

Compliments and Complaints Policy

Student Services

SLT Responsibility	Sarah Lane
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Policy Author	Tracy Espinosa, Student Services Manager (Engagement & Funding)
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Roles Responsible for Reviewing	Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality Assistant Principal Student Experience Student Services Manager (Engagement & Funding)
Related Policies	College Behaviour Policy
Distribution	College Intranet – all staff Moodle – all students Websites – all stakeholders inc. parents

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOLLOWING REVIEW

June 2021

Compliments and Complaints Policy

Page Number or Heading Name	Details of significant change	Changes made by
Throughout document	Student Services Administrators changed to Student Services Officer throughout document	Tracy Espinosa
Page 5	Statement 'Zero Tolerance against Staff Abuse Policy' added	Tracy Espinosa
Page 6	Information added for 'Open University'	Tracy Espinosa
Page 7	Half Termly reporting added	Tracy Espinosa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compliments and Complaints Policy

Compliments

All compliments are logged by the College and fed back to the appropriate members of staff. We will respond to all compliments.

Complaints

Most concerns can be resolved by discussing the issue with the person directly involved or an appropriate member of staff, this might be a Subject Tutor, Course Team Leader, Personal Tutor, Manager or a member of staff in Support Services. Groups of learners may raise a concern about their course with their class student representative. If the issue cannot be resolved a complaint can be made.

All complaints will be investigated by an appropriate manager from the relevant Department/Team. Complaints should be sent to the Customer Services Administrators in the first instance who will acknowledge the complaint and provide details of the Investigating Manager. All complaints are logged and an annual report is produced which is discussed with the Senior Leadership Team and the College Corporation.

Appeal against the outcome of a complaint

If a complaint is not resolved through the formal investigation an appeal can be lodged with the Student Services Officer.

Please refer to the full Compliments and Complaints Policy for further information

Introduction

The College is committed to providing excellent customer satisfaction and welcomes compliments, suggestions and complaints and will deal with them in a friendly, fair and efficient way. The College will respond to all complaints promptly and within the published deadlines.

Implementation

This policy will be published on the College website and communicated to all staff.

General Roles and Responsibilities

- All College staff have a responsibility for receiving compliments, suggestions and complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the policy.
- The Heads of Department/Team are responsible for resolving complaints on behalf of South Essex College. They may appoint a Manager to investigate and respond on their behalf but will maintain overall responsibility.
- Assistant Principals are responsible for Appeals.
- The Customer Services Officer coordinates the Compliments and Complaints process. They also provide support and guidance on all matters relating to this Policy.

Procedure

Compliments, suggestions and complaints can be made verbally by phone 01702 220452 (voicemail available), by email (Yoursay@southessex.ac.uk) or by formal letter. A College feedback form or Have Your Say leaflet can also be used. These are available at reception at all College sites.

Complaints

If there is concern about an aspect of a course, apprenticeship or any of the College's services, the staff member most directly involved or someone already known should be contacted. Where there is uncertainty over who to contact, or a student, apprentice or employer does not want to approach the person most directly involved, then the Personal Tutor, Course Team Leader, Tutor/Assessor or Manager as appropriate should be contacted. If other students share the concerns then the student course representative should be approached. If other apprentices share the concerns then the Head of Apprenticeships should be approached.

If the issue cannot be resolved within the Department/Team a complaint can be made. Complaints should be sent to the Customer Services Officer using the details

above in the first instance who will acknowledge the complaint and provide details of the Investigating Manager. An appropriate Manager from the relevant Department/Team will investigate the complaint and take appropriate action. A response would normally be received within 10 working days. If we are unable to do this we will make contact to advise the target date for completion.

All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and an initial response provided within 10 working days, further responses may be provided where appropriate.

We aim to help you with your complaint as soon as practicable and possible. We politely request that you respect the staff team working to look after your complaint. We operate a zero abuse policy (both verbal and physical) towards any member of our team. Swearing, threats and/or any act of violence will not be tolerated. Anyone found in breach of this policy may find their complaint may not be dealt with in a timely manner.

