



Complaints Policy 2022-25

This policy outlines United Colleges Group's approach to informal and formal complaints, made by students/members of staff/visitors/customers (the 'complainant') and includes investigation procedures, response timelines 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 and Group Principal (CEO and GP) 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 if not annually, then no later than the review date of the policy.
- 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, 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 College Chief Executive Officer and Group Principal.
- 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 informal and formal 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 or no later than the review date of the policy.
- 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 Group Principal 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 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA): 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:

- The College's: 'UCG Assessment Policy and 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 or no later than the review date of the policy.

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:

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| APPENDIX 1 | Procedure for dealing with informal complaints made by College students or stakeholders to the College |
| APPENDIX 2 | Procedure for dealing with formal written complaints to the College during term-time |
| APPENDIX 3 | Procedure for dealing with formal written complaints to the College 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 or stakeholders to the College

Please note:

- i. Except in exceptional circumstances:
 - Informal complaints may normally only be considered if the informal complaint is lodged no more than two calendar weeks after the event which is the subject of the informal complaint.
 - An informal complaint will not be considered if it is made anonymously.
- ii. In the case of an informal 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 informal complaint may be referred directly to Human Resources for consideration. In this case, the senior managers responsible for ensuring informal complaints to the College 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 Performance and Quality Administrator either by telephone or in writing to Complaints@ucg.ac.uk and makes an informal complaint.
 2. The Performance and Quality Administrator will:
 - notify the relevant Assistant Principal & Curriculum Manager or Head of Service Area of the informal complaint if they consider it to be one which should be investigated by the curriculum/service area in the first instance. If the Performance and Quality Administrator is unclear if a complaint is one which should be considered as an 'informal' complaint, then they will consult the Head of Performance and Quality, who will decide on the status of the complaint, i.e. if it is an informal or formal complaint.
 - notify the complainant of the names of staff the informal complaint has been forwarded to with the aim to resolve the issue informally.

N.B. If the complaint is submitted during term-time, the Assistant Principal/Head of Service will arrange for the informal 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 curriculum/service area, within 5 working days of being informed of the outcome, they must contact the Performance and Quality Administrator and ask for the complaint to be considered as a formal complaint. 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 Performance and Quality Administrator; or complete the College's Customer Complaint Form (Appendix 6) and send it to the Performance and Quality Administrator, outlining in detail:
 - the nature of their complaint and the response from the curriculum/service area to the informal complaint;
 - why they are not satisfied with the curriculum/service area response.
- or, if the complaint is made via the telephone/in person and the Performance and Quality Administrator considers the complaint to be one which should be considered as a formal complaint, the Performance and Quality Administrator will ask the complainant to submit the complaint in writing.

The Assistant Principal/Head of Service Area must notify the Performance and Quality Administrator of the outcome of the informal complaint.

3. For all 'formal' complaints:

- either, the 'Procedure for dealing with formal (written) complaints received by the College during term-time' (Appendix 2) are followed.
- or, 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 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 senior manager responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the College 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 by the Performance and Quality department:
 - it is acknowledged in writing by the Performance and Quality Administrator within 3 working days;
 - the complainant is told the name of the member of staff investigating the complaint, normally one of the College's managers and the date by which the complainant will receive a response as to the outcome of the investigation into the complaint. This date will be 30 working days from receipt of the complaint by the Performance and Quality department.
 2. The Performance and Quality Administrator arranges for the complaint to be investigated.
 3. The complainant will be contacted by the investigation manager, the member of staff responsible for investigating the complaint, who will summarise the complaint and will clarify if and where necessary as to what outcome(s) the complainant is seeking..
 4. If the investigation is not completed within 15 working days, the Quality Assurance Leader will notify the complainant of the progress that has been made in dealing with the complaint, together with a reminder 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 Quality Assurance Leader will write to the complainant, outlining the College's response. In the written response they will direct the complainant to 'Appendix 5: Appeals Process' and attach a copy of the college's Complaints Policy.

APPENDIX 3

Procedure for dealing with formal (written) complaints received by the College 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 manager responsible for ensuring formal complaints to the College 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 will normally take longer to investigate and for a response to be made. This is because the staff required to investigate the complaint may not be available to do so. The Performance and Quality Administrator will ensure the complainant is notified of this and this will be reflected in the date by which the complainant will receive any progress update and/or the outcome of the investigation into their complaint.

