

# Complaints Procedure

## 1. Purpose

To detail The Cornwall College Group processes for resolving complaints.

## 2. Different Processes for Further Education and Higher Education

2.1 Both processes have informal and formal stages.

2.2 All stages of a Further Education complaint are dealt with through the College internal processes.

2.3 Higher Education complaints have an informal stage (Stage 1) dealt with through the College, and a formal stage (Stage 2) which is either:

- dealt with through the partner HEI if it is about an academic matter
- dealt with through the College if it is about a service matter.

## 3. Applies to

3.1 Complaints raised by learners, parents, guardians, employers, customers, staff members or the general public in relation to College activities, staff and provision.

3.2 It is not applicable to staff members who have a grievance against an individual person such as another staff member which should be dealt with under the College Staff Grievance Procedure.

3.3 Awarding and funding bodies normally require a complainant to exhaust the College internal complaints procedure before they will consider a complaint.

## 4. Responsibility

4.1 Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for maintaining an overview of complaints and their satisfactory resolution.

4.2 Quality Unit for

- (a) Monitoring the operation of the complaints procedure.
- (b) Briefing and where necessary involving the CEO in investigations.
- (c) Allocating suitable managers to investigate complaints in discussion with Senior Managers/Directors.
- (d) Recording complaints on a database.
- (e) Termly analysis of formal complaints and bringing significant issues or trends to the attention of the CEO.

4.3 Heads of Sites/Senior Managers/Directors for

- (a) Managing the investigation and resolution of formal complaints within their areas of responsibility.
- (b) Completing, acquiring and retaining related documentation and sending electronic copy to the Quality Unit including a copy of the investigation report.
- (c) Obtaining the approval of the Quality Unit to the proposed reply to the complainant.

4.4 Staff for taking action, on receipt of complaints in accordance with this procedure, and seeking advice and guidance from the Quality Unit.

## 5. Definition

4.1 A complaint is defined as a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable. This includes, but is not limited to, the following categories:

- (a) Academic - for example, complaints which are related to assessments, progression and grades. (*For Higher Education academic appeals concerning the outcome of an Award Assessment Board, refer to the relevant awarding body / HEI regulations*).
- (b) Teaching and learning - for example, complaints which are related to the teaching provision
- (c) Course organisation - for example, complaints which are related to the course, facilities / resources
- (d) Disciplinary and conduct - for example, complaints which are related to disciplinary proceedings for non-academic offences
- (e) Academic misconduct - for example, complaints which are related to academic offences including plagiarism, collusion and examination offences
- (f) Discrimination - for example, complaints where the learner claims there has been any form of discrimination
- (g) Financial - for example, complaints relating to finance and funding
- (h) Welfare and accommodation - for example, complaints relating to support services, e.g. student support, catering, and accommodation issues
- (i) Other

4.2 The member of staff should acknowledge that a complaint has been made and outline to the complainant the complaints process and next steps.

## 6. Processes and documentation

### 6.1 Informal stage

- 6.1.1 A complaint will be regarded as at an informal stage if it is not of a serious nature and can be resolved on an informal basis by the department or individual against whom it is directed.
- 6.1.2 Informal complaints should be raised immediately with
  - (a) Member of staff directly involved or who is able to address the concerns.
  - (b) One of the support services team to resolve the complaint directly and informally.
  - (c) The complainant's senior tutor/personal tutor/tutor.

6.2 The College member of staff should keep a record of the issue and outcome.

### 6.3 Formal stage

- 6.3.1 A complaint will be regarded as formal if it is of a serious nature and/or cannot be resolved on an informal basis by the department or individual

against whom it is directed. A complaint of a 'serious nature' may include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

- Health and safety issues
- Equality and diversity issues (including but not limited to: ethnicity, race, gender, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation)
- Failure of a College service or provision
- Breach of confidentiality
- Theft or damage to personal or College property

6.3.2 Formal complaints should be emailed to: [complaints@cornwall.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@cornwall.ac.uk).

6.3.3 Complainants should provide details of: name, address and telephone number, course title, campus/site, together with all supporting information regarding the complaint e.g. relevant documents, dates, locations and witnesses if appropriate. There should also be detail of any previous attempts to resolve the issue and the action the complainant would like taken to resolve the complaint.

6.3.4 If the complainant is unable for any reason to submit a complaint by email they should contact the Quality Unit and they will record the verbal complaint and forward the complaint for appropriate response to the appropriate person.

6.3.5 If it is an academic complaint about higher education, the Quality Unit will inform the appropriate partner Higher Education Institution's Complaints Office. If it is a service complaint about higher education it will be dealt with through the College complaints process.

6.3.6 An acknowledgement to a formal complaint will be made in writing within 5 working days of the complaint by the Quality Unit. The acknowledgement will detail who will be responsible for investigating the complaint, and include a copy of this complaints procedure.

6.3.7 The Quality Unit will refer complaints to the appropriate manager who will then communicate direct with the complainant and the complaint will also be forwarded to the CEO and the appropriate Director of Cluster for information.