Appealing the outcome of a complaint decision

If a complaint is not resolved using the complaints policy there is the right to appeal. An appeal should be lodged with the Customer Services Officer within 20 working days of the unsatisfactory outcome of the formal complaint. An extension of these time limits will only be possible in exceptional circumstances.

In order to appeal:

- Write to or telephone the Customer Services Officer directly on 01702 220452.
- Detail what steps have been taken to resolve the complaint and explain why the outcome is not considered satisfactory.

Appeals will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and responded to within 15 working days. Some appeals, especially if they are complex, may take longer. If it is going to take longer to respond the Customer Services Officer will provide an update.

Please note – appeals raised under this Policy are only in relation to the outcome of a complaint. If you need further advice please refer to the Customer Service Officer.

Taking your complaint further (Further Education students only)

If a complaint remains unresolved, advice can be sought from the Education and Skills Funding Agency on how to take the complaint further. The contact details are:

Education and Skills Funding Agency
Complaints Team
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Email: complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Higher Education

For students enrolled on the College's Higher Education programmes

UAL (University of the Arts London)

Once the college appeal stage has been completed students can request a final Stage Review with UAL by emailing complaints@arts.ac.uk.

UEA (University of East Anglia)

Academic Complaints (aspects of a student's academic experience).

Once the college complaint stage has been completed students can file a formal complaint with UEA. Students must first request a 'Completion of Stage' letter from the College and complete the Academic Complaint Form Stage Two (Review Stage) Partner Institutions, a copy will be provided with the 'Completion of Stage' letter.

This should be sent to academic.partnerships@uea.ac.uk.

For Non Academic complaints: Once the college appeal stage has been completed students can petition the UEA for a procedural review of the handling of the complaint. This UEA will not overturn the decision but will act in an advisory capacity to the College. Students can do this by emailing academic.partnerships@uea.ac.uk.

OU (Open University)

There is a final right of appeal to The Open University against a decision of a Board of Examiners only if the appeal is against a decision related to either: (a) progression from one stage to another of the programme to the next; or (b) a final award; and both of the following criteria are met: (a) all appropriate internal procedures at the College have been exhausted; (b) there are reasonable grounds to believe that the College's internal procedures and regulations for dealing with appeals were not implemented correctly or fairly.

The procedure for appealing to The Open University is set out in The Open University Handbook for Validated Awards, which can be located on the College Website

All Higher Education students

Once the appeal/review against complaint outcome stages have been completed, you are entitled to ask the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#), the independent ombudsman service of last resort, to look at your complaint. All applications to the OIA must be made within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter issued by the College or University to the student. The OIA considers complaints from people who remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of the complaints procedure. The OIA looks at issues such as whether the College followed its policy, and whether the final decision was reasonable in all the circumstances. The OIA cannot normally look at complaints:

- where the student has not progressed through all stages of the complaints process
- where the complaint refers to matters more than three years old
- where the Completion of Procedures letter is received outside the twelve month time limit
- Where matters have been or are being considered in court.

Full details of the scheme are available at www.oiahe.org.uk.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The College will keep a log of all compliments and complaints. In order to secure ongoing improvement, the overall process will be monitored for consistency, quality of response and compliance with policy.

Heads of Department/Team are provided with feedback on progress in relation to complaints resolution and this is discussed in Department Review meetings. Half Termly reports are provided to the College Senior Leadership Team and Corporation. An annual summary of compliments and complaints is reviewed by the College Senior Leadership Team and The Further Education Corporation Curriculum & Quality committee.

The Further Education Corporation (governing body of South Essex College) reviews and discusses the Compliments and Complaints report with members of the Senior Leadership Team on at least an annual basis.

Personal data will be handled according to the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. For further information in regards to Data Privacy and GDPR, please see our website on the following link: <https://www.southessex.ac.uk/gdpr>.

