

**Compliments and Complaints Policy**

**Student Services**

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| **SLT Responsibility** | **Sarah Lane** |
| **Policy Version** | **3** |
| **Date of Original Version** | **June 2014** |
| **Policy Author** | **Tracy Espinosa, Student Services Manager (Engagement & Funding)** |
| **Issue date of current version** | **August 2018** |
| **Review Date** | **September 2019** |
| **Roles Responsible for Reviewing** | **Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality**  **Head of Learning Services**  **Student Services Manager (Engagement & Funding)**  **Student Services Officer (Customer Service & Learner Management)** |
| **Related Policies** | **College Behaviour Policy** |
| **Distribution** | **College Intranet – all staff**  **Moodle – all students**  **Websites – all stakeholders incl. parents** |



**SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOLLOWING REVIEW**

**August 2018**

**Compliments and Complaints Policy**

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| **Page Number or**  **Heading Name** | **Details of significant change** | **Changes**  **made by** |
| Throughout document | ‘Procedure’ to ‘Policy’ | KM/TE/JB |
| 5 | Appeals note ‘rewritten and moved’ | KM/TE/JB |
| 6 | GDPR statement added | KM/TE/JB |
| 6 | Statement relating to UOE report removed | KM/TE/JB |
| 7 and 8 | Appendix 1 ‘Roles and Responsibilities within the Compliments and Complaints Process added | KM/TE/JB |



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Compliments and Complaints Policy**

**Compliments**

All compliments are logged by the College and fed back to the appropriate members of staff. We will respond to all compliments.

**Complaints**

Most concerns can be resolved by discussing the issue with the person directly involved or an appropriate member of staff, this might be a Subject Tutor, Course Team Leader, Personal Tutor, Manager or a member of staff in Student Services. Groups of learners may raise a concern about their course with their course student representative. If the issue cannot be resolved a complaint can be made.

All complaints will be investigated by an appropriate manager from the relevant Department/Team. Complaints should be sent to Student Services in the first instance who will acknowledge the complaint and provide details of the Investigating Manager. All complaints are logged and an annual report is produced which is discussed with the Senior Leadership Team and the College Corporation.

**Appeal against the outcome of a complaint**

If a complaint is not resolved through the formal investigation an appeal can be lodged with Student Services.

**Please refer to the full Compliments and Complaints Policy for further information**



**Introduction**

The College is committed to providing excellent customer satisfaction and welcomes compliments, suggestions and complaints and will deal with them in a friendly, fair and efficient way. The College will respond to all complaints promptly and within the published deadlines.

**Implementation**

This policy will be published on the College Website and communicated to all staff.

**General Roles and Responsibilities**

* All College staff have a responsibility for receiving compliments, suggestions and complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the policy.
* The Heads of Department/Team are responsible for resolving complaints on behalf of South Essex College. They may appoint a Manager to investigate and respond on their behalf but will maintain overall responsibility.
* Assistant Principals are responsible for Appeals.
* Student Services coordinate the Compliments and Complaints process. The team also provide support and guidance on all matters relating to this Policy.

**Procedure**

Compliments, suggestions and complaints can be made verbally by phone 01702 220452 (voicemail available), by email (Yoursay@southessex.ac.uk) or by formal letter. A College Feedback form or Have Your Say leaflet can also be used. These are available at reception at all College sites.

**Complaints**

If there is concern about an aspect of a course or any of the College’s services, the staff member most directly involved or someone already known should be contacted. Where there is uncertainty over who to contact or a student does not want to approach the person most directly involved, then the Personal Tutor, Course Team Leader or Manager as appropriate should be contacted. If other students share the concerns then the student course representative should be approached.

If the issue cannot be resolved within the Department/Team a complaint can be made. Complaints should be sent to Student Services in the first instance who will acknowledge the complaint and provide details of the Investigating Manager. An appropriate Manager from the relevant Department/Team will investigate the complaint and take appropriate action. A response would normally be received within 10 working days. If we are unable to do this we will make contact to advise the target date for completion.

All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and an initial response provided within 10 working days, further responses may be provided where appropriate.

**Appealing the outcome of a complaint decision**

If a complaint is not resolved using the complaints policy there is the right to appeal. An appeal should be lodged with Student Services within 20 working days of the unsatisfactory outcome of the formal complaint. An extension of these time limits will only be possible in exceptional circumstances.

In order to appeal:

* Write to or telephone Student Services directly on 01702 220452.
* Detail what steps have been taken to resolve the complaint and explain why the outcome is not considered satisfactory.

Appeals will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and responded to within 15 working days. Some appeals, especially if they are complex, may take longer. If it is going to take longer to respond Student Services will provide an update.

