Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedures

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<td>Line Manager Responsible:</td>
<td>Head of Student Services</td>
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<td>23&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; March 2017</td>
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Impact Assessment status
In preparing the Policy and Procedures, any potential disproportionate impact it might have upon staff/learners with protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, have been carefully considered. It is the conclusion of the Policy Group that the Policy and Procedures do not adversely impact on individuals with any of the protected characteristics. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

Issue Number 2
Issue Date June 2017
Review Date 23rd March 2018
Originator Head of Student Services
Responsibility Head of Student Services

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Aim

The policy and procedures aim to ensure that:

1. A formal process exists whereby customers and stakeholders can provide feedback and compliments, which are used to shape and inform good practice and to inform continuous improvement.

2. Customers and stakeholders are aware of how to raise concerns and issues directly with the relevant department, and how to make a formal complaint if they are not satisfied with the response.

3. The organisation is accountable for responding to concerns and complaints in a consistently appropriate and timely manner, through an open and transparent process.

4. All staff take responsibility for resolving issues within their relevant area of delivery or management at Stage 1, with Heads / Directors taking full responsibility for investigating and resolving formal complaints at Stage 2.

5. A formal process exists in order for staff to respond to complaints appropriately in a safe and supportive environment.

6. The organisation meets any external requirements as an education provider in terms of legislation and good practice guidance.

Scope

The College welcomes all comments and suggestions about the services it provides and aims to resolve any expression of dissatisfaction sensitively and confidentially; informally in the first instance, at a local level, and with a focus on early resolution. Any issues or causes for concern should therefore be reported directly in the first instance to the relevant person in that area, i.e. Class Tutor, Career Pathway Leader, Work Based Tutor, Support Area Manager or Team Leader. The organisation recognises an informal complaint to be; ‘Any dissatisfaction expressed by a student or other stakeholder which results in their needs being neglected, particularly in relation to progression in learning, that needs to be revisited due to a lack of any kind of response following initial discussion’.

The College is confident that most issues and expressions of dissatisfaction will be resolved professionally by the department responsible at an informal level. However, if it is not possible to satisfactorily resolve these issues, complainants should follow the College’s formal complaints procedure as outlined within this policy. This stage is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly and consistently, and without bias or disadvantage to any students involved, and with the aim of satisfactorily resolving the complaint wherever possible. The organisation recognises a formal complaint to be; ‘A continued expression of dissatisfaction by a student or other stakeholder which has not been appropriately acknowledged or responded to by the individual or department perceived to be causing the dissatisfaction’.

This policy and procedures will apply consistently across the organisation and should be adopted when dealing with all customers and stakeholders, i.e. students, parents, general public, external organisations, partners, etc. In the event that a complainant wishes a matter to be raised on their behalf by a chosen representative, i.e. parent, guardian, friend, this will need to be confirmed to the College in writing.

The complainant should ensure that they follow the correct procedure at Stage 1 prior to making a formal complaint, in order for the College to respond as swiftly and appropriately as possible. This does not need to be done in writing. Where the issue is not resolved and the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, they should bring this to the College’s attention in writing normally within
2 weeks of the issue arising, and following the procedure at Stage 2. The complainant should explain the problem as fully and clearly as possible and provide detail of what steps have been taken to attempt to resolve the complaint informally at a local level. They should allow the College reasonable time to investigate the matter and formulate a response within the stated timeframes, and should recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the College’s control.

Complaints concerning assessment and accreditation are dealt with through appeals procedures set up with Awarding/Validating bodies. Complaints from contractors will be dealt with as appropriate and with reference to the contract terms. Any complaints made in relation to the College Higher Education (HE) provision will also be subject to the appropriate procedures as set out by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), and informed by the Quality Assurance Agency’s Quality Code.

**Implementation**

The College will ensure that:

1. Support in preparing a formal complaint in writing will be made available to students if required by the appropriate member of staff or Student Services Department, with any complaints being signed personally by the complainant prior to submission.

2. Receipt of formal complaints is acknowledged in writing within 2 working days of receipt, outlining what will happen next and the timeframes for this action.

3. They respond to the complainant within 10 working days either with a resolution or an update on the progress of the formal investigation with reviewed timeframes for completion.

4. Appropriate action is taken by the relevant person within the organisation, and that they deal with the complaint objectively and sensitively.

5. Appropriate good practice guidelines underpinned by any relevant legislation are followed at all times as appropriate to the nature of the complaint.

6. The complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the investigation and any agreed actions in order for the dispute to reach its conclusion.

