



# Complaints Policy

## Summary

This policy outlines the College's approach to formal and written complaints, made to the College by students/members of staff/visitors/customers (the 'complainant') and includes investigation procedures, responses and appeals processes

Policy Owner:	Quality Managers
Date of last issue:	January 2018
Approval/ Review Body:	Governing Body
Review Date:	September 2018

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### 1. Aims

- 1.1 To ensure all complaints and appeals are taken seriously.  
In the context of this policy:
  - a 'complaint' is any issue brought to the attention of the College, which the person, '*the complainant*' (a current/former FE or HE student/a College applicant/a member of staff/visitor/customer) feels is unsatisfactory or is unacceptable;
  - an 'appeal' is an application made to the Principal or the Chair of Governors by a complainant for any decision, arising from an investigation into the complaint, to be reconsidered/reversed.
- 1.2 To provide a framework for the way complaints are processed and resolved, according to agreed procedures.
- 1.3 To ensure the accompanying processes/procedures are reviewed/amended annually.
- 1.4 To ensure the accompanying processes/procedures comply with current legislation.
- 1.5 To eliminate, as far as possible, the factors arising from complaints, which have resolved by the College, so that similar complaints do not arise subsequently.

### 2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 The College is committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of its work. This *Complaints Policy* supports that commitment: complaints will be taken seriously and every effort will be made to eliminate the causes of complaints.

### 3. Delivery of this Policy

#### 3.1 Responsibilities/Policy Ownership/Communication

##### 3.1.1 The College's quality managers (QM) are responsible for:

- ensuring there are processes/procedures in place to deal complaints, as well as any subsequent appeals, made to the College.
- ensuring all complaints and appeals are dealt with according to the agreed procedures once a complaint has been lodged with the College.
- ensuring all formal complaints are processed within a specific time period.
- ensuring a complainant is informed of:
  - i. the procedures and processes for both formal and informal complaints;
  - ii. the outcome of an investigation into a complaint;
  - iii. the 'next steps' a complainant may take, including the complainant's right of appeal, if it is felt a complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

- ensuring the process, procedures and paperwork for lodging a complaint is appended to the policy are reviewed and amended on an annual basis and.
- for communicating the policy to the College community via the College portal and for ensuring the policy is available via the College website.

3.1.2 The Chief Executive Officer and the College's Chair of Governors are responsible for:

- the process for appeals.
- informing a complainant of the final stages of the complaint process:
  - i. if, following an appeal, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may complain to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA):Further Education; Office of Independent Adjudicators (QIA): Higher Education.
  - ii. if the complainant still remains dissatisfied that their complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction, they may complain to the Secretary of State for Education

### 3.2 Other Related Policies

Other documents which should be read in conjunction with this *Complaints Policy* and which may override what the policy covers are:

- For Further Education students, the College's: '*Assessment, Standardisation, Moderation and Verification Policy*' and '*Assessment, Standardisation, Moderation and Verification Guidelines*', which outline student and staff responsibilities, and the process students should follow if they wish to appeal against a grade/mark awarded by an assessor.
- The College's formal '*Disciplinary Procedure for Staff*'.
- The College's '*Our College Code*' for students.
- The College's '*Grievance Procedure*' for staff.

### 3.3 Policy Development

3.3.1 This policy is based on current best practice in the sector.

3.3.2 Feedback from policy users is sought, regarding the development/ revisions to the policy and the accompanying appendices, all of which are reviewed annually.