Appendix 1

Roles & Responsibilities within the Compliments and Complaints Process

All College staff are expected to:

- Treat all complaints seriously, dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the Compliments and Complaints policy
- Provide support and guidance to any student or member of the public who requests assistance to access the Compliments and Complaints process
- Respond promptly to any requests for information
- Treat all those involved with the complaint with respect
- Investigate impartially and deal with all information factually to conclude the complaint
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout

Heads of Department are expected to:

- Ensure complainants are contacted immediately to make initial contact and resolve their concerns if resolution is possible without the need for further investigation
- Include and update the Additional Learning Support Team and the Customer Services Administrators and any relevant team of progress and outcome of the investigation
- Keep the Customer Services Administrators informed of progress if/when a complaint is not resolved within the published timelines
- Support members of staff who may be subject to a complaint
- Inform relevant SMT of all complaints and seek guidance if further assistance is required.
- Inform HR of complaints made against members of staff
- Ensure outcome and any preventative action is recorded on the proforma provided and returned to the Customer Services Administrators in a timely manner, so that complaints are closed down immediately following resolution of a complaint in line with the Compliments and Complaints policy

Investigating Managers are expected to:

- Ensure complainants are contacted immediately to make initial contact and resolve their concerns if resolution is possible without the need for further investigation
- Include and update the Additional Learning Support Team and the Customer Services Administrators and any relevant team of progress and outcome of the investigation
- Keep the Customer Services Administrators informed of progress if/when a complaint is not resolved within the published timelines
- Proactively listen to all those involved
- Record and update complaints accurately and consistently
- Move the investigation forward in a timely manner
- Inform HR of complaints made against members of staff
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout
- Investigate impartially and deal with all information factually to conclude the complaint
- Ensure outcome and any preventative action is recorded on the proforma provided and returned to the Customer Services Administrators in a timely manner, so that complaints are closed down immediately following resolution of a complaint in line with the Compliments and Complaints policy

Senior Management team are expected to:

- Monitor Department complaints to ensure appropriate action is taken in line with Compliments and Complaints policy
- Investigate appeals and ensure all information relating to each appeal, the outcome and any preventative action is recorded on the proforma provided and returned to the Customer Services Administrators in a timely manner so that Appeals are closed down immediately following resolution of a complaint
- Take appropriate action where Management Teams are not responding to complaints in line with the Compliments and Complaints policy

The Student Services Officer is expected to:

- Coordinate the Compliments and complaints process and keep a record of all complaints received
- Send holding letters/emails to complainants and keep them informed of progress if a complaint or appeal investigation/review is not resolved within the published timelines
- Update the Central Feedback Log and monitor the information provided via proformas for accuracy/consistency
- Produce an Annual Report Compliments and Complaints report for SLT and College Corporation
- Provide training to new Managers
- Provide support and guidance on all matters relating to the Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Escalate to SMT when complaints are not actioned correctly

Appendix 2
College Feedback Form



Feedback Form

The College is committed to providing high quality services for our learners, employers and the community in general. We welcome this feedback to help us to improve Quality. Please complete this form, including as much information as possible.

Please note that staff are under an obligation not to allow a complaint by a student to have any bearing on the way that the student is treated or assessed.

Name

Date

Address

Post Code

Tel. No.

Course

Please set out clearly the nature and origin of your compliment/complaint

Please continue overleaf if necessary

If a complaint, please describe the steps you have taken to resolve your complaint informally. If this has not been possible, or the outcome is not satisfactory, please explain why.

Please let us know what we can do to resolve this matter.

Please continue overleaf if necessary

Signature of person making compliment/complaint

College date stamp

Please return to the College reception or by email to Yoursay@southessex.ac.uk or by post to: Customer Services Administrators, South Essex College of Further & Higher Education, Luker Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 1ND

The information provided on this form will be stored and processed under the General Data Protection Regulation 2018