**Communication Flow**

1. The Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure will be readily available to all stakeholders via the college website.

2. Appropriate training will be offered to all staff to ensure that they recognise their individual responsibility in providing good customer care, and are fully aware of this policy and procedures and follow them appropriately as the need arises.

3. In recognising and responding to an informal complaint, the member of staff will inform their line manager and any others as appropriate, and report to the Student Services Department for logging via the RC1 form.

4. Formal complaints and compliments will be recognised, logged, and acknowledged by the Student Services Team or Secretariat within a central logging system.

5. The Head of Student Services will assign formal complaints to the relevant Head / Director to investigate.

6. Senior Managers will be informed of any complaints assessed to have the potential to have a widespread negative impact on the college reputation by the Head of Student Services on the day that they are received.
7. The Head / Director overseeing the investigation will formulate a written response to the complainant within agreed timeframes and utilising appropriate communication tools (i.e. college templates or OIA Completion of Procedures letter for HE students), and send a copy to Student Services in order for this to be reviewed and sent, saved to the file, and logged as resolved.

8. The complainant should write to the College following the appeals procedures outlined within this policy if they are dissatisfied with the response and conclusion of the formal complaint investigation. Alternatively if the complaint is in relation to HE provision then the student can contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for further support and guidance.

9. During any interaction with a student or student representative, appropriate action must be taken by the member of staff to establish the identity of the person they are engaged in communication with. This should include appropriate checks of individual and next of kin details on the college records system, re-establishing contact as appropriate and in accordance with the contact information provided by the student, and in the case of adult students (aged 18+) only engaging with a third party where the student has given permission to do so in writing.

10. Any member of staff dealing with a complaint should not be subject to any form of verbal or physical violence or aggression from the complainant, with appropriate action being taken against anyone displaying these behaviours.

11. All feedback/ compliments, informal and formal complaints, will be reviewed termly by the Head of Student Services with overall responsibility for the procedures, and fed back in a short report to the relevant members of the College Management Team. This will enable a departmental response in terms of identifiable patterns of good practice and areas for development.

12. The Head of Student Services will prepare an annual report for the College Corporation.

**Monitoring of Implementation**

The Student Services Customer Services and Safeguarding Manager is responsible for logging and reviewing all feedback, compliments, informal and formal complaints upon receipt, and for referring to the Head of Student Services where further action is required to avoid escalation to a formal complaint or where a formal complaint needs to be assigned for investigation. In some circumstances this information will be received directly by College Secretariat, who will log on the central system and then refer back through to Student Services for appropriate action.

Following receipt of a formal complaint the Head of Student Services will ensure that appropriate and timely communication is maintained with the complainant in line with the investigation, and will liaise with the investigating Head / Director to ensure that the procedures outlined within the policy are followed in order to maintain an open and transparent process.

The Head of Student Services will report back to other departmental Heads / Directors on a termly basis to ensure that the College Management Team can remain informed and take any necessary action in terms of full compliance and implementation of this policy and procedures.

The number of formal complaints received by the College will be reviewed annually with a report prepared and presented to both the Senior Management Team and Corporation, who will monitor the handling of complaints in accordance with this policy. Within this report, the Principal/Chief Executive or nominee will also report back on any complaints resulting in appeals under procedure 4 of this policy.

The College’s complaints procedure will be reviewed annually, taking into account any feedback received via opinion surveys and focus groups, and in line with the Customer Charter.
Associated Information and Guidance


Related College Policies and Documents

- Data Protection Policy
- Customer Charter
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- Customer Service and Marketing Strategy
Procedures

Procedure 1: Providing Feedback and Compliments to the College

Procedure 2: Making an Informal Complaint (Stage 1)

Procedure 3: Making a Formal Complaint (Stage 2)

Procedure 3: Appealing Against the Outcome of a Formal Complaint (Stage 3)
**Family Procedure Reference – LEG02**

**Procedure 1: Providing Feedback and Compliments to the College**

**Purpose:** To provide a formal process for logging and acknowledging feedback and compliments in order to continually improve as an organisation, and to share and build on good practice.