### 3.4 Policy Location

3.4.1 The Policy is available on the College Portal and College website and all students will be made aware of the Policy and process at induction

## **APPENDICES**

### **Procedures for dealing with complaints received by the College**

- APPENDIX 1 Procedure for dealing with informal complaints made by College students to the Chief Executive Officer
- APPENDIX 2 Procedure for dealing with formal written complaints to the Chief Executive Officer during term-time
- APPENDIX 3 Procedure for dealing with formal written complaints to the Chief Executive Officer outside term-time
- APPENDIX 4 Process and Procedures for different complaint types (formal complaints)
- APPENDIX 5 Appeals Process
- APPENDIX 6 Customer Complaint Form

## APPENDIX 1

### Procedure for dealing with informal complaints made by College students to the Chief Executive Officer

Please note:

- i. Except in exceptional circumstances:
  - complaints may normally only be considered if the complaint is lodged no more than two calendar weeks after the event which is the subject of the complaint.
  - a complaint will not be considered if it is made anonymously.
- ii. In the case of a complaint against a member of staff, and depending on the seriousness of the complaint, i.e. the complaint falls under other College policies, e.g. 'Grievance Policy', '*Disciplinary Procedure for Staff*', etc., the complaint may be referred directly to the Group Executive Director of Human Resources for consideration. In this case, the College's quality managers, the senior managers responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the Chief Executive Officer are investigated, would not be informed/consulted. In this case, the complainant will be contacted in writing by the Group Executive Director of Human Resources.

1. A student, who is currently enrolled, contacts the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team by telephone, in writing or in person and makes a complaint.

2. The Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team will:

- either, ask the complainant to raise the complaint directly with the faculty (i.e. with the relevant Head of School/Head of Service/Director) if they consider it to be one which should be investigated by the faculty/service area in the first instance.

N.B. If the complaint is submitted during term-time, the Head of School/ Director/ Section Head/ Head of Service will arrange for the complaint to be investigated and will contact the complainant within 5 working days of the complaint being received by them. No complaint reference number will be allocated to this complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation by the faculty/section, within 5 working days of being informed of the outcome, they must contact the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team and ask for the complaint to be considered as a formal complaint to the Chief Executive Officer. In this case a reference number will be allocated to the complaint.

N.B. If they have not already submitted the complaint in writing, the complainant must:

- either write to the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team,

or complete the College's Customer Complaint Form (Appendix 6) and send it to the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team,

outlining:

- o in detail the nature of their complaint and the response from the faculty/section;

- why they are not satisfied with the faculty/section response.
  - or, if the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team is unclear if a complaint is one which should be considered as an 'informal' complaint, then the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team will consult the relevant quality manager, who will decide on the status of the complaint, i.e. if it is an informal or formal complaint. Whichever is the case, the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team will contact the complainant, informing the complainant of the process which will be followed.
  - or, if the complaint is made via the telephone/in person and the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team considers the complaint to be one which should be considered as a formal complaint, the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team will ask the complainant to submit the complaint in writing.

### **3. For all 'formal' complaints:**

- either, stages 2 onwards of the 'Procedure for dealing with a formal written complaints received by the College during term-time' (Appendix 2) are followed.
- or, stages 4 onwards of the 'Procedure for dealing with formal written complaints received by the College outside term-time' (Appendix 3) are followed.

## APPENDIX 2

### Procedure for dealing with formal (written) complaints to the Chief Executive Officer received by the College during term-time

Please note:

- i. Complaints may normally only be considered if the complaint is lodged no more than two calendar weeks after the event which is the subject of the complaint, except in exceptional circumstances.
- ii. Except in exceptional circumstances, a complaint will not be considered if it is made anonymously.
- iii. In the case of a complaint against a member of staff, and depending on the seriousness of the complaint, i.e. the complaint falls under other College policies, e.g. 'Grievance Policy', '*Disciplinary Procedure for Staff*', etc., the complaint may be referred directly to the Group Executive Director of Human Resources for consideration. In this case, the College's quality managers, the senior managers responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the Chief Executive Officer are investigated, would not be informed/consulted. In this case, the complainant will be contacted in writing by the Group Executive Director of Human Resources.

