
Complaints procedure

1. Purpose

To detail City of Bristol College processes for resolving complaints. The College uses complaints to inform and enhance its practices and procedures.

2. Scope

The complaints procedure is designed to deal with, but is not limited to:

- 2.1. Complaints raised by students (FE and HE), parents, guardians, employers, customers or the general public in relation to college activities, staff or any service provided by the College.
- 2.2. Complaints relating to sexual, racial, disability or any other form of discrimination.
- 2.3. Equipment and facilities.

The complaints procedure does not cover the following (which are subject to separate procedures):

- 2.4. Decisions made in examinations and assessments.
- 2.5. Admission decisions.
- 2.6. Academic decisions.
- 2.7. Allegations of misconduct by a student.
- 2.8. Staff members who have a grievance against an individual or the College.

3. Process

Stage 1: The informal approach

- 3.1. Complaints of a minor nature should be raised immediately with:
 - a) A member of staff directly involved or who is able to address the concerns.
 - b) A tutor or a manager who is responsible for the appropriate area.
 - c) A member of staff from one of the college support services:
 - Advice and Guidance
 - Careers
 - Progress Coaches
 - Student welfare

Stage 2: The formal approach

- 3.2. A complaint will be regarded as formal if it is of a serious nature, or cannot be satisfactorily resolved on an informal basis by the college department against whom it is directed.
- 3.3. Complaint forms can be collected from Learner Services or downloaded from the college website. Completed forms can be handed to Learner Services staff at any college site. Complaints can also be submitted via email to complaints@cityofbristol.ac.uk, or in writing to:

Complaints and Reputation Officer
City of Bristol College
College Green Centre
PO Box 3158
Bristol
BS6 9JS

- 3.4. Complainants should provide current contact information together with all supporting information regarding the complaint e.g. relevant documentation, dates, locations and witnesses if appropriate. Complainants should also detail any previous attempts to resolve the problem and what outcome they are seeking in order to resolve the complaint.

- 3.5. The Complaints and Reputation Officer will acknowledge your complaint (via email) within 48 hours.
- 3.6. The Complaints and Reputation Officer will assign your complaint to an appropriate senior manager who will then communicate directly with the complainant.
- 3.7. The manager assigned to your complaint will fully investigate and provide a response within 10 working days.
- 3.8. In some more complex cases, it may not be possible to resolve your complaint within 10 days, if this is the case you will be advised of the circumstances and kept informed of progress.
- 3.9. Once the investigation is complete, the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation and what, if any, action is being taken within the bounds of confidentiality.

4. Appeals

- 4.1. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you can appeal against the decision. To do this, you must write to the Deputy Principal within ten working days of the date of the complaint response letter:

c/o Complaints and Reputation Officer
City of Bristol College
College Green Centre
PO Box 3158
Bristol
BS6 9JS

Alternatively you can email your appeal to complaints@cityofbristol.ac.uk.

The appeal should outline:

- a) The grounds for appeal; this should not re-iterate the original complaint but state the reasons why the suggested resolution is not satisfactory.
 - b) Any aspect of the response or action taken that is considered inadequate.
 - c) The response or action that would be considered appropriate by the complainant.
- 4.2. The Deputy Principal will review your case and respond within one calendar month of receiving your appeal letter.
 - 4.3. Depending on the nature and grounds of appeal the Deputy Principal will:
 - a) Conduct further investigations and/or consult with the management team in order to respond to specific issues raised, and make a final decision with regard to the complaint.
 - b) If appropriate, refer the complaint to an Appeal Panel within 20 working days of the conclusion of any further investigation. The Panel will consist of three college managers not previously involved in the complaint. The Panel will provide a written response to the complainant within 5 days of the meeting.
 - 4.4. You will be provided with a 'Completion of procedures' letter detailing the final outcome of your Appeal. Appeals are final and no further correspondence with regard to the substance of the complaint will be entered into.

5. If you wish to take things further

- 5.1. The College hopes that the above procedure will satisfactorily resolve any complaints. Very occasionally this may not be the case; if you feel we have not resolved the problem satisfactorily you may complain to the relevant external bodies. Details will be provided on the 'Completion of procedures' letter sent to you following the Appeals process.

6. HE Students

- 6.1. The College actively engages with its HE students through the elected student representatives and various feedback surveys and is very keen to learn about and act on any concerns students have regarding their experience at the College.
- 6.2. The Assistant Principal Higher Education will share outcomes of complaints with the University Centre management team where there are lessons to learn and enhancements to provision can be made as a result of the complaint.
- 6.3. Records of complaints will be considered by the HE Board as part of the enhancement strategy.
- 6.4. Students studying on a programme delivered in partnership with a University who are not satisfied with the College's response can pursue their complaint by a formal complaint to the University Partner. Full details of the University Procedure are available either in the University Student Handbook or on the University website. If, following this, a student is not happy with the outcome the next step would be take the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Full details are available at www.oiahe.org.uk.

7. Vexatious complaints

- 7.1. In a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the college.
- 7.2. The College does not expect staff to tolerate behaviour which is abusive, offensive or unreasonably persistent. If a complainant behaves in a way that is unreasonably persistent or vexatious, we will take action to protect staff from such behaviour. E.g.
 - A complaint which is primarily to antagonise or bring distress or suffering to other parties.
 - A complaint which forms a series of complaints by the same complainant.
 - Where previous complaints have already been investigated and completed.
 - Using abusive or foul language on the telephone, in writing or face to face.
 - High volumes of emails, multiple telephone calls or multiple voicemails.
- 7.3. Raising legitimate queries or criticisms of the complaints procedure, or wishing to challenge the complaint outcome, should not necessarily cause the complainant's actions to be labelled vexatious or unreasonably persistent.
- 7.4. Complaints that appear vexatious will be referred to a senior manager who will decide whether the complaint is vexatious and if any actions are needed. Actions may include, but are not limited to:
 - The College applying contact restrictions.
 - Ceasing investigation of the complaint.
 - The Student Disciplinary process being invoked.

The complainant will be advised accordingly of any actions taken. The complainant may appeal against the decision by writing to the Deputy Principal (refer to section 4).

Review frequency: Every three years
Lead officer: Complaints and Reputation Officer
Senior Manager Responsible: Deputy Principal