



South Staffordshire College

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure

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This Staff policy contains information that outlines our aims. However, there may be times when we cannot meet these obligations. We are committed to act in a fair and reasonable way. We will review policies each year and the Equality Assessment every three years.

Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure

1. Procedure Statement

- 1.1. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that complaints are resolved as fairly and as quickly as possible.
- 1.2. Comments, Compliments, and Complaints are used as a key aspect of quality improvement as they provide opportunities to identify strengths and weaknesses within college systems. It also enables the college to systematically receive feedback on customer perceptions of services provided.

2. Procedure Aims/Objectives

- 2.1. The aims of the procedure are to ensure that the College has a fair and consistent approach to the management of stakeholder feedback to:
 - Provide an opportunity to bring matters of dissatisfaction to the attention of the College.
 - Investigate and respond to concerns raised.
 - Make improvements as a result of the feedback provided.
- 2.2. To provide a consistent process for stakeholders to share complements which can be formally recorded and shared with relevant individuals, teams or groups.
- 2.3. To ensure that stakeholder feedback is used to improve quality in accordance with the college Quality Improvement Strategy.
- 2.4. To ensure that customer satisfaction is prioritised, and swift action is taken to address any weaknesses or areas of concern.

3. Scope (who this covers)

- 3.1. This procedure applies to all customer feedback and the management of the feedback will follow the processes outlined below. It applies to everyone working, studying, or visiting the College. The Assistant Principal of Quality and Curriculum will have the responsibility of managing feedback and ensuring summary reports are made available to ELT/SLT and the Board of Governors.

4. Procedure Detail

4.1. Comments & Compliments

- 4.1.1. Comments and compliments will be actively sought from learners and teachers throughout the academic year through a range of sources including Learner Voice meetings and forums
- 4.1.2. Learners will be notified of the feedback via email/letter and/or posters and

flyers throughout the college.

4.1.3. The Quality Administrator will ensure that comments and compliments are collated monthly to feed into summary complaints report.

4.1.4. Information of complaints are retained for 3 academic years.

4.2. **Complaints**

4.2.1. There are 3 stages to complaints at South Staffordshire College – **informal**, **formal** and **appeal**.

4.2.2. **Informal Stage (Stage 1)**

- 4.2.2.1. In the first instance complainants who are unhappy about some aspect of their College experience can usually have things put right through an informal approach to the person most closely associated with the problem. Learner, applicants, employers and customers are encouraged to adopt this approach in the first instance.
- 4.2.2.2. Staff who receive and resolve concerns informally should document discussions and email the details to the Quality Administrator so that management intelligence about the problem and its resolution can be collated.
- 4.2.2.3. If the member of staff is unable to resolve the complaint, the complaint should be raised with the relevant manager who will investigate and respond to the complainant.
- 4.2.2.4. All learners making a complaint must go through the college complaints procedure before contacting the Awarding Organisation.
- 4.2.2.5. Where the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved, the complaint may be escalated by the complainant to Stage 2 (Formal Stage)

4.2.3. **Formal Stage (Stage 2)**

- 4.2.3.1. Individuals who wish to make a formal complaint should do so in writing or on the College Complaints Form providing name, contact details, facts about the complaints, reasons for escalating the complaint to stage 2 and what outcome is being sought. All staff, managers or governors receiving complaints should forward them to the Quality Administrator.
- 4.2.3.2. A complaint must be escalated immediately to Stage 2 (Formal Stage) where it relates to:
 - Safeguarding
 - Health and Safety
 - Equality and Diversity (i.e. discrimination)

- 4.2.3.3. Any complaint regarding safeguarding issues will be forwarded to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the college, who will liaise with the Assistant Principal HR as appropriate. The matter will then be dealt with in accordance with the Safeguarding policy and Disciplinary Policy where required. The complainant will be notified of this and the complaint closed.
- 4.2.3.4. The appropriate senior manager will investigate complaints that relate to the personal conduct or actions of one of their managers.
- 4.2.3.5. If a complaint is made against the Principal CEO the matter will be directed to the Chair of the Corporation Board who can assign a member of the board to investigate.
- 4.2.3.6. Complaints about individual governors and/or the Board of Governors should be addressed in the first instance to the Clerk to the Corporation who will appoint an independent investigator in accordance with the Corporation's Standing Orders.
- 4.2.3.7. The college seeks to analyse all complaints in accordance with legislative equality and diversity requirements. Therefore, complainants maybe asked their gender, age, ethnicity and whether or not they have a disability.

