

Greenwich Community College Complaints Procedure

Complaints procedure	
<i>E & D Impact Assessment carried out</i>	Yes
<i>Approved by</i>	CEG
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Complaints: Definition and Intent

Any person using the services of the College who is unhappy with the service that we aim to provide can complain to the College. This could include an issue that a learner, parent, employer or anyone else using the College wants to raise that needs to be investigated and resolved.

As part of our Corporate Objective to strive for excellence, the College:

- operates fair and efficient procedures for dealing with complaints
- recognises that complaints offer a pool of information on what processes need to be improved and how to improve them.

Performance standards

1. Managers and staff will endeavour to resolve all complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant and the College.
2. A first principle is to ensure that early intervention and response by **all staff** will address customer dissatisfaction.
3. Complaints that staff deem cannot be resolved will be referred to an appropriate manager or the person responsible for quality management.
4. If the line-manager is the person at which the written complaint is directed, the line-manager will pass the written complaint directly on to the Director Quality and Standards to ensure the complaint is investigated by an independent third party.
5. All written complaints will be recorded and reported monthly to the Senior Management Team and annually to the Corporation.
6. Complaints will be responded to promptly and within the stated timescale/s.
7. Responses to complaints will be constructive.
8. Where complaints cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, full responses will be given justifying the college decision and the appeal process fully explained.
9. Copies of this policy and procedure will be available from the College's Reception desks and accessible to students through LEO (the College's virtual learning environment).
10. Copies of complaint reporting forms will be available at key service points throughout the College and accessible to students via LEO. Complaints can also be communicated by telephone and email.
11. Where complainants are unable to complete the form, transcribers will be provided.
12. For complaints which are of a serious nature but which have not been received in writing, every effort will be made to report and record the complaint and outcomes for monitoring purposes.

1. Complaints Procedure

1.1 Using the procedure

- This procedure can be used by anyone using the services of GCC.
- It can be used by any learner who has a complaint relating to another learner, member of staff or the College facilities.
- Where possible, complaints should be dealt with to the customer's complete satisfaction at stage 1
- All complaints submitted in good faith will be considered fairly.
- Anyone who invokes the procedure will not be disadvantaged by having done so.
- Every effort will be made to resolve issues in a friendly and informal way.
- Throughout the process, the person complaining may have a friend to accompany them at all meetings.
- Malicious complaints could lead to disciplinary action.
- These are internal College procedures – at no stage is legal representation for any party allowed.
- For all complaints the privacy and confidentiality of the complainant will be respected.
- If disclosure is necessary to progress a complaint, the complainant will be notified in advance.
- Appeals against academic decisions in relation to grading of work are dealt with by the Academic Appeals Procedure.

We aim to resolve all difficulties in a friendly and informal way. Suggestions and compliments should be recorded on the 'Comments, Compliments and Suggestions Form' which is available from Reception.

1.2 Staged process (see also Getting it Right)

Stage One

Any person with a complaint is invited to discuss the matter first with an appropriate member of staff. In the case of students this will be their Personal Tutor, Assessor or member of the Student Services Team. They will respond with advice and guidance as to how to proceed from this point.

- a) To deal with the issue **immediately** OR
- b) Agree a meeting (**within 3 days**) to discuss the complaint; this allows time for the complainant to think about what they want to say and to take a friend with them.

Stage Two

If the person is not satisfied with the outcome or does not wish to discuss the matter first they, or their representative, should

- a) Complete the college Complaints form OR
- b) Write a letter to the Director, Quality and Standards
- c) Email service@gcc.ac.uk

Forms can be handed in to reception at any centre or posted to the college.

Receipt of the email/letter will be normally acknowledged in writing **within 4 working days** accompanied by a copy of the complaints procedure.

The email/letter will be copied to the appropriate Manager responsible for the area within which the complaint has arisen. S/he will normally seek to resolve the issue **within 10 working days** by carrying out an investigation.

The outcome will be recorded on the Complaint Form and the College will write to the complainant to outline the outcome of the investigation. Where a complaint is not upheld, reasons will be given as to why this is so. Where a complaint is upheld, a statement outlining the remedial action and timescale for implementation will be provided in writing to the complainant.

Stage Three

If the person is not satisfied with the outcome noted in the letter they should appeal against the decision within 5 days of receiving the letter in stage 2. An appointment will be made to see a member of the College Executive team to discuss the issue(s) further. The complainant may bring a friend and any written evidence thought to be useful.

Stage Four

If by this stage the person still believes the issue is unresolved, the complaint can be referred to the Corporation. This appeal must be made **within 10 working days** of the date of the meeting in stage 3. A complaint may be referred to the Corporation only where:

- The person reasonably believes that the procedures set out in this document have not been complied with; and/or
- New evidence has come to light which may affect the decisions already reached in relation to the complaint considered.

