

## **CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (Formal)**

### **Purpose**

It is the policy of the College to ensure that the service and teaching provided meets and exceeds the expectations of all our customers. To support this, we actively seek feedback from all users of our services. We encourage our customers to complain if they feel that their expectations have not been met. The College will use a structured approach to ensure the problem is resolved and will use this information to implement continuous improvement and promote good practice.

### **Responsibility**

The Quality Systems Manager and the Quality Systems Administrator are responsible for the administration and reporting of the processes as stated in this procedure. The Curriculum Manager / Assistant Principal Teaching & Learning / Unit Manager or members of the Executive are responsible for ensuring that all complaints are investigated to identify the root causes and ensure corrective / preventative actions are taken to the satisfaction of the customer.

### **Procedure**

The procedure will be implemented each time an informal and formal complaint is raised.

#### **Informal Complaint/Concern**

If an individual/s have an informal complaint, concern or problem they should in the first instance discuss the problem with their Personal Tutor/Progress Coach, who will try and sort out the problem out on their behalf or if they require specialist advice and guidance refer them to Learner Services.

Once the Personal Tutor/Progress Coach have exhausted all options and there is no satisfactory outcome or agreed action a formal complaint can be made.

#### **Formal Complaint**

1. A customer complaint will generally be raised using the Customer Complaints Form QAF 9.02A however there will be times that complaints are made by letter or telephone.
2. All complaints must be sent to the Quality Systems Administrator who will log the details into the complaints database.
3. The Quality Systems Administrator will acknowledge the complaint and our intentions by letter. This must be completed within 48 hours from receipt of the complaint.
4. QAF 9.02A and any supporting information will be sent to the relevant Curriculum Manager / Assistant Principal Teaching & Learning / Unit Manager or member of the Executive for investigation.
5. If the complaint is about a member of staff the person responsible for the investigation will as part of the early stages of the investigations hold a meeting with the member of staff to obtain their response to the allegations being made.
6. The person responsible for the investigation will use a team approach whenever possible to ensure that the root cause is identified and what the corrective action needs to be. This will be recorded on page 2 of QAF 9.02A.
7. This must be completed within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint unless circumstances require a longer period of investigation.
8. If more time is needed, the person investigating the complaint will contact the complainant and explain why and when they can expect a response. This must be agreed with the Quality Systems Administrator.
9. Once the investigation has taken place, the QAF 9.02A, supporting information and evidence of corrective actions will be returned to the Quality Systems Administrator.
10. Once an agreed outcome has been met the Quality Systems Administrator will ensure that written confirmation is sent out to close off the complaint. The details of the outcome will be provided by the member of staff responsible for investigating the complaint.
11. All relevant information is then retained in the Quality Assurance Department.

### **Appeal**

1. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the way the College has dealt with their complaint, they have the right of appeal which must be submitted in writing to the College Principal, within 10 working days of the date of the final response letter being issued.
2. The appeal must clearly state why they are not happy with the decision and the outcome that they would like to see take place to resolve their complaint.
3. The Principal will respond within 10 working days and arrange an appropriate time to meet the complainant. **Note:** The Principal may designate the appeal to one of the College's Vice Principals.
4. Prior to the meeting, the Principal or Vice Principal will conduct a review of the investigation to ensure that the complaint has been appropriately handled and conducted correctly and fairly. At this stage the Principal or Vice Principal can also include other members of staff or external bodies if it is deemed that their expertise or impartiality is required.
5. Following the meeting with the complainant, the Principal or Vice Principal will either give a final decision after the meeting or respond in writing within 5 working days. At this stage the Principal's decision will be final.
6. If a complainant is still dissatisfied with the final decision, they have the right of appeal to one of the following external bodies dependent on how their course is funded: the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Awarding Body/University or Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). These bodies may not investigate the original complaint against the College but will look at whether the complaint has been appropriately handled.
7. If the complainant wishes to appeal to an external body they can request impartial support from the College's Learner Service Team.
8. Note: If the initial complaint is against the Principal, then the Governing Body will deal with the complaint and follow the complaints and appeal procedure as stated above.

### **Monitoring**

1. Periodically the Quality Systems Administrator will contact the complainant to check that the customer is still happy with the outcome.
2. The Quality Systems Manager will submit a summary of complaints to the College Leadership & Management Team.
3. Verification of corrective actions will be conducted during the internal audit process.

### **Related Quality Forms**

QAF 9.02A Customer Complaints Form

Student Guidance 'How to make a complaint' (See Learner Services or Reception)

Note: This procedure and guidance are also on the College Website and Student Moodle