

Complaints and Compliments Policy



Family:	Customer Service and Experience
Reference Code	CSE06
Line Manager Responsible:	Director of Marketing and Customer Experience
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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.
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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 One, with Heads/Directors taking full responsibility for investigating and resolving formal complaints at Stage Two.
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, Curriculum Manager, Work Based Tutor or Manager, Support Area Manager or Team Leader as well as notifying the Complaints Team. The organisation recognises a Stage One 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 an appropriate 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 Stage Two 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 One prior to making a Stage Two 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 Stage Two complaint, they should bring this to the College's attention in writing normally within ten working days of the issue arising, and following the procedure at Stage Two. 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 after the college's complaints procedure has been completed.

Implementation

The College will ensure that:

1. All compliments are acknowledged within one working day and shared with the appropriate members of staff as well as their line manager.
2. Select compliments are shared across the organisation in monthly updates.
3. Stage One complaints are acknowledged in writing within one working day of receipt, outlining what will happen next and the timeframes.
4. The complaint will be investigated and a written response provided within ten working days of the acknowledgement email.
5. If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome, this should be communicated within ten working days by contacting the complaints team: feedback@chesterfield.ac.uk. This will then be reviewed as a Stage Two (Formal) complaint.
6. Stage Two complaints are acknowledged in writing within one working day of receipt, outlining what will happen next and the timeframes.
7. The complaint will be investigated and a written response provided within fifteen working days of the acknowledgement email.
8. If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome, this should be communicated within ten working days by contacting the complaints team: feedback@chesterfield.ac.uk. This will then be reviewed as a Stage Three (Appeal) complaint.
9. Stage Three (Appeal) complaints are acknowledged within one working day of receipt, outlining what will happen next and the timeframes.

10. The complaint will be investigated and a written response provided within twenty working days of the acknowledgement email being sent out.
11. Appropriate action is taken by the relevant person within the organisation, and they will ensure that the complaint is dealt with objectively and sensitively.
12. 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.
13. Support in preparing a complaint in writing will be made available to students if required by the appropriate member of direct delivery or support staff, with any complaints being signed personally by the complainant prior to submission.

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 Complaints Team for logging via the central email: feedback@chesterfield.ac.uk
4. Formal complaints and compliments should be forwarded to the Complaints Team to enable them to be logged, acknowledged, and complaints allocated to the appropriate Head/Director to be fully investigated within appropriate timescales.
5. The Director of Marketing and Customer Experience will maintain overall responsibility for monitoring policy compliance along with analysing data linked to complaints and taking action as necessary to respond to patterns/trends and to negate impact upon the college reputation.
6. 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). The Head/Director will ensure the Complaints Team are notified of any correspondence relating to the complaint in order for this to be reviewed, saved to the file, and logged as resolved.
7. 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.
8. 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.

9. 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.
10. All feedback/compliments, informal and formal complaints, will be reviewed monthly by the Complaints Team, and fed back in a short report to the relevant members of the Senior Management Team. This will enable a departmental response in terms of identifiable patterns of good practice and areas for development.
11. The Director of Marketing and Customer Experience will ensure the full preparation of an annual complaints and compliments report for the College Corporation.

Monitoring of Implementation

The Director of Marketing and Customer Experience is responsible for ensuring a process is in place for logging of compliments, Stage One and Stage Two complaints upon receipt, and that a member of the College Management Team (CMT) takes responsibility for working with the Complaints Team to manage the operational aspects of policy compliance across the organisation. The Complaints Team consists of: The Director of Marketing and Customer Experience, Senior Marketing Officer and Management Assistant.

The college aims to celebrate success stories within the business and invites external stakeholders, businesses, staff and students to share these success stories whenever possible. When a compliment is submitted via compliments@chesterfield.ac.uk this will be logged on a central database, before being shared with staff. The stakeholder submitting the compliment will be contacted within two working days of a compliment being submitted with a response from compliments@chesterfield.ac.uk thanking them for sharing the compliment. All compliments will be shared with appropriate members of staff and their line managers and selected compliments will be shared across the organisation in monthly updates.

Following receipt of a Stage Two complaint the Director of Marketing and Customer Experience will be informed along with the relevant CMT representative who will ensure a full investigation takes place, and that appropriate and timely communication is maintained with the complainant in line with the policy, which should remain open and transparent.

Any complaints relating to an allegation against a member of staff will be passed to Human Resources for review before being either passed to the Safeguarding Team for investigation, investigated by Human Resources or investigated through the complaints procedure.

The Complaints Team will feedback to the Director of Marketing and Customer Experience and the Principal on a monthly basis to ensure that the Senior 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 Stage Two 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 four of this policy.

The College's complaints procedure will be reviewed every three years, taking into account any feedback received via opinion surveys and focus groups, and in line with customer excellence practices.

Associated Information and Guidance

- Skills Funding Agency Procedure for dealing with complaints about providers of education and training <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-complaints-procedure-about-providers>
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers-and-good-practice/good-practice-framework.aspx>
- OIA Completion of Procedures Letter <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers-and-good-practice/completion-of-procedures-letter.aspx>
- Consumer Rights Act <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/15/contents/enacted>
- Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code for Higher Education <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>
- Data Protection Act <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act>

Related College Policies and Documents

Data Protection Policy – INF03

The Chesterfield Way Student Handbook – TLA02

Staff Disciplinary Procedure – PHR20