*Please note – appeals raised under this Policy are only in relation to the outcome of a complaint. If you need further advice please refer to the Student Services Administrator.*

**Higher Education**

**For students enrolled on the College’s Higher Education and City and Guilds Diploma in Teaching programmes**

Once the appeal against complaint outcome stage has been completed, you are entitled to ask the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)](http://www.oiahe.org.uk/), the independent ombudsman service of last resort, to look at your complaint. All applications to the OIA must be made within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter issued by the College to the student. The OIA considers complaints from people who remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of the College’s internal complaints procedure. The OIA looks at issues such as whether the College followed its policy, and whether the College’s final decision was reasonable in all the circumstances. The OIA cannot normally look at complaints:

* where the student has not progressed through all stages of the College’s complaints process
* where the complaint refers to matters more than three years old
* where the Completion of Procedures letter is received outside the twelve month time limit
* Where matters have been or are being considered in court.

Full details of the scheme are available at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The College will keep a log of all compliments and complaints. In order to secure ongoing improvement, the overall process will be monitored for consistency, quality of response and compliance with policy.

Heads of Department/Team are provided with feedback on progress in relation to complaints resolution and this is discussed in Department Review meetings.  A summary of compliments and complaints is reviewed by the College Senior Leadership Team and The Further Education Corporation Curriculum & Quality committee.

The Further Education Corporation (governing body of South Essex College) reviews and discusses the Compliments and Complaints report with members of the Senior Leadership Team on at least an annual basis.

Personal data will be handled according to the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. For further information in regards to Data Privacy and GDPR, please see our website on the following link: <https://www.southessex.ac.uk/gdpr>.

**Taking your complaint further**

If a complaint remains unresolved, advice can be sought from the Skills Funding Agency on how to take the complaint further. The contact details are:

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Complaints Team

Cheylesmore House

Quinton Road

Coventry

CV1 2WT

Email: [complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk)

Date of Approval: September 2018

Date of Review: September 2019

***Appendix 1***

**Roles & Responsibilities within the Compliments and Complaints Process**

**All College staff are expected to:**

* Treat all complaints seriously, dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the Compliments and Complaints policy
* Provide support and guidance to any student or member of the public who requests assistance to access the Compliments and Complaints process
* Respond promptly to any requests for information
* Treat all those involved with the complaint with respect
* Investigate impartially and deal with all information factually to conclude the complaint
* Ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout

**Heads of Department are expected to:**

* Ensure complainants are contacted immediately to make initial contact and resolve their concerns if resolution is possible without the need for further investigation
* Include and update the Additional Learning Support Team and the Student Services Team and any relevant team of progress and outcome of the investigation
* Keep the Student Services Administrator (Behaviour and Customer Service) informed of progress if/when a complaint is not resolved within the published timelines
* Support members of staff who may be subject to a complaint
* Inform relevant SMT of all complaints and seek guidance if further assistance is required.
* Inform HR of complaints made against members of staff
* Ensure outcome and any preventative action is recorded on the central Feedback log in a timely manner and that complaints are closed down immediately following resolution of a complaint in line with the Compliments and Complaints policy

**Investigating Managers are expected to:**

Ensure complainants are contacted immediately to make initial contact and resolve their concerns if resolution is possible without the need for further investigation

* Include and update the Additional Learning Support Team and the Student Services Team and any relevant team of progress and outcome of the investigation
* Keep the Student Services Administrator (Behaviour and Customer Service) informed of progress if/when a complaint is not resolved within the published timelines
* Proactively listen to all those involved
* Record and update complaints accurately and consistently
* Move the investigation forward in a timely manner
* Inform HR of complaints made against members of staff
* Ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout
* Investigate impartially and deal with all information factually to conclude the complaint
* Ensure outcome and any preventative action is recorded on the central Feedback log in a timely manner and that complaints are closed down immediately following resolution of a complaint in line with the Compliments and Complaints policy

**Senior Management team are expected to:**

* Monitor Department complaints to ensure appropriate action is taken in line with Compliments and Complaints policy
* Investigate appeals and ensure all information relating to each appeal, the outcome and any preventative action is recorded on the central Feedback log in a timely manner and that Appeals are closed down immediately following resolution of a complaint
* Take appropriate action where Management Teams are not responding to complaints in line with the Compliments and Complaints policy

**Student Services are expected to:**

* Coordinate the Compliments and complaints process and keep a record of all complaints received
* Send holding letters to complainants and keep them informed of progress if a complaint or appeal investigation/review is not resolved within the published timelines
* Monitor the Central Feedback Log for accuracy/consistency
* Produce an Annual Report Compliments and Complaints report for SLT and College Corporation
* Provide training to new Managers
* Provide support and guidance on all matters relating to the Compliments and Complaints Policy
* Escalate to SMT when complaints are not actioned correctly

***Appendix 2***

***College Feedback Form***

Feedback Form

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.

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| *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 let us know what we can do to resolve this matter.** | | | | | | | |
| Please continue overleaf if necessary | | | | | | | |
| *Signature of person making compliment/complaint* | | | | | *College date stamp* | | |
| *Please return to the College reception or by email to* [*Yoursay@southessex.ac.uk*](mailto:qualityimprovement@southessex.ac.uk) *or by post to: Student Services, South Essex College of Further & Higher Education, Luker Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 1ND* | | | | | | | |

**The information provided on this form will be stored and processed under the General Data Protection Regulation 2016**