1. Once a formal written complaint is received:
  - it is acknowledged in writing by the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team within three working days;
  - the complainant is told the name of the member of staff dealing with the complaint. This is normally one of the College's quality managers
2. The complainant will be contacted by the relevant quality manager (QM) within 5 working days of the complaint being received by the QM, who will summarise the complaint and will give an indicative date by which the complainant will receive a response, i.e. up to 20 working days from the date the QSM first received the complaint.
3. The QM arranges for the complaint to be investigated.
4. If the investigation is not completed within 10 working days, the complainant will be informed of the progress that has been made in dealing with the complaint, together with notice of the deadline set for resolving the complaint. If it becomes necessary to invoke the College's formal disciplinary procedures at any stage, the time-scales set by this policy/process will be followed and the complainant will be informed.
5. Once the investigation is completed, the QM will write to the complainant, outlining the College's response. In the written response the QM will direct the complainant to 'Appendix 5: Appeals Process'.

## APPENDIX 3

### Procedure for dealing with formal written complaints to the Chief Executive Officer outside term-time

Please note

- i. Complaints may normally only be considered if the complaint is lodged no more than two calendar weeks after the event which is the subject of the complaint, except in exceptional circumstances.
  - ii. Except in exceptional circumstances, a complaint will not be considered if it is made anonymously.
  - iii. In the case of a complaint against a member of staff, and depending on the seriousness of the complaint, i.e. the complaint falls under other College policies, e.g. 'Grievance Policy', *'Disciplinary Procedure for Staff'*, etc., the complaint may be referred directly to the Group Executive Director of Human Resources for consideration. In this case, the College's quality managers, the senior managers responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the Chief Executive Officer are investigated, would not be informed/consulted. In this case, the complainant will be contacted in writing by the Group Executive Director of Human Resources.
1. Once the written complaint is received:
    - within three working days it is acknowledged in writing by the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team;
    - the complainant is told the name of the member of staff dealing with the complaint. This is normally the one of the College's quality managers (QM).
  2. the complainant is given an indicative date when the QM will contact them about their complaint.
  3. Once the QM contacts the complainant, stages 3 onwards of the 'Procedure for dealing with formal written complaint received by the College during term-time' (Appendix 2) is followed.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Process and procedures for different formal complaint types**

Experience indicates that formal complaints tend to fall into one of five categories.

The procedure to be followed for each category of complaint is as follows:

1. Complaint about the quality of service received Appendix 4.1
2. Complaint about the physical environment Appendix 4.2
3. Complaint about the behaviour of a member of staff Appendix 4.3
4. Complaint about the behaviour of a student by another student or a member of the public Appendix 4.4
5. Complaint arising from a refusal to permit a student to enrol on a course or enter for an examination Appendix 4.5

#### **Appendix 4.1: Complaint about the quality of service received**

If a complaint is made about the quality of service received, the following steps will be taken, in accordance with the timescale/procedure set out in Appendix 2.

- 4.1.1 The relevant quality manager (QM) will: identify the service provider; ask the Head of Service/Director/Section Head to ascertain whether the complaint is justified; and to take remedial action as required.
- 4.1.2 The Head of Service/Director/ Section Head will report the outcome of the investigation to the QM, with a recommended response and course of action. This will include, where appropriate, a suitable form of redress.
- 4.1.3 The QM will respond in writing to the complainant.

#### **Appendix 4.2: Complaint about the physical environment**

If a complaint is made about the physical environment, the following steps will be taken, in accordance with the timescale/procedure set out in Appendix 2.

- 4.2.1 The QM will identify the exact location and ask the Head of Facilities and Property Manager to investigate in order to ascertain whether the complaint is justified and to take remedial action as required.
- 4.2.2 The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the relevant QM, who will respond to the complainant in writing.

### **Appendix 4.3: Complaint about the behaviour of a member of staff**

- 4.3.1 If a complaint is made about a member of staff, which does not fall under any other College policy, the process outlined in Appendix 2, 1-5 will be followed.
- 4.3.2 If a complaint is made about the behaviour of a member of staff and the relevant QM considers the complaint to be one which falls under the College's 'Grievance Policy', '*Disciplinary Procedure for Staff*, etc., the the complaint will be referred to the Group Executive Director of Human Resources. If the complaint falls under either of these policies, the relevant policy will be followed.

