

*College Policies and Procedures*

**The Compliments and  
Complaints Procedure**

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**Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality)**  
**Originally Agreed: February 2009, updated February 2010**

You can also find these procedures on our website at [www.southessex.ac.uk](http://www.southessex.ac.uk). These Procedures are available in other languages and formats upon request by telephoning the College on 0845 52 12345. This document refers to communication in writing throughout, however, we are happy to use any preferred method of communication.

# **The Compliments and Complaints Procedure**

## ***February 2010***

### **Policies and Procedures made by the Principal and Chief Executive under Delegated Authority from the Corporation**

These policies and procedures are made by the Principal and Chief Executive of the College using the powers delegated by the Corporation in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government.

They are intended to ensure that the matters concerned are not only conducted fairly, appropriately and in accordance with the law where required, but also promote the purposes of the College and its customers.

The policies and procedures may be revised or amended from time to time in the light of experience or changing circumstances.

If you have any observations on these policies and procedures, please write to the Principal and Chief Executive.



.....  
**Jan Hodges**  
**Principal and Chief Executive**

.....November 2003.....  
**Date**

## **Introduction**

South Essex College of Further & Higher Education is committed to providing high quality services for all our learners, employers and the community in general and we welcome their feedback. This procedure operates within the college's Equality & Diversity Policy and we welcome all types of feedback as this forms an important part of how we improve quality.

The College is pleased to receive compliments. It is always good to know that what we do is appreciated and to hear about positive experiences. This helps the College to know how well we perform, to feedback praise to our staff, and to continuously improve. You can pay the College a compliment either by writing to the Quality Improvement Team at the College, emailing the Quality Improvement Team at [qualityimprovement@southessex.ac.uk](mailto:qualityimprovement@southessex.ac.uk) or by completing the attached feedback form (see Appendix 1) and returning to the address provided. Complaints can also be made by telephone (01702 220400) or in person. For further information about making a complaint in person please contact 01702 220452.

From time to time an individual may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of his or her dealings with the College and when that happens it is important that the issue is dealt with as quickly as possible.

In this instance the issue can be raised as a complaint. Complaints might be about, for example:-

- an aspect of College policy;
- the provision and accessibility of a service;
- the way an individual has been treated;

A formal complaint can be made by either writing to the Quality Improvement Team at the College, emailing the Quality Improvement Team at [qualityimprovement@southessex.ac.uk](mailto:qualityimprovement@southessex.ac.uk) or by completing the attached feedback form (see Appendix 1) and returning to the address provided. Complaints can also be made by telephone (01702 220400) or in person. For further information about making a complaint in person please contact 01702 220452.

This procedure has been developed to ensure that such complaints are dealt with timely, appropriately and sensitively.

## **Is the Compliments and Complaints Procedure for me?**

### **Compliments**

We are committed to providing all our learners/employers/community with an outstanding service. When you feel that you have received a first class experience we would welcome you providing us with feedback on what we did well to meet your needs. Your feedback on what we do well means a lot to us.

We will use your feedback to:

- inform us on what aspects of our work are meeting our high quality standards

- enable us to feedback to our staff the appreciation of our learners/employers/ community
- give us valuable information on excellent practice which can be cascaded across the whole organisation
- inform us on ways that we might change our policies, procedures or practices to incorporate excellent practice

When we receive a compliment it will be logged by the Quality Improvement Team. The contents of the compliment will be fed back to the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team. The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) will analyse all compliments and judge where they can be used to inform quality improvement in the College. A summary of all compliments will be provided to the Senior Leadership Team. We will respond to all compliments.

## **Complaints**

However, we realise that sometimes things go wrong. If your complaint relates to any issues covered by the policies or procedures below, please refer to the relevant document instead of this procedure, to ensure your complaint is dealt with appropriately. Copies of these documents can be obtained from Reception, Learner Support Services or the College Intranet.

- Academic Appeals Procedure for FE Students (for students studying a Further Education course who wish to appeal against a result or results)
- Academic Appeals Procedure for HE Students (for students studying a Higher Education course who wish to appeal against an Exam Board decision)
- Student Policy Against Harassment and Bullying (for students wanting to report harassment or bullying)
- Student Guide to the Disciplinary Procedures (for students who are subject to the College Disciplinary procedures)
- Staff Dignity at Work Procedure (for staff wanting to report harassment or bullying)
- Staff Grievance Policy (for staff wanting to resolve a grievance relating to their employment)

Anyone who wishes to complain but is uncertain of the appropriate procedure should seek advice from their Personal Tutor, Academy Manager/Head of Faculty/Head of Team, Learner Support Services or the Quality Improvement Team. Staff should contact Human Resources.

