

Compliments, Comments & Complaints Procedure

Issue 4

Date 25-11-2022
Owner Vice Principal (Professional Services)
Review Date 25-11-2024

TO BE A BEACON OF **EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**,
TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF THE **INDIVIDUALS**
AND **COMMUNITIES** WE SERVE.

STATEMENT

1. SCC Group strives to achieve the highest standards of customer service for all stakeholders. SCC Group is committed to having a formal Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure that allows customers and stakeholders to provide feedback about our services. This will ensure that we deliver quality services for our customers and are responsive to their needs.
2. This procedure outlines how Salford City College Group (SCC Group) will deal with compliments, comments/suggestions and complaints from customers and stakeholders.
3. The purpose of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure is:
 - a. To provide effective means for people who use SCC Group's services to provide feedback, whether positive or negative
 - b. To confirm an individual's right to complain or share their opinions
 - c. To ensure that compliments, comments and complaints are dealt with effectively and impartially
 - d. To direct that complaints should be resolved:
 - as quickly as possible
 - as close to the point of delivery as possible
 - fairly (for all parties)
 - with the minimum of inconvenience to the complainant
 - in a consultative manner and to agree on a solution
 - e. To ensure that we respond to all suggestions, whether positive or negative, in a prompt, courteous and confidential manner.
4. The Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure will not be used to deal with staff disciplinary issues or grievance issues. There are separate procedures in place to cover these areas. In some instances, a reported complaint may lead to an investigation under a different policy or procedure. In this case, the customer will be kept informed as appropriate.
5. The Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure will not be used to deal with concerns relating to assessment, student progression and awards. Any matters relating to these issues need to be raised and addressed through the process of academic appeals.
6. SCC Group will not respond to anonymous complaints.
7. SCC Group takes the issue of malicious complaints extremely seriously.

Compliments, Comments & Complaints Procedure

If, after an investigation, a complaint is considered to have been made maliciously and/or without foundation, then this could, if appropriate, result in disciplinary action against the complainant.

8. All complaints should be raised within 12 months of the original issue so that evidence is available for investigation. Any complaint received after this period may not be considered and is at the discretion of the Vice Principal (Professional Services).
9. The objective of the complaints process is to investigate and improve the services that we offer and be accountable to our customers and stakeholders. The practice of SCC Group is to respond to all communications, whether positive or negative, in a prompt, courteous and confidential manner. All complaints will be treated seriously.
10. This Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure will outline the minimum expectations, timelines, responsibilities and agreed processes for responding to customer feedback.
11. All complaints will be dealt with fairly and decisions will be made on the balance of probabilities.
12. Any customer who feels that the College has not dealt with their formal complaint effectively has the option to take up the complaint with the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) via the 'Complaints against Providers' process.
13. Higher Education students should approach the College first with their complaint. Depending on the circumstances of the complaint, they may be advised to make their complaint through the complaints procedure of the relevant University. In this instance, the College will provide details of the University's process.
14. For any complaints relating to Higher Education, customers have the option to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator after the relevant University's formal complaints procedure has been exhausted.
15. This policy will be made available to all stakeholders on the College website at www.salfordcc.ac.uk. Hard copies of this policy are also available upon request from the College Switchboard on 0161 631 5000 or Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team at complimentscomplaints@salfordcc.ac.uk.
 - a. Apprentices and Employers will be informed of the College's Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy & Procedure upon registration with the College.
16. Stakeholders who are dissatisfied by the outcome, standards or processing of complaints should contact the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team at complimentscomplaints@salfordcc.ac.uk or on 0161 631 5000.

DEFINITIONS

Complaint A complaint is defined as a concern raised by a customer or stakeholder, either verbally or in writing.

Compliment A compliment is defined as a polite expression of praise or admiration raised by a customer or stakeholder, either verbally or in writing.

Customer Students, external customers using College facilities, businesses, organisations or individuals that the College works with or has a business relationship with or a member of the public.

Student A student is defined as an individual who has been enrolled with the SCC Group in the past 12 months.

HOW WE MANAGE COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS

1 The objective of this procedure is to:

- 1.1 Implement the above compliments, comments and complaints statement for the College.
- 1.2 Ensure that the College responds to all communications, whether positive or negative, in a prompt, courteous and confidential manner.
- 1.3 Welcome feedback as an opportunity to improve the services that we offer.
- 1.4 Encourage a culture of openness around compliments / comments / complaints.
- 1.5 To direct that complaints should be resolved:
 - as quickly as possible
 - as close to the point of delivery as possible
 - fairly (for all parties)
 - with the minimum of inconvenience to the complainant
 - in a consultative manner and to agree on a solution
- 1.6 To ensure that all customer compliments, comments and complaints are used to develop overall improvements to the way we work.
- 1.7 **All compliments, comments and complaints will be treated seriously but should be dealt with informally in the first instance wherever possible and addressed at the point of delivery.**

2 Compliments and Comments

- 2.1 All compliments and comments should be appropriately acknowledged, and the customer thanked for their feedback.
 - 2.1.1 Compliments or comments received in writing should be acknowledged in writing.
 - 2.1.2 Whoever receives a compliment or comment should pass it onto the Compliments and Complaints Team so that the SLT at the College can understand customer feedback and drive recognition of good practice.
- 2.2 The Head of Student Operations is responsible for administering compliments and comments.
- 2.3 The Vice Principal (Professional Services) and the Head of Student Operations will review all compliments and comments regularly.

3 Complaints



Informal Complaints (Complaint Handling)

3.1 All staff members are involved in customer service, so they may be involved in handling informal complaints. Staff dealing with a complaint should work to the following framework:

- Listen
- Ask questions
- Agree on a solution - check satisfaction
- Implement solution
- Follow up to check satisfaction

3.2 The aim should be to deal with less significant issues informally at the point of service delivery to ensure a speedy resolution.

3.3 Staff who handle informal complaints should make the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team aware of any informal complaints and resolutions so that these can be recorded in the central compliments, comments and complaints database.

3.4 Internal Customers

Students

3.4.1 In the first instance, students should discuss their informal complaint with their teacher(s) or relevant member of staff. Many problems can be resolved with this direct interaction. If an immediate resolution is not possible, or the student is not satisfied with the outcome, they should inform a member of the Pastoral Team who will aim to identify an informal solution to the problem. Staff should aim to resolve informal complaints in a timely manner.

3.4.2 If the student is not satisfied with the proposed informal solution, they may choose to make a formal complaint to the Compliments and Complaints Team who will refer them matter to a Complaint Owner.

3.4.3 If a student needs help making a formal complaint, this can be obtained through Student Services.

3.4.4 Higher Education students should approach the College with any complaint in the first instance. Depending on the circumstances, it may be more relevant for the student to complain via the appropriate

University's complaints process – in which case, the College will advise the student of this and provide details of the University's procedures.

3.5 External Customers

- 3.5.1 External customers are individuals, groups or organisations using the College facilities, business, organisations or individuals that the College works with or has a business relationship with, parents/guardians and members of the public.
- 3.5.2 Informal feedback should initially be directed to a staff member within the area where the complaint is based. Complaints can often be resolved with this direct interaction.
- 3.5.3 If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome, they may choose to make a formal complaint in line with this procedure.

Formal Complaints

- 3.6 If the customer is not satisfied with the informal resolution to the complaint, the formal complaints process begins. Alternatively, a complaint may immediately be dealt with through the formal process if it is deemed serious enough to warrant the formal procedure either by another College procedure or at the discretion of the Vice Principal (Professional Services).
- 3.7 The Head of Student Operations is responsible for administering complaints.
- 3.8 The Vice Principal (Professional Services) is responsible for the strategic overview of all formal complaints on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 3.9 The College procedure is that complaints should be dealt with as close to the source of the complaint as possible – usually by a manager or a Head of Department about which the complaint has been made.
- 3.10 **How to make a Formal Complaint**
 - 3.10.1 The College will ask customers to complete a formal complaint form to trigger the formal complaints process. This is available from the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team at:

complimentscomplaints@salfordcc.ac.uk.
 - 3.10.2 A complaint initially dealt with informally can be made formal at the customer's request only if the informal complaints process has been exhausted.

3.10.3 All formal complaints will be logged, investigated and the outcome recorded. All formal complaints must be made to the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team to be valid and should be submitted to:

complimentscomplaints@salfordcc.ac.uk

3.11 Stage 1 – Receipt of Complaint/Processing/Immediate Response

3.11.1 Once the complaint has been received, it will be referred IMMEDIATELY to the Curriculum Manager or College Manager responsible.

3.11.2 The Compliments and Complaints Team will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days and inform the customer that their complaint has been referred to a Curriculum Manager or Head of Department and provide a copy of the SCC Group Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure.

3.11.3 This person then becomes the complaint owner/investigating officer.

3.11.4 The complaint owner should contact the customer within five working days, by telephone if possible, to explain that they are dealing with the complaint, give the customer their contact details, and agree on the timeframe for resolution. This may be extended during College holiday periods.

3.12 Stage 2 – Investigation/Agreement of Resolution/Confirmation of Resolution

The Complaint owner takes the following action:

3.12.1 Investigate the complaint by interviewing staff or customers as necessary. Notes should be taken of phone calls and meetings. These must be sent to the Compliments and Complaints Team.