### **Appendix 4.4: Complaint about the behaviour of a student by another student or a member of the public**

If a complaint is made to the Chief Executive Officer about the behaviour of a student by another student or a member of the public the following steps will be taken, in accordance with the timescale/procedure set out in Appendix 2.

- 4.4.1 The relevant quality manager (QM) will identify the faculty/section where the student about whom the complaint has been made is studying and will contact the relevant Director/Section Head who will appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate into the complaint.
- 4.4.2 The Director/Section Head will notify the student/students about the investigation, who may be invited to an interview to discuss the complaint. If an interview is necessary, the student(s) will be informed that they may be accompanied by a friend/Student Enrichment Team representative when interviewed by the Investigating Officer In the case of 16-18 learners a parent/carer may be invited.
- 4.4.3 The Investigating Officer will report to the Director/Section Head, who will decide whether to dismiss the complaint or to invoke the 'Student Disciplinary Code'.
- 4.4.4 The Director/Section Head, will notify the relevant QM of the outcome of the investigation and their decision and notify the student of the decision.
- 4.4.5 The QM will respond to the complainant in writing.

### **Appendix 4.5: Complaint arising from a refusal to permit a student to enrol on a course or enter for an examination**

If a complaint is made, the relevant quality manager (QM) will inform the Director/Section Head concerned, who will appoint an Investigating Officer to enquire into the complaint, in accordance with the timescale/procedure set out in Appendix 2.

- 4.5.1 The Investigating Officer will investigate the circumstances which have led to the complaint in order to ascertain if the complaint is justified and if so, on what grounds.
- 4.5.2 The Investigating Officer will report to the Director/Section Head, who will **decide** what action, if any, is to be taken.
- 4.5.3 The Director/Section Head, will notify the QM of the outcome of the investigation and her/his decision and notify the student of the decision.
- 4.5.4 The QM will respond to the complainant in writing.

## **Appendix 5: Appeals Process**

### **5.1 Appeals to the Chief Executive Officer**

- 5.1.1 In the College response to a complainant (email or letter) sent by the relevant quality manager, the complainant is informed that they have the right of appeal if they are not satisfied with the outcome.
- 5.1.2 If the complainant decides to submit an appeal, they must:
- do so in writing (hard-copy or email), giving the relevant complaint reference number (e.g. C18-61) to which the appeal refers;
  - do so within 10 days of receiving the College response to their complaint;
  - outline in detail the grounds for the appeal, i.e. the reasons why the complainant was not satisfied with the response to their complaint given to them;
  - send the 'Letter of Appeal' to the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team, who:
    - a. will acknowledge its receipt within 5 working days;
    - b. will pass it to the College's Chief Executive Officer.
- 5.1.3 Within 5 working days of receiving the paperwork, the Chief Executive Officer will determine if there are grounds for an appeal. If the Chief Executive Officer feels there are grounds for an appeal, he may wish to interview the complainant. If an interview is necessary, the complainant making the appeal has the right to be accompanied by one other person, e.g. a parent or friend, etc.
- 5.1.4 Within 20 working days of receiving the paperwork, the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team contacts the complainant:
- i. outlining the Chief Executive Officer's response to the appeal, i.e. either that the appeal has been upheld, outlining any action the Chief Executive Officer intends to take, or the appeal has not been upheld;
  - ii. informing the complainant that if they remains dissatisfied, they have the right to appeal to the Chair of the College's Governing Body.

### **5.2 Appeals to the Chair of the College's Governing Body**

- 5.2.1 If a complainant wishes to appeal to the Chair of the College's Governing Body, the complainant should write to the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team within 10 working days of receiving the Chief Executive Officer's response to the appeal, stating that they wish to make an appeal to the Chair of the College's Governing Body, outlining the grounds for the appeal, i.e. stating why the complainant was not satisfied with the Chief Executive Officer's response to the appeal
- 5.2.2 Once a request for an appeal to the Chair of College's Governing Body has been received, the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team will pass the request and all the paperwork etc. concerned with the original complaint to the Clerk to the Governors, who will pass this to the Chair of Governors or the Chair's delegated representative.

