

Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy & Procedure

Policy statement

Quality of service is an important measure of the effectiveness of public bodies. We at the City of Bristol College understand that feedback is a valuable tool and should be treated sensitively and respectfully. We believe that learning from feedback is a powerful way of helping us to safeguard, improve and increase trust and open communication amongst the people who use our services. Complaints relating to data handling will also be covered by this policy.

We treat a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, from a user of or partner to the City of Bristol College.

We have learned that compliments indicate the parts of our service that are most appreciated and often result in a welcome opportunity to recognise and praise our members of staff and spread good practice.

The Stages of the Complaints Procedure

At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any supporting documents/correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure. See Appendix A: COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK PROCESS FLOWCHART.

Stages:

Stage 1 – Informal Complaint (verbal complaint)

Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint

Stage 3 – Review of Formal Complaint

The College aims to investigate and resolve all complaints in a fair and reasonable manner. If you are not satisfied with the outcome or any action taken relating to your formal complaint you have the right to request a Review on one or more of the grounds set out below:

Making a complaint - procedure

Stages	Action
<p>Stage 1 Informal/Local Issue</p>	<p>It is anticipated that most complaints can be resolved informally and close to their point of origin (face to face or on the telephone). As a student, by talking with a teacher, tutor, Programme Manager or Head of Department. As a parent, guardian, visitor, employer or prospective student by asking to talk to an appropriate member of staff.</p> <p>Any concern will be listened to and taken seriously. Every effort will be made to assist in addressing the issue(s) raised.</p> <p>No formal record will be kept at this stage, but we aim to resolve your complaint within 20 working days.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Formal Written Complaint</p>	<p>Where your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction at the informal stage, or your complaint is considered of a serious nature, you can make a formal complaint which must be made in writing / via email. Please see the 'Contact us' guidance in this policy for more information.</p> <p>Your complaint letter or email should include clear detailed reasons for your complaint, an indication of the resolution or outcome you seek, and copies of any documents upon which you wish to rely on.</p> <p>Complaints will be logged by the complaints team before being acknowledged. In the first instance, the complaint will be forwarded to the relevant manager, normally a Head of Department, or other relevant manager to investigate and resolve.</p> <p>You will receive an acknowledgement email outlining the Complaints policy and timelines upon the submission of your complaint, and a full response to the complaint from the Investigating Officer within 20 working days via a formal letter.</p> <p>In some more complex cases it may not be possible to resolve your complaint within 20 working days, if this is the case you will be advised of the circumstances and kept informed of progress.</p>

<p>Stage 3 - Appeal. Review of Formal Complaint</p>	<p>The College aims to investigate and resolve all complaints in a fair and reasonable manner. If you are not satisfied with the outcome or any action taken relating to your formal complaint you have the right to request an Appeal on one or more of the following grounds:</p> <p>New material evidence has come to light which was not reasonably available at the time of the complaint investigation. You believe the outcome of the complaint was manifestly unreasonable and/or any resulting action was disproportionate. The complaints procedure was not followed.</p> <p>The appeal must be made in writing / via email. Please see the 'Contact us' guidance in this policy for more information. An appeal request must outline the following:</p> <p>The grounds for the appeal (as above); this should not re-iterate the original complaint but state the reasons why the suggested resolution if not satisfactory. Any aspect of the response or action that is considered inadequate. The response or action that would be considered appropriate by the complainant.</p> <p>A written request to begin Stage 3 of the procedure must be made to the College within 5 working days of you receiving your Stage 2 response.</p> <p>A member of the College Leadership Team (independent to the investigation so far), will be nominated to formally review your complaint to date.</p> <p>Depending on the nature and grounds of the appeal the nominated senior manager will:</p> <p>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. If appropriate, refer the complaint to an Appeal Panel. The Panel will consist of three College Manager not previously involved in the complaint. The Panel will provide a written response to the complainant.</p> <p>A written response, detailing the findings of this investigation, will be sent to you, along with a decision on whether your complaint has been upheld.</p> <p>This decision is final and marks the end of our internal complaints process. There is no further right of appeal within the College process.</p> <p>Acknowledgement within 5 working days Full response within 20 working days</p>
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A record of any actions/correspondence/supporting evidence and outcomes of Stage 2 and Stage 3 will be copied to the Complaints team, to update the Complaints/Feedback Tracker and file.

Contact us

A formal complaint can be submitted via a Complaint form which can be collected from Learner Services staff at any College site or via completing the online form [Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints - City of Bristol College](#)

Complaints can also be submitted via email to complaints@cityofbristol.ac.uk, or in writing to:

Complaints
City of Bristol College
College Green Centre
PO Box 2887
Bristol
BS2 2BB

If you need any reasonable adjustments, alternative formats, or support to make a complaint, please contact the Complaints team via any of the routes identified above and we will work with you to ensure the process is accessible.

To ensure a consistent and efficient process, we ask that all complainants contact the Complaints Team only for any updates or to provide additional information relating to their complaint, not individual members of staff. This helps us track all communication in one place and prevents delays in the investigation.

