

Complaints Procedure

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Associated Policy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Policy • Academic Appeals • Quality Framework

Within this policy, whenever the term student or similar is used, this will refer to all students registered with Cambridge Regional College on any of its educational courses or apprenticeship schemes.

Aim

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all stakeholders are given an equal opportunity to express dissatisfaction about the service they have received. The College aims to:

- Ensure that effective and consistent reporting takes place
- Ensure that any concerns or complaints are handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- Use information given by the stakeholders to continually improve the service offered
- Publish the complaints procedure so that it can be accessed readily by staff and students
- Provide the best service possible

The College will investigate complaints thoroughly and fairly using a three-stage procedure and aims to act in accordance with procedures set out by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA; Chapter B9). With all complaints we aim to:

- Provide a swift and early resolution
- Acknowledge all complaints as soon as possible and within 5 working days.
- Put things right if it is our fault, or if not, explain why
- Provide an opportunity for a second opinion if the complainant is not happy with the outcome of the first
- Resolve all of our complaints within 90 days for college related issues, or one calendar month for issues relating to apprenticeships
- Use all comments, concerns and complaints when reviewing our processes to improve quality

If you need help accessing this procedure, please get in touch and we will be happy to assist you.

Scope

This procedure is for all College stakeholders. This includes, but is not limited to, current students, including apprentices, ex-students, staff, parents and carers, employers, employees, contractors and members of the public.

Complaints are defined as expressions of dissatisfaction and can be communicated using the College's complaint form (Appendix 1), in person, by telephone, email, via the College's website and by letter. Complaint forms can be found in all reception areas and in the LRC.

Examples of complaints are:

- Failure of CRC to meet its obligations
- Misleading or incorrect information provided by CRC
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration

Formal complaints which are received by the College will be redirected to the Quality team.

For complaints regarding academic decisions or academic dissatisfaction, please refer to the 'Academic Appeals' policy.

We usually acknowledge and respond to complaints by letter or email; we also contact people by telephone if required. We will always try to use the method that the complainant requests.

This complaints procedure has been written using guidance set out by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and is based on the principles of accessibility, clarity, proportionality, timeliness, fairness, independence, and confidentiality, and aims to improve the student experience.

Due to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR, we are unable to discuss or share the personal information of anyone without their consent. If a complaint is made on behalf of a student, we will explain this to the complainant, and suggest the student complains to us directly.

In this procedure, we use the words 'you' and 'the complainant' to describe the person making the complaint.

Procedure

1. Local Resolution

1.1. We aim to address concerns swiftly and locally where possible within each curriculum area or department. If you have a concern, please talk to any staff member at CRC who will help you find a solution. We encourage you to do this as soon as you have a query so we can help you quickly.

1.2. The staff member may write down the details of your concerns and record them for future reference.

2. Stage 1: Formal Complaint (Quick Resolution)

2.1. Please submit an outline of your complaint to the Quality Office using any of the methods mentioned above, and include your contact details. Every complaint received by the Quality Office will be issued with a log number and an acknowledgement will be issued within 5 working days. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted. However, these incidents will still be recorded and may be investigated.

2.2. The Quality Office may direct the complaint to a relevant area or department for a response.

2.3. You will receive a response in writing and where possible, we aim to resolve the complaint within 15 working days. If the concern has been received from either an Apprentice or Employer, we aim to resolve the complaint within 1 calendar month.

2.4. The investigating manager can recommend:

- a) **The complaint is upheld:** The College will explain how and what actions will be taken in order to resolve the situation and satisfy the complainant
- b) **The complaint is rejected:** The College will outline the reasons for the decision

2.5. If a complaint is complex, it will be passed to Stage 2 for a detailed investigation.

- Examples of this type of complaint include: complaints that involve many people, involve allegations of major or gross misconduct, where there are allegations of a major breach in health and safety, where there are concerns about safeguarding.

2.6. If a complaint cannot be resolved during Stage 1, it will be progressed to Stage 2.

2.7. **Examples of this may include: if a suitable answer cannot be reached by the curriculum area or department to respond in a timely manner, where a complaint may present as superficial but develops into a complex situation.**

2.8. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, you can request an appeal. A notification for appeal must be received by the Quality Office within 10 working days of the response. Once a request has been submitted, you have an additional 20 days to submit the details of your appeal request.