1. Once a formal written complaint is received by the Performance and Quality department:
 - it is acknowledged in writing by the Performance and Quality Administrator within 3 working days;
 - the complainant is told the name of the member of staff investigating the complaint, normally one of the College's managers and the date by which the complainant will receive a response as to the outcome of the investigation into the complaint. This date will be 30 working days from receipt of the complaint by the Performance and Quality department.
2. The Performance and Quality Administrator arranges for the complaint to be investigated.
3. The complainant will be contacted by the investigation manager, the member of staff responsible for investigating the complaint, who will summarise the complaint and will clarify if and where necessary as to what outcome(s) the complainant is seeking.
4. If the investigation is not completed within 15 working days, the Quality Assurance Leader will notify the complainant of the progress that has been made in dealing with the complaint, together with a reminder 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 Quality Assurance Leader will write to

the complainant, outlining the College's response. In the written response they will direct the complainant to 'Appendix 5: Appeals Process' and attach a copy of the college's Complaints Policy

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:

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| 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 investigation manager will, as part of their investigation, identify the relevant Assistant Principal/Head of Service Area to ascertain whether they know the complaint is justified or not; and to take any remedial action where required.
- 4.1.2 The investigation manager will report the outcome of the investigation to the Quality Assurance Leader, with a recommended response and course of action. This will include, where appropriate, a suitable form of redress.
- 4.1.3 The Quality Assurance Leader 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 investigation manager will, as part of their investigation identify the exact location and ask the Assistant Principal/Head of Service Area/Head of Facilities to ascertain whether they know the complaint is justified or not; and to take any remedial action where required.
- 4.2.2 The Quality Assurance Leader will respond in writing to the complainant.

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 Quality Assurance Leader 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. The Quality Assurance Leader will consult with the Head of Performance and Quality in this context.

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 College 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 Quality Assurance Leader will identify the curriculum area where the student about whom the complaint has been made is studying and will ensure the relevant Assistant Principal/Curriculum Manager/Director is made aware.
- 4.4.2 The investigation manager 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/guardian may be invited. In the event of a complainant from a member of public, they will be interviewed.
- 4.4.3 The investigation manager will notify the Quality Assurance Leader of the outcome of the investigation and their findings. The Quality Assurance Leader will notify the student of the outcome of the investigation.
- 4.4.4 The Quality Assurance Leader 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 investigation manager will investigate the complaint, in accordance with the timescale/procedure set out in Appendix 2.

- 4.5.1 The investigation manager 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 investigation manager will recommend what action, if any, is to be taken.
- 4.5.3 The investigation manager will notify the Quality Assurance Leader of the outcome of the investigation. The Quality Assurance Leader will notify the student of the outcome of the investigation into the complaint.

Appendix 5: Appeals Process

5.1 Appeals to the Chief Executive Officer and Group Principal

- 5.1.1 In the College response to a complainant (email or letter) sent by the Quality Assurance Leader, 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. C22-10) 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 and Group Principal's Secretariat Team, who:
 - a. will acknowledge its receipt within 5 working days;
 - b. will pass it to the College's Chief Executive Officer and Group Principal.
- 5.1.3 Within 5 working days of receiving the paperwork, the Chief Executive Officer and Group Principal will determine if there are grounds for an appeal. If the Chief Executive Officer and Group Principal 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 and Group Principal's Secretariat Team contacts the complainant:
- outlining the Chief Executive Officer and Group Principal's response to the appeal, i.e. either that the appeal has been upheld, outlining any action the Chief Executive Officer and Group Principal intends to take, or the appeal has not been upheld;
 - informing the complainant that if they remain 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 and Group Principal's Secretariat Team within 10 working days of receiving the Chief Executive Officer and

Group Principal'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 and Group Principal'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 and Group Principal's Secretariat Team will pass the request and all the paperwork etc. concerned with the original complaint to the Director of Governance, 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 Director of Governance 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:
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA): Further Education (FE Students): <https://www.gov.uk/complainfurthereducationapprenticeship>
 - Office of Independent Adjudicators (OIA): Higher Education (HE Students): 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	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. (if applicable)
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:

United Colleges Group - City of Westminster College / College of North West London
 Email Complaints@ucg.ac.uk
 Post Andrea Edwards,
 Performance & Quality Administrator,
 Performance & Quality Department,
 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 receipt of your complaint by the Performance & Quality department (during term time).

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 | |
| b. | Date sent/forwarded | |
| c. | College reference number | |
| d. | Receipt completed by (PRINT) | |
| e. | Date receipt given to Complainant | |

If received by Reception, staff should complete Section 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 Performance & Quality Administrator.

Tear off Receipt

This is to acknowledge that submitted a Complaint Form on

The form has been forwarded to the Performance & Quality Administrator. The complainant will receive an acknowledgement within the next 3 working days once it has been received.

If they do not, they should email Andrea Edwards on andrea.edwards@cwc.ac.uk or telephone on 0207 258 2756.

Signed Print Name