Our policy covers feedback received from:

- Students
- Applicants
- Parents/Carers/Guardians where a concern relates to a student who is under 18 or has an EHCP and is under 25. If the student is over 18, or has an EHCP and is over 25, we will require their permission to investigate and respond in line with GDPR. If we do not receive permission within 5 working days, the complaint will be closed. If the complaint or feedback does not concern a student, then it will be investigated.
- Employers or other users of college services and facilities
- Members of the public
- Staff (for those issues not already covered through HR procedures)

Our policy does not:

- Normally cover anonymous complaints – this will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- Normally cover ex-students unless the complaint is received by the College within eight weeks of the end date of the course
- Cover some Staff complaints, which are more appropriately dealt with through HR procedures
- Cover appeals and complaints about academic assessment which are covered by the Assessment Policy
- Deal with applicant admission appeals covered by the Admissions Policy
- Manage Safeguarding concerns which are dealt with through the College's Safeguarding Procedures
- Cover exclusions and student disciplinary complaints covered by Student Discipline and Behaviour ([Positive Attendance, Behaviour and Commitment to Study](#), all other policies can be found [here](#))

- Normally cover complaints made outside the time limit of 3 months since the issue originally occurred
- Complaints or claims that have been dealt with by proceedings outside of the College, such as an external court or tribunal
- Complaints or claims that are, or have already been settled by agreement between the Complainant and the College
- Complaints where evidence of recordings or conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded

Extending time limits

We aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex, where delay may cause potential harm or, if a complaint is received during a holiday period, it may be necessary to extend or expediate the time limits. If this is the case, we will keep you informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay and inform you of the new deadline.

External Agencies

Following the conclusion of a Review, you may be able to take the matter further with one of the following external agencies:

ESFA complaints team [Complaints procedure - Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK](#)

Complaints team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.

The ESFA will not consider complaints unless they have already been fully considered by the College.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE), if you are on a Higher Education course, with your college partner University: [How to complain to us - OIAHE](#)

If you are an adult on a West of England Combined Authority (WECA) funded course, a complaint can be made to the: WECA follow on page (westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

Complaints about post-16 education and training provision funded by DfE: [Complaints about post-16 education and training provision funded by DfE - GOV.UK](#)

Complaints about Data Use and Access: [Make a complaint about how an organisation has used your personal information | ICO](#). As with complaints to the DfE, the ICO only consider complaints once they have already been fully considered by the College.

Our policy covers feedback about:

The standard of service we provide

The behaviour of our staff, and

Any action or lack of action by the College

Compliments/general College feedback

Those that wish to make a compliment or provide some general feedback on the College as a whole, but would rather remain anonymous, or do not necessarily wish to have an individual response, should complete the form: [here](#)

Our standards for handling complaints

We treat all complaints seriously provided that they are not made abusively or offensively and comply with the guidance above. You will be treated with courtesy, fairness and with your safeguarding and wellbeing uppermost at all times. We would hope, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings the College.

We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your: sex or marital status; this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed) sexual orientation colour or race; this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality, disability, religious or political beliefs, trade union affiliation, or other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties or age.

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the relevant data Protection Act 1998. All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with data protection regulation and the College's data protection frameworks.

In some cases, related to Safeguarding, it may be necessary to refer a complaint to external child protection agencies in accordance with our Safeguarding procedures.

If a complaint is about a member of staff, details will be shared with the staff member's line manager (where this may differ from the person investigating the complaint). In some circumstances, the College Designated Safeguarding Lead may also be notified. In most cases, the complaint will be investigated with the member of staff being asked for their participation in the investigation. In some circumstances, the nature of the complaint may require the College to approach the investigation more formally, referring to the College Disciplinary Process and other relevant policies to guide the investigation and any actions where appropriate. Any outcomes or actions taken in relation to staff, in accordance with our policies, cannot be shared due to GDPR requirements.

In all other respects, the College will maintain confidentiality regarding complaints and request that students, apprentices and employers do the same.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, all students who are over compulsory school age (16+) have the right to full transparency regarding any matters that relate to them. Consequently, any complaints submitted on their behalf, or concerning them and their learning journey or experience, will be shared with them and they will be included in all related complaint communications.

Unreasonable behaviour

All complaints will be processed in accordance with this policy. However, if during this process, unreasonable complainant behaviour and/or unreasonable and persistent complainants are experienced, we reserve the right to end the process and reject the complaint.

We believe in some circumstances it would be unreasonable that a complaint is pursued if the complainant owes the College fees.

The College has the right not to accept complaints (e.g., where a complaint is judged by the College to be frivolous, vexatious or malicious).

Recording and monitoring feedback

We will log the feedback we receive so that we can monitor good practice and problems, this also helps us to take a closer look at what we are doing well and how we can further improve our own service delivery. Our Quality Department will analyse the complaint information and feedback to identify complaint patterns and issues. The Executive and College Leadership Team will receive reports on this analysis to enable it to monitor this information on a termly basis.

Version	
Approved by:	Corporation Board
Date of approval:	March 2026
Date for Review:	March 2027
Lead Officer:	Head of Quality Assurance
Senior Manager responsible:	Deputy Principal

Appendix A