- 5.2.3 Within 20 working days of receiving the paperwork, and after having consulted with the Chair of the College's Governing Body or the Chair's delegated representative, the Clerk to the Governors will contact the complainant, informing them of the decision of Chair of the College's Governing Body/the delegated representative, i.e. either that the appeal has been upheld, outlining any action the Chair of the College's Governing Body intends to take, or the appeal has not been upheld;
- 5.2.4 Whatever the outcome of the appeal to the Chair of the College's Governing Body, if the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to complain to:
- a. Central London Skills Funding Agency (SFA): Further Education (FE Students):  
<https://www.gov.uk/complainfurthereducationapprenticeship>
  - b. Office of Independent Adjudicators (QIA): Higher Education (HE Students): [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)
- 5.2.5 Following consideration by a./b. above, if a complainant remains dissatisfied, a complaint may be made to the Secretary of State for Education.

## Details

Title (Tick)	Mr <input type="checkbox"/>	Mrs <input type="checkbox"/>	Ms <input type="checkbox"/>	Miss <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="text"/>
Surname/Family Name	<input type="text"/>				
Other Names	<input type="text"/>				
Address	<input type="text"/>				
Town	<input type="text"/>				
Post Code	<input type="text"/>				
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>			Email	<input type="text"/>
Course (If Applicable)	<input type="text"/>				

## Complaint

Centre (Tick)	Willesden Campus <input type="checkbox"/>	Paddington Green Campus <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wembley Campus <input type="checkbox"/>	Maida Vale Campus <input type="checkbox"/>	
		King's Cross Campus <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date of Complaint	<input type="text"/>	Student ID No.	<input type="text"/>
What would you want the outcome of the complaint to be?	<input type="text"/>		
Have you already complained to the college about this matter? (Tick)	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Yes, in person <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Yes, by telephone <input type="checkbox"/>		
Date you complained	<input type="text"/>		

## Send

**Email** [dian.pitter@cw.ac.uk](mailto:dian.pitter@cw.ac.uk)  
**Post** Dian Pitter, PA to the Chief Executive Officer, Executive Secretariat,  
 City of Westminster College, Paddington Green Campus,  
 Paddington Green, London W2 1NB  
**Drop in** To Reception at any of the College sites

You will receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days of your complaint's receipt

# Statement

Please give as much information as you can about your complaint including:

- a. the nature of complaint i.e. Complaint: about the quality of service; the physical environment; a member of staff or a student; the College refusal to permit a student to enrol on a course or take an examination etc.
- b. the names of any people involved;
- c. full details of what took place, including times, dates etc.
- d. the names of any witnesses or others involved if this applies, together with their contact details.

## To be completed by staff

a.	Date received by Executive Secretariat	
b.	Date sent/forwarded to Quality Manager	
c.	College reference number	
d.	Receipt completed by (PRINT)	
e.	Date receipt given to Complainant	

If received by Reception, Reception staff should complete d and e above and the 'Receipt' below.

They should: tear off the Receipt from the slip below | give the Receipt to the Complainant | put the form into the internal post for the attention of Dian Pitter, Executive Secretariat.

## Tear off Receipt

This is to acknowledge that  submitted a Complaint Form on   
The form has been forwarded to Dian Pitter, PA to the Chief Executive Officer, Executive Secretariat, City of Westminster College, Paddington Green Campus, Paddington Green, London W2 1NB, dian.pitter@cw.ac.uk  
The complaint will receive an acknowledgement within the next 3 working days once it has been received.  
If they do not, they should email Dian Pitter on dian.pitter@cw.ac.uk or telephone her on 0207 258 2760

Signed

Print Name