

Policy/Procedure title	Compliments & Complaints Policy	
Review cycle (*Please specify)	1 Year	
Responsible department	Quality	
Procedure *owner (*Overall responsibility)	Head of Quality	
Responsible *person (if different to above) *responsibility for communicating changes and staff training where appropriate	Quality Co-ordinator	
Types of provision this procedure applies to: (delete as appropriate)	14-16 Study programmes 19+ Apprenticeships Higher education	
Revision record		
Rev. no:	Date of issue:	Details and purpose of revision:
5	20/06/2019	Amendment to scope to provide additional clarity
6	06/01/2020	New work instruction – combined STU02
7	01/11/2021	Change of ownership to Head of Learning Improvement
8	30/05/2023	Update of role titles
9	26/06/2023	Clarification of roles at each stage
10	22/04/2024	Formatting changes made to bring policy in line with OU CMA recommendations
11	29/09/2025	Full review and development
12	06/03/2026	Minor additions to cover Higher Education related complaints and change of reference from ESFA to DfE

Equality impact assessment

Whenever a policy is reviewed or changed, its impact assessment also must be updated. The Equality Act 2010 seeks to simplify discrimination law and introduced statutory duties to promote equality whereby The College of West Anglia must, in the exercise of its functions, pay due regard to the need to promote equality in relation to the protected characteristics.

Could any staff or students be adversely impacted by this policy/process? If yes give details and how this will be mitigated: No

Date:	Action and monitoring:
02/02/2024	02/02/2024
19/05/2025	19/05/2025

EDI Statement

This procedure has been reviewed in line with the Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment., Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual Orientation and Disability. We will continue to monitor this procedure to ensure that it allows equal access and does not discriminate against any individual or group of people.

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1. Purpose

The college aims to deliver a high-quality learning experience and welcomes feedback on the service provided.

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction or praise. It is a positive statement about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College of West Anglia (CWA) or about the helpfulness, attitude, or approach of an individual colleague. A compliment may be made to any colleague by:

- Telephone
- E-mail
- Feedback Forms
- Surveys
- Letter
- In person

Throughout the year there are opportunities for learners to give compliments. In addition, any compliments can be sent to compliments@cwa.ac.uk. Compliments given directly to delivery teams can also be sent to compliments@cwa.ac.uk. This information is captured and celebrated at intervals throughout the year and used to inform future good practice.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet with the college's action, lack of action or standard of service that has a negative impact on the complainant's experience. This policy and related procedure (see Appendix 1) aims to ensure that any complaints are resolved as fairly and quickly as possible and, in the spirit of continuous improvement, that lessons are learnt, and action is taken to secure improvements and prevent the reoccurrence of similar complaints.

2. Objectives

The college will ensure that:

- informal concerns are resolved quickly and effectively.
- Complaints are dealt with promptly, politely, and confidentially.
- making a formal complaint is as easy as possible.
- full written responses are provided in the event of a formal complaint with information, an explanation, or an apology provided where appropriate.
- complaints are used to improve the learning experience/service on offer.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all further education, higher education and general college complaints, including:

- college policy, procedure or process.
- academic and support services or facilities.
- the conduct or actions of a member of staff.
- misleading/inaccurate information about programmes, fees, services/facilities.

For complaints related to Higher Education - If your complaint concerns assessment or examination regulations of a course run in partnership with a University, the Academic Appeals Procedure for that University should be used. Sometimes both the appeal and the complaints procedure are needed.

Learners enrolled through a CWA subcontractor/partner should follow the complaints process of the subcontractor/partner in the first instance. If a learner has exhausted the subcontractor's internal complaints process, and if a satisfactory resolution has not been achieved, the learner may raise a formal complaint with CWA using this policy and the related procedure.

To be eligible for consideration under this policy the complaint must be raised in a timely manner (normally within 20 working days of becoming aware of the issue). Complaints received outside this deadline will be considered at the college's discretion.