3.12.2 Consult with their line manager as required.

3.12.3 Agree on the resolution with the customer within fifteen working days of receipt of the complaint or within the previously agreed timeline.

3.12.4 Resolution should be presented/agreed in person where possible or, failing that, by telephone. Resolution should only be presented in writing if no other contact details are available or requested explicitly by the customer.

3.12.5 The target timeframe to agree on a resolution to a complaint with all customers is **within fifteen working days of receipt**. This may not be possible in complex cases, in which case the customer should be informed of the timeframe to agree on a resolution.

3.12.6 If the customer is satisfied, inform the Compliments and Complaints Team of the agreed resolution and provide them with all investigation documentation.

3.12.7 The Compliments and Complaints Team will follow up in writing with the customer to confirm that they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and the resolution.

3.12.8 If the customer remains dissatisfied by the response of the complaint, they may request that the complaint is escalated to a Senior Manager by emailing:

complimentscomplaints@salfordcc.ac.uk

3.13 Stage 3 – Escalation

The complaint will be escalated to the relevant Head of Centre/Centre Principal or Senior Manager.

3.13.1 This person then becomes the complaint owner.

3.13.2 The Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team will write to the customer to confirm that the complaint owner is dealing with the complaint.

3.13.3 The complaint owner should contact the customer within five working days, by telephone if possible, to explain that they are dealing with the complaint, to give the customer their contact details and to agree on the next step – in most cases, this will be a face-to-face meeting.

3.13.4 The complaint owner will meet with the customer or speak on the telephone to agree on a solution/respond within ten working days.

3.13.5 The Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team will follow up in writing with the customer to confirm that they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and the resolution.

3.13.6 If the customer remains dissatisfied by the response of the complaint, they may request to appeal the outcome of the complaint by emailing:

complimentscomplaints@salfordcc.ac.uk

3.14 Stage 4 – Appeal

In exceptional circumstances, if the customer is still not satisfied after the previous steps, they may appeal in writing. The appeal will be dealt with by a member of the SLT within ten working days. The SLT member will consult with colleagues who have been involved in the complaint, meet with the complainant to hear the appeal, and give a final decision.

3.14.1 An appeal will only be considered if the customer can evidence one or more of the following:

- Any aspect of the original complaint was not investigated.
- The investigation findings do not match the outcome.
- There is new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the original complaint investigation.
- The College Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure was not followed.

3.14.2 The purpose of an appeal is to review the original complaint investigation and outcome to ensure that the most appropriate conclusion was reached.

3.15 Anyone who feels that the College has not dealt effectively with their complaint has the option to take up the complaint with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) via the 'Complaints against Providers' process: [Complaints procedure - Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342222/complaints-procedure-education-and-skills-funding-agency.pdf)

3.15.1 The Education and Skills Funding Agency complaints team may be contacted at:

Complaints Team
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Or online using their online enquiry form:

[https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact the Department for Education](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact%20the%20Department%20for%20Education)

3.16 Any Higher Education student who is still unhappy after all formal complaints procedures have been exhausted (whether those of the College or the relevant University) can choose to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator:

3.16.1 Any complaint to the OIA must be submitted within three months of the Completion of Procedures letter being received by the student. The OIA will not normally consider complaints that have not followed the University's formal complaints procedures through all stages, including appeal.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education may be contacted at:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57 – 75 Kings Road
READING
RG1 3AB

Tel: 0118 959 9813

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Website: www.oiahe.org.uk

GENERAL NOTES ON THE FORMAL COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESS

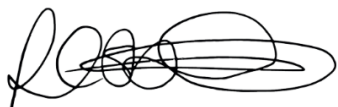
- Every communication either from the complainant or the College should be copied to the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team.
- Notes will be kept of meetings, all telephone calls will be logged, and this information will be copied to the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team.
- The appropriate manager will give a complete response to the complaint within the required timescales.
- When it is impossible to give a complete response to the complaint within the required timescale, the customer will be provided with a proposed schedule for a response.
- The final response should include an explanation to the customer of how to take their complaint further, if necessary.
- All complaints will be treated as confidential and handled with sensitivity by the complaint owner and Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team.

MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Vice Principal (Professional Services) will present regular updates on live complaints to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and an annual report for the SCC Group Corporation summarising the complaints during the year. This will be based on an analysis of the year's complaints. The Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for investigating and responding to any queries arising from the annual report to the Corporation.

POLICY APPROVAL

Signed on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team:



Ruth Osborne-Thompson
Vice Principal (Professional Services)