OSC03

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

1 Introduction

This Policy concerns feedback (compliments, comments and complaints) from stakeholders including students, parents, carers, representatives from the local community, employers, and others. Its purpose is to recognise that all stakeholders who are impacted by the College's services have a right to comment on the services provided and to have any issues raised, investigated and acted upon. Likewise, stakeholders of the College's services may wish to express their satisfaction with the service they have received and to be assured that their comments will be forwarded to those concerned and inform excellent practice elsewhere in the College.

The College is committed to dealing with complaints in a fair and transparent manner and to having accessible procedures, which enable:

- Complainants to be clear of the process, timescales and actions taken
- Staff to be clear about their responsibilities within this process

The College encourages feedback and gathers and analyses this as part of the drive to improve the quality of service. Similarly, the College views feedback as an additional method of measuring the effectiveness of its service and, where appropriate, highlighting and celebrating good practice.

Not all issues turn into formal complaints and often an issue is most usefully managed informally, leading to rapid resolution by those who are best placed to find practical solutions.

When a stakeholder has a concern that has not been resolved informally, it is important that the focus is placed on identifying what has happened, where the service may have failed, what can be done to put things right, informing the complainant and learning from the experience.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all stakeholders of the College services – internal and external.

A College employee who wishes to complain should refer to the College's Grievance Policy and Procedure, or take advice from the People Team.

There is a procedural document for the management of complaints and compliments, which accompanies and is a guide to this policy.

The College reserves the right not to pursue any malicious, vexatious or abusive complaints (for example, complaints which use offensive or abusive language in communications to staff).

The College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.

3 Responsibility for implementation

The overall responsibility for the management of feedback lies with the Group Vice Principal Curriculum & Standards. The investigation and resolution of complaints will be delegated to senior managers, usually the appropriate manager for the area where the complaint sits. Similarly, it is recognised that informal complaints and compliments are received through a variety of routes and therefore any member of staff may, at some time, be in receipt of these and may need to give advice about the formal steps. It is therefore expected that all members of staff be familiar with the procedure and their responsibility for ensuring complaints are resolved as quickly as possible.

4 Policy Statements

The College welcomes and encourages feedback from students, members of the public, employers and other stakeholders and makes every effort to resolve complaints quickly at the most appropriate level. Members of the College management view complaints and compliments as robust management information that input into the ongoing review of the quality of provision.

4.1 Compliments

It is important that compliments are recognised and shared about the service provided. A compliment from a customer may be made to any member of staff in writing by:

ESC

- Email – complimentsandcomplaints@esc.ac.uk
- Website or College social media pages
- Letter – Client Services, East Surrey College, Gatton Point, London Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 2JX

JRC

- Email – complimentsandcomplaints@johnruskin.ac.uk
- Website or College social media pages
- Letter – Client Services, John Ruskin College, Selsdon Park Rd, South Croydon CR2 8JJ

The line manager should be advised and the Marketing department informed of all compliments received into the College as they may be of value in enhancing the corporate image.

4.2 Complaints

4.2.1 Methods of making complaints

Stage 1 – Informal Procedure

These complaints are dealt with by the managers of the departments in which the complaint is raised.

The College anticipates that most concerns will be resolved at an early stage through informal discussion.

If a concern arises, the first step is to bring it to the attention of the relevant staff member. For example, current students should discuss the matter with their tutor to facilitate a rapid resolution. Alternatively, other members of staff may also be able to help with a concern, for example Client Services. All other stakeholders should bring their concern to the attention of the appropriate staff member or Client Services. **If this discussion does not resolve the matter, or if it is not appropriate to discuss a situation with a member of the staff with whom the complaint is directed, then the complaint should be made to the person responsible for the particular area or service.**

If the issue remains unresolved, a formal complaint may then be instigated through Stage 2 – Formal Complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If a concern is not resolved informally at Stage 1, a formal complaint may be made.

Formal complaints should ideally be brought to the attention of the College in writing, either using the Client Feedback Form, or via letter or email as follows:

ESC

- Email - complimentsandcomplaints@esc.ac.uk
- Letter – Client Services, East Surrey College, Gatton Point, London Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 2JX

JRC

- Email - complimentsandcomplaints@johnruskin.ac.uk
- Letter – Client Services, John Ruskin College, Selsdon Park Rd, South Croydon CR2 8JJ

If assistance is required to make a formal complaint in writing, a member of the Client Services team will support individuals to complete this.

The College will treat with equal seriousness any complaint received, regardless of the route chosen. The procedural document ‘A Guide to the College’s Compliments, Comments and

Complaints Policy' details how complaints should be progressed, irrespective of by whom and how they are received.

