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# Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Procedure

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## 1. Purpose

To detail City of Bristol College processes by which a student, employer or other stakeholder can communicate a compliment, suggestion or complaint to the College. It outlines how compliments and suggestions will be received directly by those involved, and the process for resolving complaints. The College uses compliments, suggestions and complaints to inform and enhance its practices and procedures.

### **Procedure upon receipt of a compliment or suggestion:**

- All compliments and suggestions will be shared between the relevant manager, person or team mentioned in the compliment, and the Complaints and Reputation Officer.
- All compliments and suggestions will be recorded by the Complaints and Reputation Officer.
- All suggestions and recommendations will be acknowledged, reviewed and where appropriate, implemented.

### **Procedure upon receipt of a complaint:**

## 2. Scope

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

2.1 Complaints raised by students (Further Education and Higher Education), parents, guardians, employers, customers or the general public in relation to college activities, staff or any service provided by the College.

2.1. Complaints relating to any form of discrimination.

2.2. Complaints relating to equipment and facilities.

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

2.3. Decisions made in examinations and assessments.

2.4. Admission decisions.

2.5. Academic decisions.

2.6. Allegations of misconduct by a student.

2.7. Staff members who have a grievance against an individual or the College.

## 3. The informal process

Complaints of a minor nature should be raised immediately with the staff or team who are best placed to provide appropriate support or an immediate response.

- In the case of complaints related to the course or curriculum area, this would be a teacher, personal tutor/study coach or the manager for that area.
- In the case of complaints related to college services or facilities, this would be the Student Services Team at reception, or in the Study Centre.

However, an informal complaint can be submitted to any member of staff, who is then responsible for passing this on to the most appropriate person, who in the majority of circumstances would be the lead manager for the related area.

Each manager will take such action as necessary to resolve informal complaints. The outcome will be shared with the Complaints and Reputation Officer to add to the central record.

#### 4. The formal process

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

- 4.3. 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.
  - 4.3.1. If a complaint is made on behalf of a person over the age of 16, in compliance with the Data Protection Act, City of Bristol College will not discuss matters with third parties, but will instead, through a nominated member of the Quality Team, raise the matter directly with the individual concerned in an appropriate manner to confirm their willingness to advance the complaint.
  - 4.3.2. A formal complaint raised on behalf of a student over the age of 16, will not begin until the College has received written consent from the student for the parent / guardian / other to act on their behalf in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.
  - 4.3.3. If there is any element of the complaint that could be considered a potential safeguarding issue the complaint **will** be referred to the safeguarding lead for guidance.
- 4.4. The Complaints and Reputation Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint (via email) within 5 working days, outlining the steps that will be taken next in the process (including an outline of the next stage of the process).
- 4.5. Where appropriate, the Complaints and Reputation Officer will initiate a **formal complaint investigation**.

#### 5. Formal complaint investigation

- 5.1. The Complaints and Reputation Officer, working with a Quality Manager, will assign the complaint to an appropriate senior manager who will then communicate directly with the complainant.
- 5.2. The manager assigned to the complaint will fully investigate it. This will be reviewed by the quality team and the assigned manager will then provide a response within 10 working days of receiving the complaint and all conditions identified in 4.3 being satisfied.
- 5.3. In some more complex cases, it may not be possible to resolve a complaint within 10 days. If this is the case, the complainant will be advised, at the earliest opportunity, of the circumstances resulting in this unforeseen delay and will then be kept informed of progress by the investigating manager.
- 5.4. Information gathered within the investigation will be recorded, along with actions or recommendations. These will be forwarded to the manager responsible for implementation, monitored by the Quality Team and recorded by the Complaints and Reputation Officer.
- 5.5. 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.

## 6. Appeals

- 6.1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they can appeal against the decision. To do this, they must write to the Vice 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, a written appeal can be emailed to [complaints@cityofbristol.ac.uk](mailto: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.
- 6.2. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality will review the complaint, response, investigation and process followed, and respond within one calendar month of receiving the appeal letter.
- 6.3. Depending on the nature and grounds of appeal the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality 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 two college managers not previously involved in the complaint. The Panel will provide a written response to the complainant within 5 days of the meeting.
- 6.4. The complainant will be provided with a 'Completion of procedures' letter detailing the final outcome of the Appeal. Appeals are final and no further correspondence with regard to the substance of the complaint will be entered into.

## 7. Following the appeal stage

- 7.1. The College hopes and expects that this policy, and its associated procedure, will satisfactorily resolve any complaints, but recognises that a complainant may wish to continue the process if unsatisfied with the outcome from the appeal stage. In these circumstances the College is committed to providing clear and impartial advice as to the most appropriate external agency or department that any further complaint should be directed towards. Details will be provided on the 'Completion of procedures' letter sent to you following the Appeals process.

## 8. Higher Education (HE) Students

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. The Assistant Principal - Further and Higher Education will share outcomes of complaints with the University Centre Heads of Department where there are lessons to learn and enhancements to provision can be made as a result of the complaint.
- 8.3. Records of complaints will be considered by the HE Board as part of the enhancement strategy.
- 8.4. 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](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

## 9. Vexatious complaints

- 9.1. 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.
- 9.2. 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.
- 9.3. 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.
- 9.4. 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 Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality (refer to section 4).

## 10. Monitoring and reporting of Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints.

All compliments, suggestions and complaints are logged by the Complaints and Reputations Officer who when works with the relevant Quality manager to decide how these are actioned, in line with agreed processes, and then monitors progress until each is resolved. Data is collated by department and category. This, and any findings from the investigations process are reviewed by the Quality Team and used to improve the quality of provision throughout the College. Reports of complaints and compliments are tabled for information regularly at the Curriculum and Quality forum and through the Student Experience Task and Advisory group. The Senior Leadership Team monitors the data and findings regularly through the SLT Quality Report. An annual report is produced for governors.

**Review frequency:** Every three years

**Lead officer:** Complaints and Reputation Officer

**Senior Manager Responsible:** Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality