



Calderdale College Complaints Policy

2025 - 2027

Approved at Senior Leadership Team, April 2025

AUTHOR: Head of Quality

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VERSION 5

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1. Purpose & Scope

Calderdale College is committed to providing a high standard of service which meets and exceeds the expectations of all our stakeholders.

The Complaints Policy applies to all people served by the college including students, parents, customers, employers, local residents and visitors who wish to comment on or express dissatisfaction with any aspect of the service provided by the college.

Complaints which arise as a result of an unsatisfactory assessment (internal or external), academic appeal for OU programmes, disciplinary, admission or exclusion will have the Complainant referred to the correct appeals process.

The Complaints Policy is designed to ensure that all complaints are resolved in a fair, consistent and timely manner, and that appropriate action is taken. All complaints will be treated as confidential to safeguard interests and information limited to those involved in the complaints process.

The outcomes from complaints support continuous improvement and will be shared with the complainant and any college staff involved.

2. Details of policy

2.1 How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made verbally, by telephone, email, letter or by completing a Complaints Form available on the College website and at College Receptions. (Appendix 1)

2.2 Informal Complaints (Early Resolution)

In the first instance complainants should attempt to resolve the matter informally. Issues which appear straight forward and potentially easily resolved may be directed to any relevant member of staff to seek an early resolution. Students are encouraged to resolve any issues of dissatisfaction with their course tutor so that this may be dealt with quickly and informally.

2.3 Formal Complaints

If the complainant does not want to follow the informal approach, or initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the complainant remains dissatisfied, formal procedures will need to be invoked.

Formal complaints consist of 3 stages:

- Stage 1 - Formal Complaint submitted for investigation
- Stage 2 - Complaint Appeal
- Stage 3 - Request for External Review

3. Complaint Process

3.1 Stage 1 – Submitting a Formal Complaint

- The complainant will need to complete a Complaints Form available on the [College website](#) and at College Receptions.
- The College will aim to send an acknowledgement within 2 working days of receiving the complaint. This communication may be by letter or email and will outline the name of the Investigating Officer.

Stage 1 - Complaint Investigation

- The Quality department are responsible for the operation and management of the College's Complaints Procedure.
- Formal complaints are allocated to an Investigating Officer who will be responsible for conducting a full and comprehensive investigation of the complaint.
- If the complaint is about a course or service offered by the college, the manager of the area concerned will be the responsible Investigating Officer.
- If the complaint relates to staff, an independent* manager will be assigned as Investigating Officer and the investigation will involve the HR Manager.
- If the complaint is against the College Principal, then the Governing Body will deal with the complaint and lead the complaints and appeal procedure.
- Where a conflict of interests is identified, an independent* manager will be assigned as an Investigating Officer.
- The College aims to investigate and respond to complaints within 20 working days of first receiving the complaint. The College aims to ensure all complaints are dealt with promptly and would expect to meet the prescribed number of working days. However, the College reserves the right to make reasonable extensions where there are circumstances when the timescales# cannot be met. When this is required, the College will keep the complainant apprised of the new deadline and provide an explanation for the delay.

* all references to "Independent" are defined as an Investigating Officer who has no connection or direct line management of the curriculum area or department involved in the complaint.

all references to timescales within the Policy relate to working days, excluding vacation periods, weekends and statutory bank holidays.

Stage 1 - Complaint Outcome

- The Investigating Officer will verbally communicate the outcome of the investigation to the complainant including their investigation findings and any recommended action. This may take place in a face-to-face meeting, via an online meeting, or via a telephone call.
- Following the investigation, the Complainant will receive a Final Response Letter/email to confirm the complaint outcome in writing.

3.2 Stage 2 – Complaint Appeal

- If the Complainant remains dissatisfied after they have received the Final Response, they have the Right to Appeal which must be made in writing to the College Principal, within 10 working days of the date on the final response letter being issued. Details of how to do this will be included within the Final Response Letter.

- The Principal or Designate (depending on who conducts the appeal) will respond within 10 working days to arrange an appropriate time to meet with the complainant to discuss their appeal.
- An Appeal Hearing Outcome Letter will be sent within 10 working days of the appeal hearing.
- After hearing the appeal, the decision of the Principal or Designate will be final.
- Students on Open University courses should directly submit their request for a review of their complaint by the Open University. This can be submitted to the Open University up to 28 days following the outcome of the internal complaints process. Further information on how to submit a review can be found in the [Open University Handbook for Validated Awards](#) and will be included in the Complaint Response letter.

3.3 Stage 3 – Request for External Review

If the complaint is not resolved to satisfaction of the Complainant, the following further avenues of external review are available through the relevant agencies:

Further Education (16-18 year-olds)

Department for Education [Complain about a further education college or apprenticeship - GOV.UK](#)

Adult Courses (up to Level 3)

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

[West Yorkshire Combined Authority](#)

Higher Education (Validated Programmes)

Office for Students (OfS)

[Complaints about a university or college - Office for Students](#)

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

[How to complain to us - OIAHE](#)

Please Note - these agencies may not investigate the original complaint made against the College but will look at whether the College handled the complaint appropriately. Details of how to do this can be found on the College website.

4. Cut Off Limit

The College cut-off limit to accept a complaint is 3 months after the date of an incident unless there is clear evidence that the Complainant needed longer and therefore the College is willing to consider these exceptions.

5. Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant becomes unreasonable, aggressive, abusive or vexatious (e.g. the complainant tries to re-open the same issue), the College reserves the right to end the complaint handling process and will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is now closed.

If appropriate, the College could consider invoking the Disciplinary Procedure as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy where complaints are found to be vexatious, frivolous or malicious.

A summary of behaviour which could be classified as unreasonable or unreasonably persistent is included at Appendix C.

6. Group Complaints

The College will consider a group complaint, but the group must identify one person as spokesperson and correspondent. For a Stage 2 Formal Complaint, all students must agree in writing that the spokesperson is acting on their behalf, and must be able to demonstrate that they have been affected by the subject of the complaint. No additional students can be added to the complaint application once submitted.

7. Anonymous Complaints

The College Complaints procedure can only be effective if a complaint can be satisfactorily investigated. This is not possible where complaints are submitted anonymously, and these complaints would not normally be considered.

8. Third Party Complaints

Calderdale College will not investigate a third-party complaint unless it receives a signed statement from the student authorising the individual bringing the complaint to act on their behalf. This includes complaints submitted by a parent, spouse, guardian or legal representative.

9. Recording Complaints

The Quality Department are responsible for logging and recording all complaints including details of the outcomes that have been agreed to meet the issues raised.

A central log of complaints and appeals against complaints outcomes is maintained and monitored by the Quality Department. An overview analysis of complaints received by the College is provided to Senior Leaders and the Board of Corporation.

10. Confidentiality

Information collected and used under this procedure will be treated confidentially and only disclosed to those staff investigating and responding to the complaint, and as may be necessary to progress the complaint.

Any information collected and used under this procedure may be made available for other organisational processes, for example an academic appeal, or as part of a review of the complaint by the relevant awarding partner.

Any individual about whom a complaint is made will have the right to be informed of the fact and nature.

11. Complaints Policy Review

The Quality Department will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure, making changes where necessary.

As well as addressing individual complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to continuous improvement. When individual complaints are heard, the Quality

Department may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed in other areas or across the College.

The frequency with which the complaints procedure will be reviewed biannually, unless trends or issues require this to be conducted sooner.

12. Monitoring

This Policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

13. Policy review

13.1

| Change(s) Made | | | Reason for Change | | |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------|
| Policy Streamlined Amendments to references regarding OU courses Inclusion of additional complainant categories Reduction in review period | | | Easier to read and follow Request from OU Reflection of variety of potential complaints To ensure policy remains current | | |
| Review Date | Reviewed by: | Initial Approval by: | Final Approval by: | Next Review Date: | Review Period |
| Feb 2020 | Quality Systems Manager | Policies and Procedures Committee | Policies and Procedures Committee | Feb 2023 | 3 Years |
| Jul 2022 | Quality Systems Manager | | | Jul 2026 | 3 years |
| April 2025 | Head of Quality | Deputy Principal | Senior Leadership Team | March 2027 | 2 Years |

13.2 Equality Impact Assessment

| First Assessment Conducted by: | Date: | Final/Approved Assessment Conducted by: | Date: |
|--------------------------------|------------|---|------------|
| Head of Quality | April 2025 | EDI Co-Ordinator | April 2025 |

14. Publication

| Audience: | Published: |
|-----------|-----------------|
| Staff | Staff Intranet |
| Students | Student App |
| Public | College Website |



How to make a Complaint

Tell us what you think!

When should I make a complaint?

- If you have an issue, problem or any concern, in the first instance you should speak to Student Services and Admissions, a Progress Coach, Tutor, Head of Faculty or a Curriculum Area Leader. Most issues can be resolved without the need for a formal complaint to be submitted.
- If your issue remains unresolved after an informal conversation you should register a complaint with the College.
- The complaint form can be found on the College website: www.calderdale.ac.uk/contact-us/compliment-comment-or-complaint
- Alternatively, you can pick up a form at Reception and follow the instructions for completion.

What happens next?

- We aim to send you an acknowledgement letter within 2 working days of receiving your complaint, confirming who will carry out the investigation along with contact details.
- Investigating staff may contact you to assist in their investigation of your complaint.
- A Final response will be sent by letter within 20 working days of first receiving the complaint. (Please note that working days are days when the College is open for lessons/exams, but does not include school/college holidays). This is our target for all complaints. If we need more time to investigate, we will explain why and when you can expect our response.

Appeals

- If you remain dissatisfied after you have received the final response, you have the right of appeal which must be made in writing to the College Principal, within 10 working days of the date on the final response letter being issued.
- The Principal or designate will respond within 10 working days and arrange an appropriate time to meet with you to discuss your appeal.
- An Appeal Hearing Outcome Letter will be sent within 10 working days of the appeal hearing.
- After hearing your appeal, the Principal or Deputy/Vice Principal's decision will be final.
- If you are still dissatisfied, you have the right to appeal to either the Department for Education (DfE) for FE funded courses; West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) for Adult funded courses up to Level 3; and the Office For Students (OfS) or Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for courses delivered through our University Centre. These bodies may not investigate the original complaint you made against the College but will look at whether the College handled your complaint appropriately. Details of how to do this will be included in your Appeal Hearing Outcome letter.
- Students on Open University courses should submit their request for a review of their complaint by the Open University. This must be submitted to the Open University with 28 days following the outcome of the internal complaints process. Further information on how to submit a review will be included in the Complaint Response letter and can be found in the [Open University Handbook for Validated Awards](#).

Cut-off Limits

The College cut-off is 3 months after the date of an incident to accept a complaint unless there is clear evidence that the complainant needed longer and therefore the College is willing to consider these exceptions.



COMPLAINT FORM

Alternatively you can fill out the form on our website: www.calderdale.ac.uk/contact-us/compliment-comment-or-complaint/

| | | | |
|--|--|------------------------|--|
| Learner ID: | | Date: | |
| Full Name: | | | |
| Full Postal Address: | | | |
| Telephone/ Mobile Number: | | | |
| Email Address: | | | |
| Who have you spoken to about your initial concerns, and when? | | | |
| Details of your complaint: (please provide as much detail as possible, including dates, and attach any supporting documents/evidence) | | | |
| Issue: | | Desired outcome | |
| 1 | | 1 | |
| 2 | | 2 | |
| 3 | | 3 | |
| 4 | | 4 | |

Please return this form to: Quality Assurance Unit, Calderdale College, ~~Empire~~ Street, Halifax, HX1 3UJ

Appendix C – Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent Behaviour

We know that people have very different needs and circumstances. In serving our range of customers, we have to ensure we are fair and that we balance competing needs, whilst at the same time ensuring that our resources are used proportionately and appropriately.

