



## Plumpton College

### Complaints Policy & Procedure

#### 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 The Principal's Personal Assistant will undertake the duties of a Complaints Administrator to ensure that all complaints (whether formal or informal) are logged and tracked.
- 1.5 The Complaints Administrator will consider each complaint raised and advise the relevant manager whether it constitutes an informal or formal complaint. Such assessment will consider the seriousness, urgency, sensitivity and impact of the complaint.
- 1.6 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:
  1. 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 such cases complainants should be referred to the appropriate body.
  2. Employment issues which are covered by staff Grievance Procedures.

3. Any matter that is the subject of legal action.
4. Any complaint which is deemed to be vexatious or malicious following investigation.

### **3. The Procedures**

There are three main stages of the Complaints Policy and Procedures;

#### **3.1 Stage 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 Head of Faculty or 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 In some cases individuals are unsure as to whom to raise their complaint with and they are often raised through Reception or Student Services with a request to meet with the Principal. In such cases the complainant should usually be referred to the Head of Faculty of the area which is the subject of complaint.
- 3.1.3 Responsibility for the prompt follow up of informal complaints will lie with the relevant manager.
- 3.1.4 Within this 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 (to include email) 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 escalate their complaint by following the procedure set out in 4.2 Stage 2 – Formal Complaints.
- 3.1.6 If the Head of Faculty is unable to resolve the issue it should usually be referred to a member of the Senior Management Team to resolve through stage two of the complaints procedure.

#### **3.2 Stage 2 - Formal Complaints**

- 3.2.1 Formal complaints should be submitted in writing and addressed to the Complaints Administrator, Laura Janowski or by email and sent to [laura.janowski@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:laura.janowski@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 incident. This may help to speed up the response time

- 3.2.3 A written acknowledgement will be sent by the Complaints Administrator within three working days and the details logged on the Complaints Log for checking and reporting purposes. All correspondence will be filed securely.
- 3.2.4 Any letter submitted should clearly set out the circumstances of the complaint, any individuals or witnesses involved and any relevant dates or times.
- 3.2.5 Where possible, and to provide the greatest opportunity for the complaint to be actioned, complaints should be submitted in a timely fashion in order to facilitate a resolution.
- 3.2.6 Complaints will be investigated fairly and quickly by the Head of Faculty and a copy will be sent to the relevant Senior Manager, with the intention of satisfactorily resolving the matter, identifying the causes and symptoms and upholding or rejecting the complaint for the benefit of all involved.
- 3.2.7 A considered College view on the complaint will be made by the Head of Faculty or relevant member of the Senior Management Team. They will ensure that a detailed response with evidence is sent to the complainant and the Complaints Administrator within ten working days of the complaint being received. This response should be clear on whether the complaint has been upheld or rejected and what (if any) action has been taken to address the complaint.
- 3.2.8 The Complaints Administrator will review the status of each complaint to ensure that the complainant receives an update from a member of SMT if it is not possible to provide a formal response within ten working days.
- 3.2.9 The Principal will be informed of any complaint which is more than 20 working days old and conduct a progress review with the investigating manager to seek assurance that adequate priority is being given to the complaint.
- 3.2.10 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.
- 3.2.11 Following the resolution of a complaint it is the investigating manager's responsibility to update the complainant and SMT on the progress of any outstanding actions relating to the circumstances that gave rise to the complaint.

### **3.3 Stage 3 - Appeals**

- 3.3.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied or aggrieved or in disagreement 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 Complaints Administrator.
- 3.3.2 A written acknowledgement of receipt 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 communicated 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:  
[complaintsteam@sfa.bis.gov.uk](mailto:complaintsteam@sfa.bis.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:  
[Ofsted](#)
- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator if the complaint relates to Higher Education:  
[Office of the Independent Adjudicator - OIA Homepage](#)
- Or direct to the appropriate Secretary of State. If the complaint is justified, the Secretary of State can insist that things are put right.

#### **4. Reporting**

- 4.1 The Complaints Administrator will produce a report for the Senior Management Team and Corporation 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.



Plumpton College

**FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM**

Making a formal complaint (by completing this form), will not affect the complainant's statutory rights. (If you are unable to complete this form yourself, please ask a member of staff or another student to do this for you.)

Please complete this form in black ink using block capitals.

Name of person making the complaint:	Address:    Telephone number:  Email address:
Nature of the complaint. Please identify what your complaint is in regard to. (Continue on separate sheet if necessary.)	
Date your complaint relates to:	
What action would you like the College to take?	
Have you raised this issue informally?	Yes      No  <p style="text-align: right;">(Please circle)</p>
If 'yes' which member of staff did you raise this with and what was their response?	
If 'no', please give the reason why you haven't raised the issue informally.	
Signature:	Date: