

Quality Department Complaints Policy and Procedure

Final – November 2015

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1. Purpose

1.1. At Solihull College & University Centre we are committed to providing high quality services for all our College Community. Taking account of users' views enables the College to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement.

1.2. This document details the complaints procedure. A complainant may be a student (Further Education or Higher Education), prospective student, parent, employer, or any other interested party that indicates dissatisfaction with the current level of service. All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with impartially.

1.3. Academic Appeals are not a part of this policy or procedure, nor are appeals related to the admissions processes. Please see the College's Appeals or Admissions Policy.

1.4. The College expects that the majority of issues can be resolved at an early stage through informal discussions. Therefore if an issue arises, the first step is to bring the matter to the attention of the relevant staff member, either by email or verbally, and discuss it with them.

1.5. It should be noted that a written record of issues raised at this early stage will not normally be made.

1.6. If the issue remains unresolved a formal complaint should be instigated through the College complaints procedure.

2. Responsibility

2.1. Overall responsibility for this procedure lies with the Vice Principal, Teaching, Learning & Assessment.

2.2. Day-to-day responsibility for implementation of this procedure lies with the Quality Assurance Co-ordinator.

3. Complaints Procedure

Formal Complaints – Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure

3.1. Formal complaints are submitted to the Quality Team and are overseen by the Vice Principal for Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

3.2. A formal complaint can be made in the following ways: By Email: Sending a completed College Complaints Form (downloadable from the College Website and at the end of this document) as an attachment to quality.mailbox@solihull.ac.uk In Writing: Completing the College Complaints Form (also available from the Student Hub and Reception), and sending it to:

Quality Team, Management Admin, Solihull College & University Centre, Blossomfield Road, Solihull B91 1SB.

3.3. An initial response to the complaint will be sent to the complainant, or to their representative, within 5 working days.

3.4. The complaint will be forwarded by the Quality Team to one of the College's Senior Managers who will take responsibility to fully investigate the matter and provide the complainant or their representative with a formal response within 10 working days.

3.5. If for any reason it is not possible to provide a formal response within 10 working days, the complainant will be informed as to the reason for the delay and kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

Appeals – Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure

3.6. Should the complainant wish to appeal against the outcome of Stage 1, formal complaint, they should submit this appeal in writing, within 10 days of the Stage 1 outcome, to:

Vice Principal, Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Solihull College & University Centre, Blossomfield Road, Solihull B91 1SB.

3.7. The Vice Principal Teaching, Learning and Assessment will fully investigate the appeal.

3.8. Stage 2 appeals may involve a face to face meeting with the complainant and their representative (where requested).

3.9. Following the outcome of the appeals stage, a formal response will be sent to the complainant who outlines the College's final response and the completion of procedures.

3.10. This is the final stage of the College's complaints procedure.

4. Formal Complaints – External Resolution

4.1. If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 process they have the opportunity to appeal to the appropriate external body.

4.2. If the complaint relates to a Further Education course funded by the Skills Funding Agency and the above Complaints and Appeals Process has been exhausted, the complainant can contact the Skills Funding Agency within three months of the complaint decision using the contact details below:

Skills Funding Agency, West Midlands Area, Director Area Relationship Team, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B2 4AJ.

4.3. The Skills Funding Agency Complaints Team can be e-mailed at: complaintsteam@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk

4.4. If the complaint relates to a Higher Education course, the complainant can appeal to the relevant partner University or Validating Body (Contact details are available from the Quality Team on request, or the College website).

Birmingham City University: <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/complaints-procedures>

Newman University: <http://www.newman.ac.uk/policies/2288/complaints-policies>

Oxford Brookes University: <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/your-studies/student-disputes/student-complaints/student-complaint-procedure/>

University of Warwick: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/gov/complaintsandfeedback/>

Pearson: <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html>

4.5. If the complainant, after seeking resolution with the partner University or Validating Body is still not satisfied, they have the opportunity to seek adjudication from the Office of Independent Adjudication (OIA). See the OIA website for further information www.oiahe.org.uk

4.6. Please note that it is normally a requirement of the SFA & OIA that any complaint has completed Stage 1 and 2 of the College complaints procedure, and, if applicable, the procedure of the relevant partner University or Awarding Body.

5. Policy

5.1. Solihull College & University Centre will investigate a complaint thoroughly and objectively and it will be regularly monitored by the Quality Co-ordinator. The College aims to resolve complaints within 10 working days – however some complaints, especially if the issue is more complex, may take longer to resolve.

5.2. Solihull College & University Centre will contact the complainant to advise them if the investigation is likely to take more than 10 working days and keep them informed of progress by their preferred method of contact.

5.3. Solihull College & University Centre respects the right to confidentiality. If the complainant would like a concern to remain confidential, they need to raise this immediately.

However, the complainant should be aware that a full investigation and resolution might not be possible if the request for confidentiality means that the College would be unable to fully communicate with individuals referred to in the complaint.

5.4. Solihull College & University Centre will ensure that students will not be treated less favourably following their complaint. If this is found to be the case staff disciplinary procedures will be followed.

5.5. Solihull College & University Centre will identify actions from complaints received to improve and develop its services.

5.6. Solihull College & University Centre will ask for Equality and Diversity Information for example Gender and Ethnicity, to help to ensure sure that all people are treated fairly.

5.7. A Complaints Form should be completed with as much detail as possible but most importantly full name, date of birth and contact details. If the form is completed on behalf of a complainant, then the form must include full contact details of the complainant's representative. **We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.**

5.8. College Staff must send complaints to the Quality Co-ordinator to record on the Complaints System.

5.9. On receipt of a formal complaint by Quality, an Investigation Lead will be allocated within two working days of receipt. The Quality Co-ordinator will then liaise with the Investigation Lead to investigate the issues raised. They will be provided with details so that they have all of the information required to undertake the investigation.

5.10. The College's decision will be communicated to the complainant by the College using the complainant's preferred method of contact.

5.11. The College's Quality Team will continuously monitor a complaint until the issue has been resolved.

5.12. The complaint will be closed on the Complaint System only when the issue has been resolved, or at the end of Stage 2.

5.13. The College reserves the right not to pursue any malicious, vexatious or abusive complaints (i.e. complaints that are not true or use offensive or abusive language in communication to staff).

5.14. Complainants should be aware that our staff have the right to work in a pleasant and safe environment and any violent or abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.

5.15. All complaints must be raised within twelve months of the original issue so that evidence is available for the investigation.

6. Monitoring of Complaints

6.1. The College monitors complaints carefully. A termly report on complaints is produced and shared with the Executive Management Team detailing issues raised, areas of study, timeliness of resolution and any subsequent actions. In addition, the College reports annually to its Governing Body on the operation of the Complaints Procedure and the views of complainants.