

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The College believes it is in everyone's interest to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, as close to the source of the problem as possible, and by informal means in preference to formal ones.
- 1.2 The College aims to ensure that all complaints are received and dealt with promptly, fairly, professionally and in a non-discriminatory manner.
- 1.3 The College will ensure appropriate action is taken to resolve issues and will endeavour to prevent similar occurrences.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This Policy applies to complaints from any student, apprentice or external stakeholder who wishes to express dissatisfaction with an aspect of the College's activities.
- 2.2 Any allegation made against a member of staff/volunteer regarding abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) or neglect, made in the form of a complaint, will be dealt with under the Safeguarding Children Policy or the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
- 2.3 A separate Grievance Policy exists for staff.
- 2.4 This policy links to the Grievance, Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Equality and Diversity, Internal External Assessment including appeals, Student Disciplinary and Admissions policies.
- 2.5 Matters relating to admissions, student or apprentice disciplinary or academic appeals will be dealt with under their separate policies.
- 2.6 The College will not consider matters that are the subject of legal action.
- 2.7 It will not consider anonymous complaints or complaints about a third-party provider. Nor will it consider complaints made by a third party on behalf of another person without prior authority.
- 2.8 A complaint must be made within three months of the event that gave rise to it.
- 2.9 If at any stage of a complaint or concern investigation, a complainant does not respond to correspondence, or the College is unable to contact, within 10 working days the College reserves the right to cease investigations
- 2.10 Timelines and procedures are subject to change due to actions that are beyond the College's control e.g., COVID-19 Pandemic

3 PROCEDURE

- 3.1 **Complaints from Students/Apprentices**
 - 3.1.1 The College endeavours to deliver high standards to its students/apprentices at all times. Students/apprentices may complain about any aspects of the College's activities.
 - 3.1.2 It is expected that day-to-day concerns will be resolved promptly and

informally between a student/apprentice and their subject or personal tutor.

- 3.1.3 When it is felt that an issue has not been resolved or is of a sufficiently serious nature, a concern should be escalated to a formal complaint. A student/apprentice should submit their complaint, preferably in writing, on the appropriate form (Appendix 1) to the relevant Programme Management staff. The complaint will then be forwarded to the Quality Department.
- 3.1.4 Students/apprentices may approach Programme Management staff if they require assistance in formulating or writing their complaint or for any other support or guidance.
- 3.1.5 The Quality Department will normally acknowledge the complaint within three working days of its receipt. It will then be forwarded to and dealt with by the appropriate manager. After investigating the complaint, a response will normally be sent within ten working days. If for any reason there is a delay in the response time then the student will be advised.
- 3.1.6 If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student/apprentice and they wish to appeal, the complainant should contact the Quality Department, preferably in writing. An appeal must be made within five working days of receipt of the response to the complaint. The appeal will normally be acknowledged within three working days of its receipt and the Quality Department will assign a manager with sufficient authority to investigate. Grounds for appeal will be based on the following:
- The evidence used to support the judgement was incorrect or insufficient
 - Further or new evidence has emerged since the outcome of the complaint
 - The investigation did not follow the correct process
- 3.1.7 After investigating the appeal, a response will normally be sent within ten working days. If for any reason there is a delay in the response time, the student/apprentice will be advised.
- 3.1.8 If the College's complaints procedure has been exhausted and the student/apprentice is still not satisfied they will be directed to the Education & Skills Funding Agency; Higher Education students will be directed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator; and Adult Learners will be directed to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, if applicable.
- 3.1.9 Some aspects of the College's work are also governed by the complaints and academic appeals procedures of other external organisations. In the case of awarding organisations or a university that validates and awards a qualification, course teams will advise students/apprentices of the procedure to be followed in relation to academic appeals.
- 3.1.10 The appropriate senior manager will deal with a complaint that relates to the personal conduct or actions of one of their managers. In the case of a complaint against the Principal, the matter will be directed to the Chair of the Board of Governors. Complaints about individual governors should be addressed in the first instance to the Clerk to the Governors.
- 3.1.11 The College reserves the right not to investigate complaints considered vexatious or malicious. Where the College deems this to be the case, the complainant or appellant will be informed in writing.
- 3.1.12 The College reserves the right to cease investigations if correspondence or behaviour from the complainant or any element of the complaint or concern is deemed manifestly excessive.

3.2 External Complaints

- 3.2.1 It is expected that day-to-day concerns will be resolved promptly and informally.
- 3.2.2 Any person other than a member of staff, a student/apprentice, who is dissatisfied about any aspect of the College's activities, should direct their complaint in the first instance to the Quality Department. The complaint will normally be acknowledged within three working days of its

receipt. It will then be forwarded to and dealt with by the appropriate manager. After investigating the complaint, a response will normally be sent within ten working days. If for any reason there is a delay in the response time, the complainant will be advised.

- 3.2.3 If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and they wish to appeal, the complainant should contact the Quality Department, preferably in writing. An appeal must be made within five working days of receipt of the response to the complaint. The appeal will normally be acknowledged within three working days of its receipt and the Quality Department will assign a manager with sufficient authority to investigate. Grounds for appeal will be based on the following:
- The evidence used to support the judgement was incorrect or insufficient
 - Further or new evidence has emerged since the outcome of the complaint
 - The investigation did not follow the correct process
- 3.2.4 After investigating the appeal, a response will normally be sent within ten working days. If for any reason there is a delay in the response time, the complainant will be advised.
- 3.2.5 If the College's complaints procedure has been exhausted and the complainant is still not satisfied they will be directed to the relevant regulatory or professional body where applicable.
- 3.2.6 The appropriate senior manager will deal with a complaint that relates to the personal conduct or actions of one of their managers. In the case of a complaint against the Principal, the matter will be directed to the Chair of the Board of Governors. Complaints about individual governors should be addressed in the first instance to the Clerk to the Governors.
- 3.2.7 The College reserves the right not to investigate complaints considered to be vexatious or malicious. Where the College deems this to be the case, the complainant or appellant will be informed in writing.
- 3.2.8 The College reserves the right to cease investigations if correspondence or behaviour from the complainant or any element of the complaint or concern is deemed manifestly excessive.

4 MONITORING, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL

- 4.1 Managers must provide written details of the action taken and the outcome of the complaint and forward a copy of this, with supporting documents to the Assistant Principal (Quality).
- 4.2 If interviews are deemed necessary, the investigating officer should have another member of staff present in all meetings with the parties involved.
- 4.3 College staff have the right to terminate any meeting or interview, if they feel that the behaviour of any of the parties is inappropriate.
- 4.4 The Assistant Principal (Quality) will monitor the overall operation of the procedure to ensure that it is effective.
- 4.5 The Assistant Principal (Quality) is responsible for logging, recording and reporting all formal complaints on a termly basis to the Senior Management Team and annually to the Quality and Standards Committee of the Board of Governors. Reports will analyse trends, including issues related to discrimination and diversity, recommend actions and maintain the confidentiality of the complainants.



Appendix 1

COMPLAINT FORM

Name of person making complaint:
(please print)

Status: Student / Apprentice Parent or Carer / Other (delete as appropriate)

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Address of complainant:

Nature of complaint:

Please continue overleaf if required

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Name of person taking complaint: _____

Please now forward this form to Assistant Principal, Quality

For Teaching, Learning and Standards Use only:

Initials of person(s) investigating Complaint: _____

Holding Letter sent on: ____/____/____