Stage Five

If the complainant is still not satisfied, and the issue relates to a course funded through the Learning and Skills Council, the complainant should be given the appropriate contact details and invited to write to that body setting out clearly the reason for their complaint.

2. Risk assessment

It is the responsibility of **CEG** to judge the risk of the complaint.

Level of risk	High Risk	Medium risk	Low risk
<i>Examples</i>	Complaints that pose a legal threat to the college e.g. breach of E&D policies, safeguarding, health and safety or likely to bring the college into serious disrepute.	Complaints about teaching and learning, individual staff	Complaints about premises, prices etc
<i>Action required</i>	Reported to a member of CEG immediately. Investigation by a member of the senior management team with support from a member of CEG.	As set out in the procedure.	May be referred informally to the relevant area manager

3. Recording and reporting

A record must be kept of all complaints. (see table on next page for a summary)

- informal and immediately resolved complaints are recorded onto a spreadsheet on Staffshare by the member of staff that resolves the complaint.
- written complaints (form, letter, email or online form) and subsequent investigation; records are maintained by the Principal's Office

All **serious complaints** (also see above Risk Assessment) should be reported to the Principal immediately together with a short summary of what is being done. Serious complaints are those that relate to:

- Allegations of abuse by staff
- Academic malpractice
- Activity that may constitute a breach of the professional code of conduct
- An issue of illegality

All formal feedback and complaints will be reported under the following categories to ensure action can be targeted and the impact measured.

Categories		Classification
Curriculum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of T&L - Environment - Course admin 	Facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - classroom - general 	Equality and Diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - disability; race; gender; age; sexual orientation; religious belief - general
Learner behaviour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External - Internal 	Catering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality - service 	Safeguarding
Staff behaviour	Reception	Health and Safety
Enrolment	Franchise	Other
Outside the college	Fees / Finance	

4. Investigation

A thorough investigation is carried out; this is focussed on the issues raised by the complainant. The college reserves the right to dismiss or examine anonymous complaints at its discretion. Malicious complaints will be investigated and the college reserves the right to raise the matter with the appropriate authorities.

The investigation officer

- must examine the complaint without partiality and in accordance with best practice in customer care, seeking opportunities to resolve rather than escalate the complaint
- Must complete the Complaint Investigation Form as a written record
- Report any delays to the DQS
- Respect confidentiality
- Identify actions to be taken which could include disciplinary procedures

Framework for investigating complaints

The nominated investigator will:

1. Receive notice to investigate, a copy of the complaint and the Investigation Compliant form.
2. Review the dates and inform the DQS of any possible delay in carrying out the investigation; in such a case, notice will be given to the complainant.
3. Identify the people to be involved, set up meetings and ask questions to clarify what happened.
4. Identify any documents that would help the investigation e.g. timetables, lesson observation reports, and carry out a review
5. Identify any visits required to aid judgements e.g. checking a room, observation of a teacher.

Reporting

The report must be sent to the DQS by the date specified on the Complaint Investigation Form. The report should state clearly if the complaint is wholly upheld, partly upheld or not upheld and state the reason for the judgment clearly.

The DQS will

- 1) inform the relevant HoD of the outcome
- 2) agree any compensation with the Vice PP&S
- 3) write to the complainant with the outcomes and informing them of the appeals procedures.

5 Quality Improvement

The college knows that most service failures are not due to staff but to inadequate systems and processes that do not support high quality delivery.

The 'Comments, Compliments and Suggestions Form' is designed to allow college users to offer constructive feedback. However, we understand that, at times, things go wrong. The college

recognises that customer complaints are a useful source of intelligence to inform quality improvement. We seek to ensure that:

- a) We have systems in place to put things right quickly
- b) We learn from our mistakes and identify the root cause of the complaint

7 Equality and Diversity

This policy is consistent with and complementary to all other College policies and in particular to the Equal Opportunities, Race Equality, Disability and Health & Safety policies. Effective reporting of user feedback will enable the college to make improvements where the need is identified.

8 Sharing Good practice

The college seeks to improve its services through sharing good practice within the college, with our partners and with other institutions. Good practice identified as a result of this procedure will be recorded and shared, together with the impact of any action/s taken.

9 Availability and Reviewing

The procedure sets out and clarifies college practice; it is available to all staff on Staffshare and to all users on request.

A simplified version, 'Getting it Right' is available at all service points at each college site.

This procedure was drafted in Feb 10 and approved by CEG.

It will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Glossary

DQS:	Director Quality and Standards
CEG:	College Executive Group
Resolve:	to find or agree an answer to the problem
Escalate:	to take the complaint to the next stage

Linked Documents are:

- 1) Customer Service Policy Manual**
- 2) Comments, Compliments and Suggestions Form**
- 3) Complaint Form**
- 4) Getting it Right** (a leaflet explaining complaints procedure for customers)
- 5) Guidelines for Staff – 'Handling Complaints – Do's and Don'ts!'**
- 6) Complaint Investigation Form**
- 7) Instructions for investigation of complaints**