CAMBRIDGE REGIONAL COLLEGE
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Complaints Policy and Procedure

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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 courses or apprenticeship schemes.

1. Cambridge Regional College (CRC) views all complaints received as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

2. Our policy is to:

- Have few or no complaints, but when they occur to ensure that they are resolved quickly and fairly
- Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- Publish our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- Base our procedure on principles of accessibility, clarity, proportionality, timeliness, fairness, independence, confidentiality, and improvement of the student experience
- Make sure everyone at CRC knows what to do if a complaint is received
- Make sure complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- Make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved quickly
- Analyse complaints regularly, consider their outcomes and use this information to help improve the quality of what we do

3. **Reasonable Adjustments**

3.1. This policy and procedure define arrangements for communication and investigation relating to complaints. Any party involved has the right to request reasonable adjustments to be made to these arrangements and the College will respond as appropriate where they have a specific need and to ensure they are not disadvantaged by the arrangements.

4. Definition of a Complaint

4.1. Complaints are defined as expressions of dissatisfaction and can be submitted in accordance with CRC's Complaints Procedure (below).

4.2. Complaints can come from (but not limited to) students, ex-students, employers, members of the public, staff, parents, employees and contractors. The College will not normally deal with a complaint that is six months old or more than three months old (if the complainant is a student who has left the college).

4.3. For complaints regarding academic decisions please refer to the Academic Appeals Policy.

5. Confidentiality

5.1. All complaints and appeals will be handled sensitively; we will only share information with those who need it and will comply with the Data Protection Act (2018) and UK GDPR.

5.2. If a parent/guardian submits a complaint on behalf of a student, it will only be accepted if the student is under 18 years old, with the student's consent. If the student is 18 years old or over or have asked us not to share personal information with a third party, we will ask them to complain directly to us themselves, or to give us permission to share their personal details with the complainant.

5.3. If an employer submits a complaint on behalf of an apprentice, it will only be accepted if the apprentice has provided consent. We will ask them to complain directly to us themselves, or to give us permission to share their personal details with the complainant.

5.4. CRC will retain secure copies of complaints for at least 3 years and will review at least annually the volume and nature of all complaints received.

6. Conduct

5.1 We expect anyone who is investigating or responding to a complaint to:

- Be aware of the complaints procedure
- Try to sort out any problems locally in the first instance
- Follow guidance provided by the quality and/or HR team
- Investigate a complaint fully, taking account of all available evidence and documentation
- Keep records of their investigation, and prepare a report outlining their findings
- Use the complaints procedure fully before involving any outside organisations
- Be reasonable with the complainant's response to any actions we take to address the problem

5.2 Where a complaint is received about a member of staff, it will be passed to the HR team for their review. The HR team will identify an appropriate manager to carry out the investigation and report their findings. If actions are proposed that do not relate to a particular member of staff, these will be shared with the Quality team for monitoring.

5.3 The complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome of any investigation. If a complaint is received during a college holiday, timescales may be extended, and we will advise the complainant of this as soon as we can.

5.4 Where a complaint is upheld, the complainant will be advised of any actions which are as a result of the complaint, unless these are specific to a member of staff.

5.5 Complaints about the Principal or any member of the governing body should be directed to the Chair of Corporation at Cambridge Regional College, marked 'private and confidential'.

5.6 Complaints which are obsessive, repetitive, and malicious or considered harassment will not be accepted.

5.7 Where requests are unreasonable, complainants will be informed quickly in order to manage expectations.

7. Monitoring

7.1. This policy and procedure will be reviewed annually or sooner to comply with legislative changes.

7.2. Complaints will be reviewed and analysed annually and reported to Governors. Interim reports will be provided to Senior Managers.

8. Procedure

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 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 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

Formal complaints which are received by the College will be redirected to the Quality team. 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. Due to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK 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.

Local Resolution (informal)

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

1. Stage 1: Formal Complaint (Quick Resolution)

1.1. If you are not able to resolve your issue informally, please submit an outline of your complaint to the quality office using any of the methods mentioned above and include your contact details. Emails should be sent to: complaints@camre.ac.uk. 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.

1.2. The quality office will assign the complaint to an appropriate manager for investigation.

1.3. The complainant 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.

1.4. The investigating manager can recommend:

a) **The complaint is upheld**: The College will explain how and what actions will be taken to resolve the situation and satisfy the complainant

b) **The complaint is rejected**: The College will outline the reasons for the decision

1.5. If a complaint is complex or cannot be resolved during stage 1, it will be progressed to Stage 2.

1.6. 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.

1.7. 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.

2. Stage 2: Formal Complaint (Complex cases)

2.1. A complaint will be considered Stage 2 if:

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

Examples include complaints that involve many people or departments: allegations of major or gross misconduct; allegations of a major breach in health and safety; concerns about safeguarding; where a thorough investigation cannot be undertaken to respond in a timely manner; where a complaint may present as straightforward but develops into a complex situation.

2.2. The quality office will send details of the complaint to an appropriate manager for investigation.

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

2.4. 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 to gain a good understanding of the situation.

2.5. 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.

2.6. A response will be sent to you within 90 working days of CRC 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.

2.7. The investigating manager can recommend**:**

a. **The complaint is upheld**: The College will explain how and what actions will be taken 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.

2.8. 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 or your appeal request.

2.9. 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.

3. Stage 3: Appeal

3.1. 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

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

3.3. 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.

3.4. If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal, you can ask for 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] or the relevant Awarding Organisation as per the College Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure to review the case. Any request must be submitted within 3 months following the closure of Stage 3: Appeal.

3.5. 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
22/02/2016	1	Policy created approved and impact assessed	22/2/2016	SMT/EIA
2017	2	Annual review – no change		
2018	3	Addition of GDPR compliance, appeal permitted following stage 1. Minor adjustments		
2019	3	Annual review - no change		
2021	4	4.2 clarification of parents submitting complaints. 5.2 Clarification added about staff.	08/02/2021	QA Manager
2021	4.1	Addition of clarification statement of who is covered within the policy.	09/06/2021	QA Manager
2021		Clarification of employers submitting complaints	10/06/2021	
2021	5	Amended 'learner' to 'student' and 'GDPR' to 'UK GDPR'. Added more information regarding investigations and monitoring of actions (paras 5.1 and 5.2)	3/8/2021	VP Quality Improvement
2022	5	Annual review – no change		Head of Quality
2023	6	Amended to combine the policy with the procedure and add the complaints email address to the procedure.	31/08/2023	Director of Quality
2024	7	Annual review	12/08/2024	Director of Quality
2024	8	New paragraph 3, reasonable adjustments, added.	02/12/2024	EIA Working Group
2025	9	Annual Review	12/12/2025	Director of Quality

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