occasions whereby the complainant is offered a meeting/telephone call to discuss the outcome of the investigation. In these cases, a formal written outcome may follow, though it is not always necessary.

3.2.8 Any complaint received 6 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 10 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 complaints@plumpton.ac.uk.

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 20 working days from the date of the receipt of the appeal. If the review of the complaint is going to take more than 20 working days, the Complaints Administrator will send a further holding letter/email.

3.3.4 The decision at the end of this stage is final. Complainants will receive a Completion of Procedures letter confirming that the College has reached a point where we cannot pursue the complaint any further.

3.3.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, or they have received a Completion of Procedures letter, they may wish to request an independent review as per the below.

i) If it relates to an ESFA funded student (e.g., Further Education, Apprenticeships)

The Skills Funding Agency - complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk

Complaints Team

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House

Quinton Road

Coventry

CV1 2WT

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

Or

Ofsted

If the complaint relates to any service in relation Further Education

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

ii) If it relates to a Higher Education Student

- Complainants may be able to request a review of their complaint with the relevant partnering University.
- A review is not a re-investigation of your complaint, the partner university will assess what happened with your complaint at the partner institution.
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision of the review, they may wish to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) - Office of the Independent Adjudicator - <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>.
- The OIA provides an independent scheme for the review of university student complaints and appeals.

iii) If it relates to an international student/learner

UK Border agency if complaint relates to a Student 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>

iv) Where a complaint relates to freedom of speech matters, external review rights may differ depending on the status of the complainant and the nature of the issue. In accordance with the College's Freedom of Speech Policy, Procedure and Code of Practice and the applicable regulatory framework, students may in appropriate cases have access to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), while staff, non-student members and external speakers may have access to the Office for Students free speech complaints scheme, where applicable. The availability of any external review will depend on the eligibility criteria and requirements of the relevant body at the time.

3.3.6 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.

Appendix 1



PLUMPTON COLLEGE

Formal Complaint Form

- Before completing this form, please refer to the College's Complaints Policy to:
 - Familiarise yourself with the procedures outlined in the policy (a copy of which is on the website)
 - See if the College can resolve it informally
- 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.

Your Details

(if you are completing this form on behalf of someone else, please add their details to the last row)

First Name		Title	
Surname			
Programme of Study			
Email address for correspondence			
Day time phone			
If this form is being completed on the behalf of someone else, please add their name here			

GROUP COMPLAINTS - If you are submitting a complaint on behalf of a group of students, you must provide the details of all students that you are representing in the section at the end of this form.

PLEASE SET OUT BELOW THE KEY POINTS OF YOUR COMPLAINT

Your complaint must be summarised here (in no more than 500 words), even if you attach other documents to support it.

Who did you approach to resolve your complaint informally? What action, if any, was taken to resolve your complaint?

Why are you dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal resolution?

How do you propose that your complaint could be resolved to your satisfaction?

What documented evidence do you have to support your complaint? Please give details (and attach any evidence to this form).

GROUP COMPLAINTS ONLY

Please list below all students wishing to be part of this complaint to confirm:

- The students listed below consent to you acting on their behalf; and*
- Each member of the group can demonstrate that they were personally affected by the matter of the complaint*

Student ID number	Student Name