If you have difficulty completing a feedback form a member of Learner Support Services or the Quality Improvement Team can help.

Responses to complaints are normally in writing, although additional methods of response are available upon request.

## **Key Principles in successfully resolving any complaints**

Throughout this document an individual who has complained will be referred to as a complainant.

1. The complainant should try to resolve the matter informally in the first instance. Dissatisfaction often arises from misunderstanding, which is why the best starting point is with the person whose actions are the cause of dissatisfaction or with the manager of the Faculty or team responsible for the provision of the service. If you explain to someone what the problem is they can often provide an immediate explanation or solution.
2. Once it is clear to the complainant that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, a complaint should be made as soon as possible. It is much more likely that the matter will be satisfactorily resolved if it is raised at an early stage.
3. Complaints will be dealt with quickly and complainants kept informed of progress if the investigation is prolonged.
4. Staff are under an obligation not to allow a complaint to have any bearing on the way that a student is treated or assessed; information about a complainant will only be disclosed when appropriate and/or necessary to the investigating team.
5. If a student who is subject to disciplinary procedures makes a complaint, which relates in any way to the allegation against him/her, then this matter would be taken into account as part of the Disciplinary Process, not as part of the Complaints Procedures.
6. Complaints about a member of staff will be investigated by their Line Manager. The Line Manager will normally be expected to share the complaint with the individual concerned.
7. If a Stage 2 or 3 investigation identifies concerns about staff performance/conduct, the Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality) will notify the Head of Human Resources
8. In exceptional circumstances, the Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality) may decide to omit Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedures and proceed directly to Stage 2.
9. Information in relation to complaints will be stored and processed in line with Data Protection Act 1998.
10. Complaints received by a Faculty/Team which relate to another Faculty/Team will be forwarded to the Quality Improvement Team for processing as appropriate.
11. Complaints received from legal organisations may be referred to the College's solicitor for action and as such may fall outside of these procedures.
12. Complaints that raise concerns about 'safeguarding' will be brought to the attention of Sue Coole, Vice Principal, Learner Support and Community Links.

## **Informal Complaints**

If you have a concern about an aspect of your course or any of the College's services, you should contact the staff member most directly involved, someone who you will know already. If you are not sure who to contact or you do not want to approach the person most directly involved, then you should contact your Personal Tutor, Course Team Leader or Academy Manager. If you are aware that other students share your concerns then you could make use of your course student representative.

## Stage 1 - Formal

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally you may make a formal complaint within a reasonable period of time. This stage is designed to enable complaints to be resolved formally by the Faculty or Team responsible.

- **In the case of learners** they should raise their complaint/concern with their Head of Faculty/Team. The Head of Faculty/Team or nominated manager will then take into account all relevant facts, needs and interests of all concerned and use their discretion to resolve the matter with due sensitivity. They will normally provide feedback in writing to the complainant within 10 working days. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to Stage 2.
- **In the case of a parent/carer** who is dissatisfied with any aspect of their daughter/son's course of study at the College, they should initially bring it to the attention of the Head of Faculty/Team. The Head of Faculty/Team or nominated manager will then take into account all relevant facts, needs and interests of all concerned and use their discretion to resolve the matter with due sensitivity. They will normally provide feedback in writing to the Complainant within 10 working days. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to Stage 2.
- **In the case of an employer** who is dissatisfied with any aspect of their employee's course of study at the College, they should initially bring it to the attention of the Head of Faculty/Team. The Head of Faculty/Team or nominated manager will then take into account all relevant facts, needs and interests of all concerned and use their discretion to resolve the matter with due sensitivity. They will normally provide feedback in writing to the Complainant within 10 working days. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to Stage 2.
- **In the case of a complaint made against an Head of Faculty/Team** their Line Manager will investigate and will normally provide feedback verbally or in writing to the Complainant within 10 working days. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to Stage 2.
- **In the case of a member of the public** who is dissatisfied with any aspect of College business, they should initially bring it to the attention of the Quality Improvement Team who will pass the complaint to the appropriate Head of Faculty/Team. The Head of Faculty/Team or nominated manager will normally provide feedback in writing to the Complainant within 10 working days. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to Stage 2. The Quality Improvement Team can be contacted either by writing to the Quality Improvement Team at the College, emailing the Quality Improvement Team at [qualityimprovement@southessex.ac.uk](mailto:qualityimprovement@southessex.ac.uk) or by completing the attached feedback form (see Appendix 1) and returning to the address provided.

