



# Complaints Policy 2019-22

This policy outlines the Group's approach to informal and formal complaints, made by students/members of staff/visitors/customers (the 'complainant') and includes investigation procedures, responses and appeals processes for both the College of North West London and City of Westminster College.

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## 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 Chief Executive Officer (CEO) 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 has specific senior managers responsible for:

- ensuring there are processes/procedures in place to deal with complaints, as well as any subsequent appeals, made to the CEO/College.
- ensuring all complaints and appeals are dealt with according to the agreed procedures once a complaint has been lodged with the CEO/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, appended to the policy, are reviewed and amended on an annual basis.
  - 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 Staff Policy'
- The College's 'Grievance Policy' 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 Staff Policy', etc., the complaint may be referred directly to Human Resources for consideration. In this case, the senior managers responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the CEO are investigated, may not be informed/consulted. In this case, the complainant will be contacted in writing by Human Resources.
  1. A student, who is currently enrolled, contacts the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team (CWC) or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) by telephone, in writing or in person and makes a complaint.
  2. The Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) will:
    - either, ask the complainant to raise the complaint directly with the relevant Head of Faculty/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 Faculty/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/service area, within 5 working days of being informed of the outcome, they must contact the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team (CWC) or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) and ask for the complaint to be considered as a formal complaint to the CEO. In this case a reference number will be allocated to the complaint.

N.B. In this case, 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 the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL);

or complete the College's Customer Complaint Form (Appendix 6) and

send it to the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL),

outlining:

- in detail the nature of their complaint and the response from the faculty/service are;
  - why they are not satisfied with the faculty/service area response.
- or, if the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) is unclear if a complaint is one which should be considered as an 'informal' complaint, then they will consult the relevant 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 or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) 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 Principal's Secretariat Team or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) considers the complaint to be one which should be considered as a formal complaint, the Head of the Chief Executive Officer's Secretariat Team (CWC) or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) 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 Staff Policy', etc., the complaint may be referred directly to Human Resources for consideration. In this case, the the senior managers responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the CEO are investigated, may not be informed/consulted. In this case, the complainant will be contacted in writing by 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 or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL) 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 managers responsible for overseeing complaints

2. The complainant will be contacted by the relevant manager responsible for overseeing complaints within 5 working days of the complaint being received by them, 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 they first received the complaint.

3. The manager responsible for overseeing complaints 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 manager responsible for overseeing complaints will write to the complainant, outlining the College's response. In the written response they 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 Staff Policy', etc., the complaint may be referred directly to Human Resources for consideration. In this case, the senior managers responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the CEO are investigated, may not be informed/consulted. In this case, the complainant will be contacted in writing by Human Resources.
- iv. It is important to note that when a complaint is received outside term-time it may take longer to investigate and for a response to be made. This is because the staff who would investigate the complaint may not be available to do so.

#### 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 or the Personal Assistant to the Principal (CNWL).
  - the complainant is told the name of the member of staff dealing with the complaint. This is normally the manager responsible for overseeing complaints.
2. the complainant is given an indicative date when the manager responsible for overseeing complaints will contact them about their complaint.
  3. Once the manager responsible for overseeing complaints 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 manager responsible for overseeing complaints will identify the service provider; ask the Head of Service/Director/ Head of Faculty to ascertain whether the complaint is justified; and to take remedial action as required.
- 4.1.2 The Head of Service/ Director/Head of Faculty will report the outcome of the investigation to manager responsible for overseeing complaints, with a recommended response and course of action. This will include, where appropriate, a suitable form of redress.
- 4.1.3 The relevant manager responsible for overseeing complaints 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 relevant manager responsible for overseeing complaints will identify the exact location and ask the Head of Facilities 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 manager responsible for overseeing complaints, 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 manager responsible for overseeing complaints considers the complaint to be one which falls under the College's 'Grievance Policy', 'Disciplinary Staff Policy', etc., the complaint will be referred to Human Resources. If the complaint falls under any policy other than the 'Complaints Policy', the other 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 CEO 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 manager responsible for overseeing complaints will identify the faculty/section/department where the student about whom the complaint has been made is studying and will contact the relevant Director/Head of Faculty, who will investigate the complaint.
- 4.4.2 The Director/Head of Faculty will notify the relevant 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. In the case of 16-18 learners a parent/carer may be invited.
- 4.4.3 The Director/Head of Faculty will decide whether to dismiss the complaint or to invoke the 'Student Disciplinary Code'.
- 4.4.4 The Director/Head of Faculty, will notify the relevant manager responsible for overseeing complaints of the outcome of the investigation and their decision and will notify the student of the decision.
- 4.4.5 The relevant manager responsible for overseeing complaints 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 manager responsible for overseeing complaints will inform the Director/Head of Faculty concerned, who will enquire into the complaint, in accordance with the timescale/procedure set out in Appendix 2.

- 4.5.1 The Director/Head of Faculty 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 Director/Head of Faculty will decide what action, if any, is to be taken.

4.5.3 The Director/Head of Faculty will notify the relevant manager responsible for overseeing complaints of the outcome of the investigation and her/his decision and will notify the student of the decision.

## **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 manager responsible for overseeing complaints, 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. C19-61) 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. It is important to note that an appeal may only be considered if there is new or additional evidence or a procedural error has been made by the College when the complaint was investigated.
  - 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.

# Complaints Form

## 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)	Yes, in person <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Yes, by telephone <input type="checkbox"/>		
Date you complained	<input type="text"/>		

**Please send your complaint to the person at the relevant college to which it applies:**

**Email** City of Westminster College  
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

**Email** College of North West London  
tracie.ffoulkes@cnwl.ac.uk

**Post** Tracie Ffoulkes  
EA to the Group Principal  
Executive Secretariat,  
College of North West London,  
Willesden Campus,  
Dudden Hill Lane, London, NW10 2XD

**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                    |  |
| 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 the respective Executive Secretariat.

## Tear off Receipt

This is to acknowledge that  submitted a Complaint Form on   
The form has been forwarded to the respective Executive Secretariat. The complaint will receive an acknowledgement within the next 3 working days once it has been received.

If they do not, for CWC, they should email Dian Pitter on [dian.pitter@cw.ac.uk](mailto:dian.pitter@cw.ac.uk) or telephone on 0207 258 2760, or for CNWL, they should email [tracie.foolkes@cnwl.ac.uk](mailto:tracie.foolkes@cnwl.ac.uk) or telephone on 020 8208 5109

Signed

Print Name