4.2.4. Process

- 4.2.4.1. The Quality Administrator will send the complainant an acknowledgement email or letter within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- 4.2.4.2. A College manager will be asked to investigate the complaint and the subject of the complaint.
- 4.2.4.3. The complaint investigator will hold meetings with relevant staff and interview learners and stakeholders as appropriate to enable a judgement to be made to draft a response.
- 4.2.4.4. All responses to complaints are reviewed by the Head of Quality Improvement before being sent to the complainant. It is anticipated complainants will receive a formal response within 10 working days, where possible. As such, those investigating are required to send responses for review to the Head of Quality Improvement and Quality Administrator in a timely manner to allow the review to take place and meet the published response time.
- 4.2.4.5. The Quality Administrator will inform the complainant of the outcome and the right to appeal the outcome.

- 4.2.4.6. Within the response to the complaint the investigator will identify the outcome which has been reached which can fall into three categories
- Upheld
 - Partially upheld
 - Not upheld
- 4.2.4.7. Human Resources will be notified of any issues concerning performance and / or conduct of a member of staff where further action is required.
- 4.2.4.8. The Quality Administrator will log and monitor the complaint as being closed upon receipt from the investigating manager of the letter or email sent to the complainant.
- 4.2.4.9. Where the reply does not satisfy the complainant, they will have 5 working days in which to appeal.
- 4.2.4.10. Where a complaint can be evidenced to be malicious in nature further action may be considered against the individual.
- 4.2.4.11. Complaints in relation to the outcome of the Learner Conduct Procedure and / or the Fitness to Study Procedure are heard in accordance with those policies and procedures and include the opportunity for appeal and therefore would not be heard under the complaints procedure.

4.2.5. **Appeals (Stage 3)**

- 4.2.5.1. An appeal must be made in writing and include the reason for the appeal along with any additional supporting evidence. An appeal can only be considered on the basis that at least one of the following criteria apply:
- There has been a procedural irregularity.
 - New evidence has come to light.
 - Not all of the evidence was considered when coming to a conclusion.
- 4.2.5.2. If the complainant appeals, a member of ELT will be assigned to review the appeal. The member of staff leading the appeal may also interview the investigator of the complaint. A decision will be made as to whether or not the appeal is upheld, and the complainant will be notified.
- 4.2.5.3. The Quality Administrator will be responsible for providing a

summary of comments, compliments, and complaints to the Assistant Principal of Quality and Curriculum on a regular basis and a full report will be provided on an annual basis.

- 4.2.5.4. When the formal complaints procedure has been exhausted and a resolution has not been achieved the complainant has the right to complain to the colleges regulatory body, in the instance of Further Education this is the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency). If your complaint is in relation to Higher Education then it would be the validating Higher Education Institution.
- 4.2.5.5. Where complaints are related to specific courses or programmes and the college appeals procedure has been exhausted, the learner, if not satisfied with the outcome, can submit a complaint to the relevant Awarding Organisation. Information on this process is found on the specific Awarding Organisations website.

Data protection

- 4.3. The College manages data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, further details are available in the GDPR Policy.
- 4.4. Where the complaint is received from a third party on behalf of the student to whom the complaint relates, the college will only accept the complaint with the express written consent of the student /individual. Exceptions will only be made on the vital interests of the student; such as where there is serious concern on the welfare of the learner.
- 4.5. The outcomes of a complaint that involve a member of staff who may be subject to disciplinary action will be managed by Human Resources and the outcomes of such action will be confidential and not disclosed within the complaint's procedure.

5. Monitoring, Review and Responsibility

- 5.1. This procedure will be reviewed by the Assistant Principal of Quality and Curriculum every three years or sooner if required.