Alternatively, the feedback form (see Appendix 1) can be completed and sent directly to the Quality Improvement Team who can forward this on to the appropriate Head of Faculty/Team. All complaints must first be investigated at Stage 1, unless agreed otherwise by the Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality).

## **Stage 2 – Appeal**

This stage is designed to deal with any complaint an individual might have that cannot be resolved at Stage 1.

- Complete a Feedback Form (see Appendix 1) setting out clearly the nature and origin of the complaint and send to the Quality Improvement Team as detailed on the Complaints Form. Complaints Forms are available from Reception at any college site. Alternatively, you can write to or telephone the Quality Improvement Team directly on 01702 220452.
- If applicable, detail what steps have been taken to resolve your complaint and explain why the outcome at Stage 1 is not considered satisfactory. This information will help us to investigate the complaint more effectively.
- The Quality Improvement Team will acknowledge all complaints/appeals within five working days of receipt.
- The Quality Improvement Team aim to investigate and respond to all complaints within 15 working days. Some complaints, especially if they are complex, may take longer. If it is going to take longer to investigate the complaint we will let you know and keep you informed of progress.
- Responses to complaints will normally be in writing.

## **Stage 3 – Independent Review**

If you are unhappy with the response to your complaint at Stage 2 you can request that your complaint is reviewed by an independent panel.

- The request for review must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of the written response from the College, setting out clearly the basis of dissatisfaction with the findings of the formal investigation. This request should be addressed to the Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality), South Essex College of Further & Higher Education, FREEPOST SMU 110, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 5BR.
- The request for a review will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt.
- The review panel will comprise of a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Chair), or their nominee, a Head of Faculty/Team or their nominee (other than that to which your complaint refers) and another member of the College Management Team (who is not directly involved with your complaint). This will enable us to select a manager with relevant knowledge if appropriate. You will be informed of the membership of the review panel.
- The review may take up to 15 working days to complete.
- A final response will be sent in writing by the Chair of the review panel.

**Higher Education students studying Anglia Ruskin University or University of East London programmes should refer to the relevant University Complaints Procedures.**

### **Higher Education students on University of Essex programmes**

Complaints received from students on University of Essex programmes will be investigated by the College at Stage 1 and 2. The Vice Principal Higher Education will be fully involved in this process. If a student remains dissatisfied they can request a further final review by the University of Essex.

### **Procedure for Stage 3**

1. The student should write to the Academic Registrar at University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ to request a review by the University, setting out clearly the basis of dissatisfaction with the findings of the formal investigation. The request for review must be submitted within 10 working days of the stage two written response to the formal complaint.
2. The Academic Registrar will acknowledge the request within five working days of receipt and will refer the case to the relevant Pro-Vice-Chancellor.
3. If the Pro-Vice-Chancellor considers that the case for review is not well-founded then he or she will dismiss the case and will inform the complainant accordingly, normally within 10 working days.
4. If the Pro-Vice Chancellor considers that the case for review is well-founded then he or she will initiate an appropriate investigation and will let the complainant know, normally within 10 working days, when he or she can expect a response.
5. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor will respond to the complainant in writing with details of the findings indicating, if the complaint is upheld, what the outcome will be. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor's decision will be final.
6. The response to the complaint will be copied to the Academic Registrar who will maintain a central record of complaints and who will report termly to the Vice-Chancellor.

### **The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education**

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints or appeals. When the University's internal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals have been exhausted, the University will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. Students wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity for an independent review by the OIA must submit their application to the OIA within three months of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter. Full details of the scheme are available on request and will be enclosed with the Completion of Procedures.