The College undertakes to:

- Acknowledge formal complaints within five working days of receipt
- Conduct an internal investigation to establish the facts and timelines.
- Provide a final written response with the results of the investigations, except in exceptional circumstances, within 15 working days.
    - If the investigation is conducted over a holiday period when relevant key staff are absent, a full response may be delayed but will be provided as soon practicable and the complainant will be kept updated.
    - Occasionally, a complex complaint will need more time to investigate – at all times the complainant will be kept informed of the progress.
- Provide information on how the College will deal with the matter if your complaint is upheld.
- Regular reporting to College Extended Executive on compliments and complaints to ensure wider patterns and themes are considered and acted upon where appropriate.

Stage 3 – Appeal

The College anticipates that formal complaints are resolved promptly and amicably, however should the complainant wish to appeal against the outcome of Stage 2, they should submit their appeal in writing (email or letter) within 10 days of the Stage 2 outcome to: Chief Operating Officer, East Surrey College, Gatton Point, London Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 2JX.

The Chief Operating Officer, or their designated representative, will acknowledge receipt, review the investigation and come to a judgement on the validity of the appeal. The possible judgements are:

1. Appeal rejected – the original resolution will remain
2. Appeal upheld – the Chief Operating Officer, or their designated representative, will propose an alternative solution to the complainant

The formal judgment response will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal.

This is the final stage of the College's complaints procedure.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the final College response, and has exhausted all stages of the College's complaints procedures, they have the right to raise it with the Department for Education (DfE).

4.2.2. **Information about complaints**

Details of complaints should be kept confidential and shared only with:

- The complainant
- Those being the subject of the complaint
- The line manager of the area concerned
- Group Vice Principal Curriculum & Standards

Only when it is necessary to involve others in the investigation of the complaint will the information be shared and then only on a 'need to know' basis. The single exception to this is if a member of staff, who is the subject of a complaint, wishes to solicit the involvement of a representative.

All complaints will be held on a central log for the current year plus six previous years.
All complaint documentation will be held for the current year plus two previous years.

4.3 Feedback reports

Directorate Administration at both campuses are the central collection points for formal complaints. There will be a record of each complaint to track its progress and, where relevant, to assist action planning processes to improve services.

Regular reports and a formal annual report will contain statistical analysis of all complaints and compliments received.

The Group Vice Principal Curriculum & Standards will review complaints received, overview investigation and provide reports to the Executive, Quality and Standards Committee and to the Learning and Quality Committee of the Corporation Board.

4.4 Time limits

Complaints should be made through the appropriate channels as soon as an issue arises. The time limit for bringing a complaint is one month from the date of the original incident.

4.5 Complaints about staff

Complaints about staff must be handled sensitively and confidentially and referred to the appropriate line manager who may involve the People Team.

A record of the complaint will be kept on file by the People Team.

4.6 Key Features of the Procedures for Formal Complaints

The Procedures for dealing with formal complaints are designed to ensure that:

- All formal complaints are treated seriously and with discretion;
- Complainants can be sure that their concerns are being treated fairly and in confidence;
- Complainants receive initial and, where appropriate, regular feedback about the progress of their complaint;
- All formal complaints are properly documented and are dealt with as quickly as possible;

- Appropriate investigations are carried out by the appropriate Vice Principal / Manager who is responsible for implementing remedial action. The Group Vice Principal Curriculum & Standards will identify who to conduct the investigation;
- All records of complaints will be evaluated to identify service improvements

Information about this Policy and the procedural guide document are available to staff and students.

4.7 Equality & Diversity Monitoring

In accordance with the College's Equality Policies and Scheme, the College may collect information about the people who raise formal complaints. This information may include age, gender, ethnicity and disability and will only be used for monitoring purposes. All information will be treated confidentially.

5 Access to Policy

This Policy is available from Client Services, on the College OSC Gateway and on the College website.

6 Mechanisms for Feedback

Constructive comments on the continued improvement of this Policy are welcomed and should be forwarded to the CEO and Principal.

7 Training and Guidance

Questions about this policy and/or procedure, and requests for training, guidance or information on this policy and/or procedure should be directed to the People Team.

8 References

Equality Policy & Procedures for staff and students
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report
Grievance Policy & Procedure (for Employees)
General Data Protection Policy
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Quality Improvement Policy

9 Further information

A Guide to the College's Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy.

Student Handbook on Ezone

10 Produced/reviewed by: Vice Principal Curriculum and Standards **Date:** June 2024

11 Approved by: Policy and Procedure Approval Meeting **Date:** 5 July 2024

12 Next Review Date: July 2026

13 Policy Code: OSC03