6.3.8 The manager investigating the complaint will provide a response within 20 working days.

6.3.9 During the investigation the manager may arrange to meet with:

- (a) The complainant to discuss the complaint.
- (b) Any person(s), if appropriate, who are the subject of the complaint.

6.3.10 During any meetings the complainant or subject of the complaint may be accompanied by a colleague or learner. A written record of all proceedings will be made.

6.3.11 If the complaint cannot be resolved within 20 working days for any reason, the complainant will be advised why the response has been delayed.

6.3.12 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 boundaries of confidentiality.

- 6.3.13 The investigating manager will send copies of the investigation report and correspondence sent to the complainant to the Quality Unit.

#### 6.4 Appeals

- 6.4.1 The appeals stage of a Further Education complaint is dealt with through the College internal processes.
- 6.4.2 The appeals stage of a Higher Education complaint is either:
- dealt with through the partner HEI if it is about an academic matter
  - dealt with through the College if it is about a service matter.
- 6.4.3 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, an appeal must be submitted to [complaints@cornwall.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@cornwall.ac.uk) within ten working days of receipt of the response to your complaint. This appeal should detail :
- (a) The nature of the appeal, which should not restate the original formal complaint but state the reasons why the suggested resolution is unsatisfactory.
  - (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.
- 6.4.4 If the appeal concerns a higher education academic matter, the Quality Unit will inform the appropriate partner Higher Education Institution's Complaints Office.
- 6.4.5 For Higher Education academic appeals concerning the outcome of an Award Assessment Board, the learner should refer to the relevant awarding body / HEI academic regulations which specify how an academic appeal will be addressed.
- 6.4.6 An acknowledgement will be sent to the appeal in writing within 5 working days of receipt.
- 6.4.7 Depending on the nature and cause of dissatisfaction :
- (a) A further investigation may be conducted and consultation with the CEO in order to respond to specific issues raised and a final decision will be made with regard to the complaint.
  - (b) If appropriate the complaint will be referred to an Appeals Panel within 20 working days of the conclusion of any further investigation. The panel will consist of 3 managers not previously involved in the complaint. The panel will review all documents and make appropriate recommendations. The panel will provide a written response to the complainant within 5 working days of their meeting.
- 6.4.8 Appeals are final and no further correspondence with regard to the substance of the complaint will be entered into by the College.

## **7. Referral to External Bodies**

7.1.1 If the complainant is not satisfied after having exhausted all stages of the College's Complaints procedure or the HEI partner institution's procedure, they can refer:

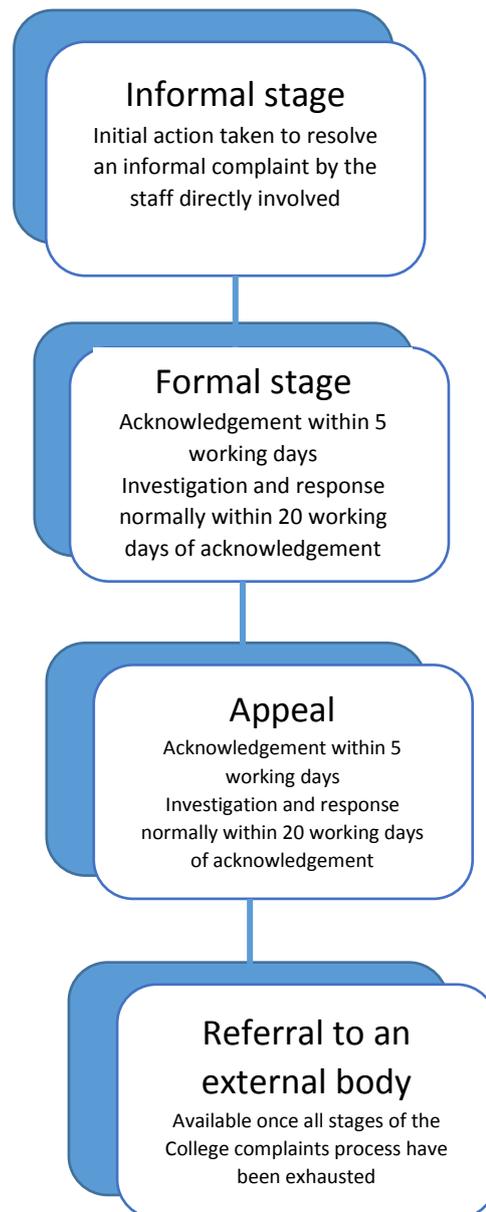
- a complaint about a further education, or a Pearson higher education, programme to the relevant awarding/funding body.
- a complaint about a higher education programme to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

7.1.2 If the complaint reaches this stage the College will give the complainant full information on how to proceed.

## **8. Related documents**

- Staff Grievance Procedure

## The Management of Further Education Complaints



## The Management of Higher Education Service and Academic Complaints

Illustrative example showing the process for Plymouth University partnership provision.