This policy should not be used where an issue is covered by any other college policy. In such instances, the complainant will be advised accordingly and directed to the appropriate policy. These policies include, but are not limited to:

- Student Charter and Code of Conduct
- Student Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding, Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance Policy (Academic Appeals)
- Staff Dispute Resolution and Grievance Procedure
- Staff Capability and Disciplinary Procedures
- Staff Redundancy and Recruitment Selection Policies
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure (Whistleblowing)

4. General Principles

Individuals making a complaint have a right to vocalise their feelings if they do so in good faith and should feel able to share their opinions without fear of victimisation.

All parties involved in complaint investigations have the right to be heard and treated fairly. Decisions taken as part of a complaint investigation are based on sound evidence and are balanced and reasonable.

Complaints found to be of a false nature may result in disciplinary action for the learner.

Where the same complaint is raised by several learners this will be treated as a single complaint. To effectively manage the complaint the group will be asked to nominate a representative. The person investigating the complaint will respond to and communicate with the nominated representative, who is expected to cascade the response to group members.

Normally the college would not accept a complaint from a third party such as a friend or family member. Complainants are expected to raise the complaints directly themselves. The college appreciates that this is not always possible and so where a complaint has been raised on a learner's behalf, the college can only respond with the direct positive consent from the person concerned, unless they are deemed unable to raise the complaint themselves for a clearly defined reason or where there is serious concern which may impact on the safeguarding or welfare of the individual. The college will always act reasonably.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be accepted. Complainants should be assured that the college will deal with the complaint appropriately, and therefore, a complaint of this nature should not be needed.

Where a complaint is made about another learner or a member of staff they will be told about the existence and nature of the complaint, so that the complaint can be thoroughly investigated. The complainant will be told the outcome of the investigation, however, where it is not appropriate to share specific details affecting the other learner or staff member, the details will remain confidential.

Where the complaint relates to a member of staff, it will normally be investigated through the complaint's procedure in the first instance. Where a serious complaint/allegation is made about a member of staff the matter will be referred to Human Resources. Where this is the case, the complainant will be advised accordingly.

College staff have the right not to be subjected to aggressive, offensive or abusive actions, language or behaviour be it face to face, on the telephone or through electronic communication channels. The college will take the minimum action required to address such unacceptable behaviour in line with the [Student Charter and Code of Behaviour](#), [Student Behaviour Policy](#), and/or [Parent Charter](#), for example:

- Require that contact is only made with a specified person and/or at specific times and/or in specific ways.
- Terminate an abusive telephone call and/or end an abusive meeting.

The college may consider invoking the [Student Behaviour Policy](#) for learners or taking legal action against non-students, where complaints are found to be persistent, vexatious or malicious. Examples of such complaints include, but are not limited to:

- Complaints which are repetitive, harassing or obsessive.
- Insistence on pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- Insistence on pursuing unsubstantiated complaints or Academic Appeals.
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption.
- Unfounded demands for redress.

5. Raising Complaints

Wherever possible CWA aims to bring complaints to an early resolution.

Daily issues or concerns are likely to be raised directly with staff and in most cases can be resolved without them needing to be logged formally in the complaints system. If a prompt resolution cannot be found and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, or there is a more serious concern, the complainant should be directed to submit their complaint through the CWA website contact page (Stage 1).

If this route fails to bring about a resolution, then a formal investigation is initiated (Stage 2). Formal complaints require the complainant to complete and submit a Stage 2 Complaint Form, outlining the nature of the complaint and resolution sought.

Any complaint sent directly to a member of the senior leadership team will be re-directed to the Quality Co-ordinator so that it can be dealt with by the relevant member of staff as per Stage 1.

In the case of a serious complaint, the matter may progress directly to Stage 2. Examples of complaints that could be considered for formal resolution include:

- A complaint received directly from a regulatory body such as a funding body, police or government department.
- A complaint of a serious or complex nature, including complaints involving discrimination, injuries, safety or data protection breaches at the college.

The details of the Complaint Handling and Resolution Procedure can be found in Appendix 1.