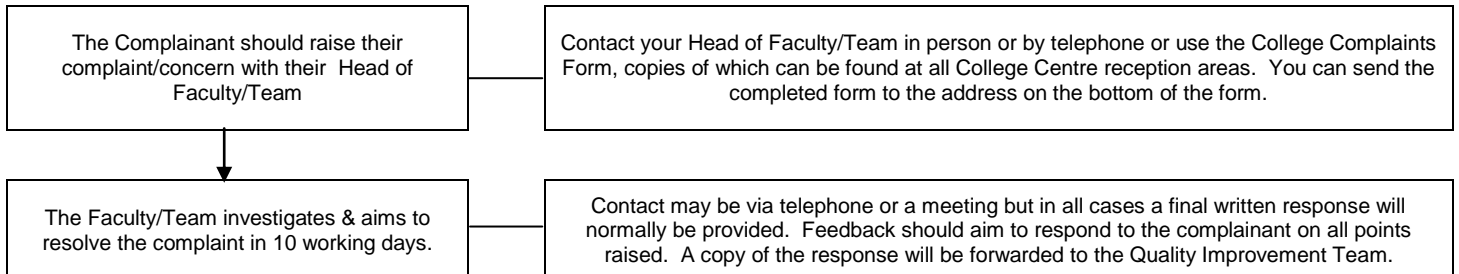
## **Quality Assurance**

The Quality Improvement Team keeps a status log of all compliments, as well as complaints received at Stage 2 and 3 and will complete a 10% audit of all written responses to Stage 1 complaints for quality control purposes. All Faculties/Teams keep a status log of all complaints received at Stage 1. All Stage 1 responses must be approved by the Head of Faculty/Team and copied to the Quality Improvement Team. The Head of Quality Improvement meets with Heads of Faculty termly to review Stage 1 Complaints and a summary of compliments and complaints is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team at the end of each Term. The Further Education Corporation (governing body of South East Essex College) receives and considers an annual report presented by the Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality). A report on the outcome of all formal complaints received from University of Essex students will be provided to the Academic Registrar at the University on a termly basis.

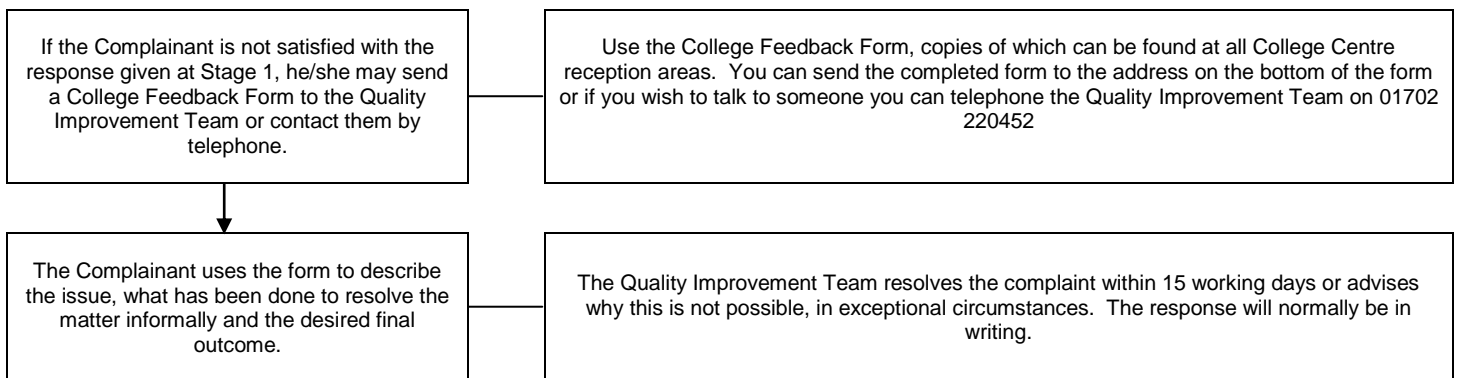
## Complaints Procedure

The College is committed to providing high quality services for our learners, employers and the community in general; we welcome this feedback to help us to improve Quality. This procedure operates within the College's Equality and Diversity Policy and an appropriate person will deal with your complaint with due sensitivity as necessary. A person who complains is referred to as the Complainant throughout this document.