**Responsibility:**
- Customer (CUST)
- Student Services Department (SSD)
- Head / Director (H/D)
- Head of Student Services (HSS)

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| 1. | 1.1 Feedback and Compliments should be shared verbally at the main college reception or via email to: advice@chesterfield.ac.uk  
   Alternatively you can provide feedback through the College Website at the following link: https://www.chesterfield.ac.uk/contact-us | Within 2 working days | CUST |   |
|    | 1.2 Student Services will log the feedback / compliment onto the central system and send an acknowledgement email in the case of feedback received in writing | Within 2 working days | SSD |   |
|    | 1.3 Details of the feedback / compliment will be emailed directly to the individual or team via the relevant manager, copying in the Head / Director | Within 2 working days | SSD |   |
|    | 1.4 Heads / Directors will review the feedback / compliment and ensure that this information is used to inform best practice | Annually | H/D |   |
|    | 1.5 An annual report of feedback / compliments will be prepared for the College Corporation | | HSS |   |

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**Issue date:**

**Version No:** 2  
**Review date:** 23rd March 2018

**Monitoring Method:**
- Annual Corporation Report
- Termly Audit of Feedback / Compliments / Complaints Log
Family Procedure Reference – LEG02

Procedure 2: Making an Informal Complaint (Stage 1)

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for customers to raise any issues / causes for concern directly with the department concerned in order for a quick and satisfactory resolution to be sought.

Please note: where an informal complaint is being made around the provision of Higher Education, advice should also be sought from the Head of Higher Skills in order for responses to be compliant with the guidance of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Responsibility:
- Customer (CUST)
- All staff (AS)
- Customer Services Manager (CSM)

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<td>2.1 When a customer of the organisation is dissatisfied with any aspect of the service and care they receive, they should communicate this at the earliest opportunity with the relevant member of staff in order for this to be addressed and resolved. (if unsure of who to speak to ask at Student Services who will be happy to put you in touch with the relevant person).</td>
<td>Within 1 week of becoming dissatisfied</td>
<td>CUST</td>
<td>Internal Complaint form</td>
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<td>2.2 The member of staff dealing with the informal complaint should complete the internal complaint record via the following link: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/hv722qq">https://tinyurl.com/hv722qq</a> which will automatically send to reception for central logging. They should make every effort to resolve the informal complaint / area of dissatisfaction, seeking advice from their Line Manager as appropriate.</td>
<td>Within 2 working days</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3 The outcome of the informal complaint response should be communicated clearly to the customer and emailed to reception: <a href="mailto:reception@chesterfield.ac.uk">reception@chesterfield.ac.uk</a> in order for the complaints log to be updated. If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome, this should also be logged and the customer advised of the formal complaints procedure.</td>
<td>Within 1 working week</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Email communication</td>
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<td>2.4 The Customer Services Manager will monitor the</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>CSM</td>
<td>Complaints and Compliments</td>
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**Issued by:** Jo Down

**Issue date:**

**Version No:** 2

**Review date:** 23rd March 2018
# Procedure 3: Making a Formal Complaint (Stage 2)

**Purpose:** To provide a formal process for recognising and responding to formal complaints in order to resolve them effectively and in a timely manner.

Please note: where a formal complaint is being made around the provision of Higher Education, advice should also be sought from the Head of Higher Skills in order for responses to be compliant with the guidance of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

**Responsibility:**
- Complainant (C)
- Student Services Department (SSD)
- Head of Student Services (HSS)
- Head / Director (H/D)

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<td>3.</td>
<td>When Procedure 2 has not brought a satisfactory resolution, the customer can make a formal complaint in writing at the following link: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/gwzoxh4">https://tinyurl.com/gwzoxh4</a> which will automatically be received at: <a href="mailto:advice@chesterfield.ac.uk">advice@chesterfield.ac.uk</a> or by completing the attached complaints form and posting to: Head of Student Services, Chesterfield College, Infirmary Road, Chesterfield, S41 7NG detailing the nature of the complaint and what action has been taken so far to resolve the presenting issue.</td>
<td>Within 2 weeks of issue remaining unresolved</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Record of complaint</td>
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<td>Student Services will log the complaint onto the central system and send an acknowledgement email / letter to the complainant.</td>
<td>Sent within 2 working days</td>
<td>SSD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Complaint is assigned to the relevant Head / Director to conduct an investigation into the issues raised in order for a resolution to be agreed with the complainant.</td>
<td>Within 2 working days</td>
<td>HSS</td>
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<td>The Head / Director will conduct a full investigation within the timeframes for resolving complaints, keeping the complainant informed of any extension required in order to reach a conclusion, and should inform Student Services in order for the new timeframes to be logged and monitored. A written response should be prepared detailing the outcome of the investigation and any other action to be taken, and forwarded to Student Services for logging and sending out to the complainant.</td>
<td>Within 10 working days</td>
<td>H/D</td>
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3.5 The Head of Student Services will monitor the complaints and compliments log on a fortnightly basis and seek updates on formal complaints.