6. Accountabilities

A **complainant** is responsible for:

- raising concerns promptly and directly with a member of staff or submitting through the Complaint page on the CWA website.
- explaining the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including details of any witnesses and any action taken to date.
- outlining the remedy sought.
- responding promptly to all communication from the college.
- recognising that some circumstances may be beyond the college's control.

The **member of staff handling Stage 1 of the complaint** is responsible for:

- Considering the details of the concerns raised by the complainant.
- Discussing the concerns with the complainant as soon as possible after receiving the complaint and within 10 working days of receiving a Complaint Form.
- Taking swift action to address and resolve valid concerns.
- Identifying any learning that emerges from resolving the complaint and taking action to prevent similar complaints arising in the future.
- Supplying details of the complaint, the resolution agreed, and the lessons learned and applied to the Quality Co-ordinator on the Complaint Handling and Resolution Form.
- Secure all related information and evidence in the relevant complaint folder. All information should be retained for 6 years for future reference should it be required.

The **Quality Co-ordinator** is responsible for:

- Ensuring the complaints procedure is available to all college users.
- Acknowledging the receipt of complaints within 5 working days.
- Seeking a learner's written permission to disclose personal information where they are being represented by a 3rd party, as per General Data Protection Regulations.
- Referring complainants to other policies/procedures if they are more appropriate.
- Logging complaints and monitoring response times.
- Supporting the Investigating / Appeals Officer as required and ensuring the associated investigation / appeal response is relayed to complainants in a timely manner.
- Checking that actions are in place to prevent the reoccurrence of complaints.
- Recording, analysing and reporting on the outcomes of formal complaints.
- Ensuring that central records relating to formal complaints are securely retained for a maximum period of 6 years.

The **Investigating / Appeals Officer** is responsible for:

- Carrying out a full and balanced investigation into the complaint / appeal.
- Complying with the timescale for completion.
- Ensuring all investigation notes, information and evidence is sent to the Quality Co-ordinator on completion of the investigation / appeal.
- Updating the Complaint Handling and Resolution Form for the Quality Coordinator.
- Keeping the Quality Co-ordinator informed of all aspects of the investigation / appeal.
- Ensuring actions have been put in place to prevent the reoccurrence of complaints.
- Providing a written response to the complainant.

7. Evaluation and Reporting

Information about compliments and complaints will be collected by the Quality Co-ordinator and a termly statistical analysis of all compliments and complaints will be used to report trends and the action taken to improve practice/share good practice.

8. Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed every year, or sooner when deemed necessary to provide continued support for all stakeholders.

9. Related Policies and Procedures

- [Student Charter and Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding, Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy](#)

- Assessment and Quality Assurance Policy (Academic Appeals)
- [Staff Dispute Resolution and Grievance Procedure](#)
- [Staff Capability Procedure](#)
- [Staff Disciplinary Procedure](#)
- [Staff Redundancy Policy](#)
- [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure \(Whistleblowing\)](#)

Complaint Handling and Resolution Procedure

Stage 1

Learners are advised to raise complaints with the relevant member of staff within 20 days of becoming aware of the issue and should be prepared to work in partnership with staff to secure a swift resolution. Complaints raised through the website will be logged and resolved within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged by the Quality Co-ordinator. The Quality Co-ordinator will notify the complainant of any circumstances which mean the complaint can't be addressed within this timeframe.

Where complaints are assessed as an issue or concern that can be resolved quickly these are best dealt with at a local level. Usually, the issues raised can be addressed by the relevant member of staff and resolved by a face-to-face discussion, facilitated meeting, email or telephone conversation. Assuming the informal complaint is successfully resolved no formal letter will be issued or Complaint Handling and Resolution form completed, however the member of staff must inform the Quality Co-ordinator of the outcome and share any communications with the complainant so that these can be logged.