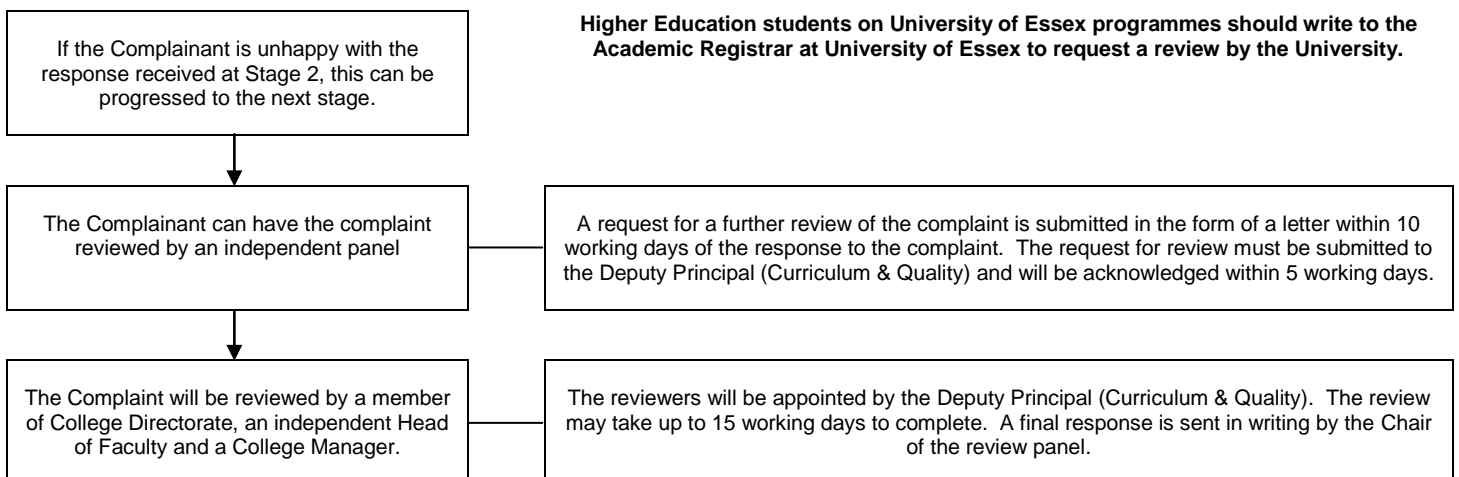
### STAGE 1 - Formal (With Faculty/Team)



### STAGE 2 - Appeal (With Quality Improvement Team)



### STAGE 3 Independent Review



**Quality Management:** The Quality Improvement Team keeps a status log of all compliments, as well as complaints received at Stage 2 and 3 and will complete a 10% audit of all written responses to Stage 1 complaints for quality control purposes. All Faculties/Teams keep a status log of all complaints received at Stage 1. All Stage 1 responses must be approved by the Head of Faculty/Team and copied to the Quality Improvement Team. The Head of Quality Improvement meets with Heads of Faculty termly to review Stage 1 Complaints and a summary of compliments and complaints is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team at the end of each Term. The Further Education Corporation (governing body of South East Essex College) receives and considers an annual report presented by the Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality). A report on the outcome of all formal complaints received from University of Essex students will be provided to the Academic Registrar at the University on a termly basis. Information in relation to complaints are stored and processed in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Appendix 1**  
**College Feedback Form**

**Compliment/Complaints** (delete as appropriate)

The College is committed to providing high quality services for our learners, employers and the community in general. We welcome this feedback to help us to improve Quality. Please complete this form, including as much information as possible.

Please note that staff are under an obligation not to allow a complaint by a student to have any bearing on the way that the student is treated or assessed.

**Name** **Date**

**Address**

**Post Code** **Tel. No.**

**Course**

**Please set out clearly the nature and origin of your compliment/complaint**

Please continue overleaf if necessary

**If a complaint, please describe the steps you have taken to resolve your complaint informally. If this has not been possible, or the outcome is not satisfactory, please explain why.**

Please continue overleaf if necessary

**Signature of person making compliment/complaint** **College date stamp**

**Please return to the College reception or by post to:**  
The Quality Improvement Team, South Essex College of Further & Higher Education,  
FREEPOST SMU 110, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5BR

**The information provided on this form will be stored and processed under the Data Protection Act 1998**