We want to make sure we are aware of all legitimate complaints and enquiries and that we have the right information to do something about them promptly, effectively, and efficiently; whilst at the same time, having a policy in place to identify unreasonable, and unreasonably persistent behaviour.

Unreasonable behaviour is defined as that which is exhibited by individuals who, because of the frequency, persistency or the manner in which an individual makes contact with the College, whether intentionally or unintentionally, hindering consideration of their own or other people's complaints or enquiries.

Whilst we accept that an individual can be persistent on an entirely reasonable basis and sometimes persistence is not only justified by necessary, unreasonable behaviour however is unacceptable. Individuals may have justifiable cause for concern but may be pursuing it in inappropriate ways, or they may be simply intent on pursuing matters which appear to have no substance, or which have already been addressed and determined.

Unreasonable contact with the College may be placing very heavy demands on staff time, or the individual may be very emotionally charged creating a distressing situation for all those involved.

Examples of behaviour that the College considers to be unreasonable are as follows:

Unreasonable Behaviour

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refusing to cooperate with the College's processes for handling complaints or casework while still wishing their issue to be resolved.
- Adopting false identities or forging documents.
- Insisting on a complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints policy, relevant legislation, or statutory guidance.
- Making what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the issue(s) and seeking to have them replaced.
- Changing the basis of a complaint as the matter proceeds and/or denying statements made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing irrelevant new information which the individual expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all fully answered.
- Making inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations.
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.
- Making unreasonably excessive demands on the time and resources of staff while an issue is being looked into, for example by excessive telephoning or sending emails to numerous people, writing lengthy complex letters every few days and demanding immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints or casework, after proper processes have been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions and/or variations which the individual insists make these 'new' matters which should be thoroughly considered.

Unreasonable Demands

- Insisting a complaint is dealt with outside of the College's Customer Enquiries and Complaints Policy.
- Demanding responses within an unreasonable timeframe.
- Persistently demanding to see or speak to a particular member of staff.
- Continual phone calls, letters or other customer contact including via Social Media channels. comments that are not relevant to the matter – all these must be looked at and included in our consultation reports.
- Demanding unreasonable compensation.

Unreasonably Persistent Behaviour

- Actions that are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious and/or otherwise unreasonable.
- An insistence on pursuing unjustifiable complaints or other matters and/or unrealistic outcomes; beyond reason.
- An insistence on pursuing justifiable complaints or other matters in an unreasonable manner or being uncooperative with those trying to resolve them.
- Persistent refusal to accept a decision or accept an explanation made by the College.
- Continuing to pursue a concern without presenting any additional information.
- Repeatedly making the same complaint, sometimes with minor differences and insisting this is a new issue that requires consideration.
- Adopting an excessive "scattergun" approach by submitting the same complaint to multiple departments and offices of the College at the same time, or by persistently communicating with and pursuing complaints and issues through different College contacts and departments at the same time.
- Continuing to pursue a complaint that relates to an issue based on a historic case.
- Excessive demands on the College's resources including lengthy phone calls, multiple emails, or insistence on face to face contact.

Wholly Unacceptable Behaviour

- Swearing, threatening and abusive words or behaviour.
- Racial, religious, or sexual abuse.
- Making personal derogatory comments about the individual.
- Shouting at or seeking to intimidate.
- The making of threats.
- The making of threats of physical violence, abuse, derogatory remarks and/or rudeness, in writing or spoken.
- Threats, harassment, and other attempts to intimidate, which would include, but is not limited to, the posting of material on all and any social media platforms.
- Unsubstantiated allegations including unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues.
- Continued/ persistent contact, unwanted attention or stalking of a specific staff member/s. This includes in person and online for example staff members personal social media account or contact details.

Staff members have the right to terminate telephone calls where they consider that the caller is being aggressive, abusive, or offensive, after telling the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and/or is placing unreasonable demands on the organisation. In this event a note will be made of the action taken.

Staff members who directly experience aggressive, offensive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour from an individual have the right to deal immediately with this behaviour either by removing themselves from the situation or asking the individual to leave the premises