2.9. An appeal will review the procedures which occurred during this stage and will only consider new information if this could not be presented during the formal stage due to valid reasons.

3. Stage 2: Formal Complaint (Complex cases)

3.1. A complaint will be considered Stage 2 if:

- No resolution has been achieved during the previous stages
- If the issues raised are complex and need a detailed investigation

3.2. Complaints should be submitted to the Quality Office. Every complaint received will be given an individual log number. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted but details will be recorded and may be investigated.

3.3. We will acknowledge your complaint and issue the log number within 5 working days of receipt by the Quality team.

3.4. Details of the complaint will be sent to an appropriate College manager for investigation.

3.5. It may be necessary for the manager to organise a meeting with you or others involved to gain an understanding of the situation.

3.6. If the manager decides to hold a panel meeting or hearing, you will be told of the date(s) of the meeting, the names of the panel members and job titles, any anyone else who will be there. You will receive an outline agenda and a copy of any documents which are relevant. You may bring someone with you. The investigating manager may use evidence from emails, documents, virtual learning environments or other electronic or physical means in order to gain a good understanding of the situation.

3.7. The manager, or appointed representative, will take notes during any meeting to inform the final report and ensure an accurate record is kept. You can ask to see these notes if you wish.

3.8. A response will be sent to you within 90 working days of receiving the formal complaint. Where a complaint is raised in connection with apprenticeships, a response will be sent to you within a calendar month. If the investigation requires an extension, you will be told of the new deadline, along with a reason.

3.9. The investigating manager can recommend:

- a. **The complaint is upheld:** The College will explain how and what actions will be taken in order to resolve the situation and satisfy the complainant
- b. **The complaint is rejected:** The College will outline the reasons for the decision if permitted under the GDPR Act.

3.10. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2, you can request an appeal. A notification for appeal must be received by the Quality Office within 10 working days of the response. Once a request has been submitted, you have an additional 20 days to submit the details of your appeal request.

3.11. An appeal will review the procedures which occurred during this stage and will only consider new information if it could not be presented during the formal stage due to valid reasons.

4. Stage 3: Appeal

4.1. The aim of the appeal is to review the procedures which have been followed throughout stages 1 or 2 to ensure that the complaint was approached fairly.

4.2. A member of the College Senior Management Team (SMT) or College Management Team (CMT) who was not involved in either stage 1 or stage 2 will be appointed to review the complaint. The SMT or CMT member will have 10 working days to investigate and respond.

4.3. If we do not receive any further communication from you within 10 working days of the date on the appeals response letter, the complaint will be recorded as closed.

4.4. If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal, you can ask or the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) [for complaints about further education or apprenticeships] or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) [for complaints about higher education] to review the case. Any request must be submitted within 3 months following the closure of Stage 3: Appeal.

4.5. You will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter within 28 days of completing CRC's entire complaints procedure.

Document history

Date	Issue number	Change/Comments	Date Approved	Approved by
2008	1	Procedure written	05/03/2008	SMT
2015	2	Adherence to the OIA standards	25/11/2015	SMT
		Impact assessment updated		
2016	3	Annual review – no change	23/06/2016	Director of Quality
2016	3	Mid-year review – update to Stage 1 response time from 10 days to 15 days	08/11/2016	Director of Quality
2017	4	Annual review - no change		

2018	5	Annual review – minor changes, including adding GDPR	11/09/2018	AP QI
2018	6	Update to appeal following Stage 1. Update to add CMT as investigating manager for appeals. Minor amendments	26/10/2018	HoQI
2019	6	Minor amendment to show response for apprenticeships and to clarify GDPR.	15/05/2019	HoQI
2019	6	Addition of the term apprentices to the inclusion terms used.	12/7/2019	HoQI
2019	6	Minor amendment to include reference to limitations under GDPR Act.	29/11/19	HoQI
2020	6.2	Amendments to web page links	20/8/2020	HoQT
2021		Confirmation of the term student added		
2021	6.4	Minor amended to included timescale for Apprentice/Employer concerns	10/06/2021	



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