Where a quick resolution cannot be reached or the complaint requires greater investigation an Investigation Manager will be allocated. The member of staff resolving the complaint will complete a Stage 1 resolution letter and the Complaint Handling and Resolution Form. The response to a Stage 1 complaint will clearly outline the decision, reasons for the decision and, if the complaint is justified, what will be done to resolve the complaint and the action being taken to prevent similar complaints arising in the future. The member of staff resolving the complaint should submit all notes and documents to the relevant complaint folder. The Quality Co-ordinator who will record the details of the complaint, the resolution agreed, and the lessons learned and applied. Records must be kept for 6 years in the event the matter re-emerges later and/or progresses to Stage 2.

In the event the matter is not resolved at Stage 1, the member of staff involved in the early resolution attempt will complete the Complaint Handling and Resolution Form and send it to the Quality Co-ordinator along with any related notes and evidence. The complainant should contact the Quality Co-ordinator explaining the reasons for the continued dissatisfaction and request their complaint progresses to Stage 2. The request should be made within 10 working days of the early resolution attempt.

On the rare occasions that a complaint is immediately progressed to Stage 2 then the complainant is informed of this by the Quality Co-ordinator.

Stage 2

Where a complaint has exhausted Stage 1, the complainant should contact the Quality Co-ordinator, and request their complaint progresses to Stage 2. The request should be made within 10 working days of the early resolution attempt.

The Quality Coordinator will acknowledge receipt of the request to progress to Stage 2 within 5 working days from the date of receipt and request the complainant completes a Stage 2 formal complaint form.

An Investigating Officer will be assigned by the Quality Co-ordinator. This will normally be an independent manager with no direct involvement in Stage 1.

The Investigating Officer will review the related documentation and may talk with the various parties involved. They aim to conclude their investigation, report on their findings and determine whether the complaint is justified, partially justified or not justified within 15 working days of being appointed. If the complaint is upheld the relevant area will be required to resolve the complaint and take action to prevent other similar complaints occurring.

On conclusion of the investigation the Investigating Officer will update the Complaint Handling and Resolution Form and prepare and send a letter of response to the complainant. All related correspondence/evidence is to be stored in the relevant complaints folder. The Quality Co-ordinator will ensure all records are stored securely.

The Quality Co-ordinator will notify the complainant of any circumstances which mean the investigation can't be fully concluded within the specified timeframe.

Appeal Stage 2 Decision

If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2, the complainant can contact the Quality Co-ordinator within 10 working days of being informed of the Investigating Officer's findings to request a review of the Stage 2 decision.

An appeal against a Stage 2 decision can only be requested on the basis that at least one of the following criteria apply:

- Procedural irregularity
- New evidence has come to light
- Not all the evidence was considered

The Head of Quality will determine whether there are grounds for appeal and if so, appoint an Appeals Officer to review the case. This will normally be someone from the Leadership Team.

The Quality Co-ordinator will acknowledge receipt of the appeal request and confirm to the complainant whether there are grounds for appeal within 5 working days of receipt of the appeal request.

The Appeals Officer will review the complaint in its entirety, determine whether the appeal is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld and report the reasons for their decision and any action required on behalf of the college. The Appeals Officer will prepare a final written response, send to the Complainant and inform the Quality Co-ordinator. All associated information/evidenced is to be stored in the related complaints folder. The Quality Co-ordinator will ensure the information/evidence is stored securely.

If there is any delay in producing a final written response, the Quality Co-ordinator will send an update to the complainant informing the complainant of the reason for the delay and the revised timeline for completion of the review.

Continuing a Complaint Beyond the College

If a satisfactory resolution hasn't been secured after the complainant has exhausted the internal complaints process (Stage1, Stage 2 and Appeal), the complainant has the right to complain to the Department for Education (DfE).

The DfE will only take up a complaint when they are satisfied that the college procedure, including appeal, has been exhausted, unless the department believes that the college is not dealing with a complaint appropriately or effectively, when it may intervene before the procedure is exhausted. Details can be found here [Complain about a further education college or apprenticeship - GOV.UK](#)

For complaints related to Higher Education the complainant has the right to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA is an independent body that reviews student complaints. Details can be found here [OIAHE Complaints page](#)