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<td>• Annual Corporation Report</td>
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| Issued by: | Jo Down |
| Issue date: | |
| Version No: | 2 |
| Review date: | 23rd March 2018 |
Procedure 4: Appealing against the outcome of a Formal Complaint (Stage 3)

Purpose: To provide a formal process for complainants to appeal against an organisational formal complaint response / outcome, in the event that not all of the evidence and relevant information has been taken into account at the formal complaint investigation stage, or that circumstances relating to the complaint and outcome have significantly changed.

Responsibility:
- Complainant (C)
- Principal / Deputy Principal (P/DP)

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<td>4.</td>
<td>If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of the complaint outlined in Procedure 3, they can write to the Principal / Chief Executive (address as noted in procedure 3), stating the reason for this and offering any new evidence for consideration as appropriate.</td>
<td>Within 7 working days of receiving written confirmation of formal complaint outcome</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>The Principal / Chief Executive or nominee (usually the Deputy Principal) will respond and any new information will be considered.</td>
<td>Within 5 working days</td>
<td>P/DP</td>
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<td>If the complainant is still dissatisfied and / or feels that there complaint has not been dealt with fairly and effectively, they should seek advice and assistance from the following bodies:</td>
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<td>For complaints relating to Further Education provision including Apprenticeships:</td>
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<td>Skills Funding Agency</td>
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<td>For complaints relating to Higher Education provision:</td>
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<td>Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)</td>
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Monitoring Method:

- Annual Corporation Report
- Termly Audit of Feedback / Compliments / Complaints Log
Appendices

Documentation

- A.1 - Formal Record of Complaint
- A.2 - Complaints Workflow
- A.3 - OIA Completion of Procedures Letter Template
A.1 – Record of Formal Complaint for postal communication

The Chesterfield College Group

Your complaint will be acknowledged and the relevant Manager dealing with the matter will normally respond within 10 working days. Please address this Record of Complaint to: Head of Student Services, Chesterfield College, Infirmary Road, Chesterfield, S41 7NG detailing the nature of the complaint and what action has been taken so far to resolve the presenting issue.

Email: 
Surname: 
First name(s): 
Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: 
Telephone no: 
Mobile no: 
Home address: 
Date: 
Existing student? If the complaint is in relation to the experiences of an existing student, please provide the students full name, DOB and/or student number:

Details of complaint: (Please continue on reverse):
A.3 – Complaints Workflow

Customer Complaint

- Informal
  - Appropriate member of staff should deal with complaint at source and aim to resolve informally. Details of the informal complaint to be logged with student services.
  - Resolved - Yes
    - End of process
  - Resolved - No
    - Customer to be directed to the informal complaints and compliments procedure

- Formal
  - Student Services log the complaint and send acknowledgement to complainant
  - Complaint is assigned to relevant Head/Director for investigation
  - Investigating manager informs complainant in writing of outcome and any further action
  - Resolved - Yes
    - End of process
  - Resolved - No
    - Complainant follows the appeal process and writes to the Principal/Chief Executive
    - Principal/Chief Executive or nominee investigates and provides a written response to complainant
    - Resolved - Yes
      - End of Process
    - Resolved - No
      - Complainant contacts external organisations as appropriate (see appeals procedure for guidance)
      - End Of process for the Chesterfield College Group
A.4 - OIA Completion of Procedures Letter Template

This template is for complaints closed on or after 9 July 2015.

Please note - the format may be adjusted to meet the individual circumstances of a complaint provided that the key points below are included.

Dear [Name of complainant],

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of [name of higher education provider] in relation to your complaint / appeal etc* regarding [please describe] have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your complaint / appeal etc* were [details]

The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your complaint / appeal etc was / were*: [brief summary of the complaint etc].

The final decision of [name of higher education provider] is* [detail] because [reasons].

The procedures / regulations applied were*: [details and date as supplied to the OIA’s electronic Regulations Bank].

[Name of provider] subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you may be able to apply for a review of your complaint / appeal etc* to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA on or before [insert date - e.g. if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 9 July 2015, this date should be 9 July 2016].

[Include here any factors of which the provider is aware which mean that it is particularly important for the student to bring the complaint promptly.]

You can fill in the OIA’s complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website. http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/oia-complaint-form.aspx. The OIA also publishes An Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students, which can be downloaded from http://oiahe.org.uk/media/42715/oia_intro_leaflet_16pp.pdf. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Complaint Form.
Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA’s website http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia.aspx. You may also wish to seek advice from the Students’ Union about taking your complaint to the OIA.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider’s internal procedures.

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]