



# Complaints

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Policy & Procedure 2023-24

Deputy Principal

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## 1. Policy

- 1.1 At City of Wolverhampton College, we are committed to providing high quality services for all our stakeholders and visitors.
- 1.2 The policy covers complaints about services the College provides, and the treatment received whilst at the College.
- 1.3 Overall responsibility lies with the Deputy Principal.
- 1.4 Quality are responsible for the management of the processes of timely investigation and communication to complainants. Quality will monitor and track intervention, whilst maintaining accurate records.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 To explain the processes for raising, investigating, and concluding raised complaints.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 The procedure applies to complainants. A complainant is a stakeholder (a current or prospective student or apprentice, a parent/carer or an employer) or a visitor that indicates dissatisfaction with the current level of service.
- 3.2 It does not cover complaints about student or apprentice assessments e.g., grades and marks. Complainants wishing to make a complaint re outcomes should fully exhaust the Assessment Appeals Procedure before instigating this policy and procedure.

## 4. Procedure

### 4.1 Raising a complaint

- 4.1.1 If a student or apprentice has a concern/complaint it should initially be raised with a member of staff. A member of staff must take every opportunity to resolve the concern/complaint informally. Staff dealing with informal concerns/complaints should keep records of conversation and actions. These will be requested should a concern/complaint escalate to a formal stage.
- 4.1.2 If an informal resolution is not possible, formal communication is required to be completed by the student or apprentice with as much detail as possible, but most importantly the complainant's full name and contact details.
- 4.1.3 A formal complaint must be made within three months of the issue first arising, formal communication can take the guise of various methods:
  - a) A 'Have Your Say' form which can be submitted access and submitted via the website <https://www.wolvcoll.ac.uk/have-your-say/> or scanned and emailed to [complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk)
  - b) A letter or a 'Have Your Say' form posted to Quality, City of Wolverhampton College, Paget Road Campus, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV6 0DU.

- c) A letter or a 'Have Your Say' form handed to a member of staff who will pass on to Quality
- d) An email sent directly to [complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk)

- 4.1.4 If a student or apprentice needs help in presenting a complaint, advice can be sought from a member of staff. If completed on behalf of the complainant, additional information may be required.
- 4.1.5 If the complainant communicates by telephone, a member of staff can record the details on behalf of the complainant. This should then be forwarded to Quality or scanned to [complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk)
- 4.1.6 A formal complaint must be made within three months of the issue first arising. The College cannot guarantee to explore complaints outside this timeframe, however may consider complaints raised within the same academic year. On receipt if it is deemed that the complaint will not be investigated due to timeframes, the complainant will be advised. This will conclude the complaints process.

## 4.2 Investigating a complaint

- 4.2.1 On receipt of a formal complaint, the complainant will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt and an Investigation Lead allocated. Quality may contact the complainant for further information or to provide any further information.
- 4.2.2 Quality will then liaise with the Investigation Lead to investigate the issues raised. Where possible, the Investigation Lead will be independent to the scope of the complaint however, in some instances managers of areas may be allocated due to having appropriate background knowledge.
- 4.2.3 The Investigation Lead will complete an investigation within ten working days (or longer if more complex or investigations are needed due to external factors). Where timeframes are extended, the complainant will be advised.
- 4.2.4 Quality will continuously monitor the progress of the complaint.
- 4.2.5 In exceptional circumstances, for example in a pandemic, these procedures may be adjusted slightly due to working restrictions.

## 4.3 Complaint outcomes

- 4.3.1 Following the investigation outcome, a response will be formed by the Investigating Officer and communicated to the Deputy Principal. This will be then put in writing to the complainant by the Deputy Principal solely based on the findings by the Investigating Officer.
- 4.3.2 In the event of a complaint being raised relating to Higher Education (HE), under the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Scheme Rules, the College will incorporate in the response the Completion of Procedures Letter. The Completion of Procedures Letter serves four main purposes:
  1. It fixes the date when the student completes the provider's internal complaints procedures
  2. It clarifies the issues considered by the provider under those procedures

3. It establishes the timescale for bringing a complaint to the OIA
4. It advises the student of the possibility of bringing a complaint to the OIA.

- 4.3.3 The College will ensure that students and apprentices will not be treated less favorably following a complaint.
- 4.3.4 All formal complaints are recorded on a central tracking system.

#### 4.4 Appeals

- 4.4.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal against the decision within five working days of the response. This needs to be clearly requested and via formal communication such as:
  - a) A letter posted to Quality, City of Wolverhampton College, Paget Road Campus, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV6 0DU.
  - b) A letter handed to a member of staff who will pass on to Quality
  - c) An email sent to [complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@wolvcoll.ac.uk)
- 4.4.2 The appeal will be investigated by a member of the Executive Management Team (EMT) or another Senior Manager independent of the original complaint and a response issued within ten working days from the receipt date of the appeal.
- 4.4.3 Where the appeal relates to a complaint about Higher education (HE), under the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Scheme Rules, the College will incorporate in the response the Completion of Procedures Letter.
- 4.4.4 The outcome of this appeal concludes the complaints process.
- 4.4.5 All appeals are recorded on a central tracking system.
- 4.4.6 In the event that a student or apprentice is still dissatisfied with the outcome of an complaint appeal, they have the option to escalate the matter to the Awarding Organisation. However, as an initial step, students and apprentices are required to follow the centre's established complaints procedure before seeking external intervention.

#### 4.5 Malicious, abusive or persistent complaints

- 4.5.1 City of Wolverhampton College does not tolerate malicious complaints received in any form and will initiate appropriate disciplinary action against such actions, i.e., complaints that are not true, use of foul language in any communication that are sent to staff.
- 4.5.2 A complainant who continues to contact the College with unreasonable demands following a complaint investigation, may be considered an unreasonable or persistent complainant. Unreasonable demands can include seeking excessive amounts of information, excessive email or telephone contact, demanding an unrealistic nature or scale of service, or seeking to prolong contact with the College by continually raising new issues throughout an investigation.

- 4.5.3 If it is agreed that a complainant is unreasonable, the Deputy Principal will decide the most appropriate actions, informing the complainant that the College that all investigations will cease.
- 4.5.4 Complainants who have displayed unreasonable behaviour in the past have the right to make new complaints in the future in accordance with the set timeframes.

## **5. Monitoring & Evaluation**

- 5.1 An annual analysis is produced, and in year reports are compiled on a regular basis concerning the nature of the complaints received and actions emerging for improvement purposes.

**Appendix 1 - Complaint Process Flowchart**