

Preston's College Student Complaint Policy and Procedure

Policy Owner:	Learner Experience
Effective Date:	1 January 2016
Next Review:	31 December 2019
Officer with Responsibility for Review:	Head of Learner Experience
Reference and Resources:	Complaint Discipline Procedure Complaint Code of Conduct Academic Misconduct Procedure Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure Managing Performance Improvement Policy and Procedure

Note: The receipt of complaints and responses to them will be monitored. As part of this process, the College may contact to seek your views on how your complaint was handled. **If you do not wish to be contacted**, please tick this box

Policy

Preston's College is committed to providing high quality education and other services to its complainants. Our aim is to provide a supportive environment including academic, welfare and recreational services and to be responsive to concerns when they are raised.

Feedback is welcomed as part of the College's approach to the development and enhancement of the quality of its services. There are many local routes whereby concerns and issues can be raised and addressed and we encourage all to make full use of these routes. In particular, individuals should ensure they are familiar with the quality assurance procedures that exist within the College.

The College recognises that there may be occasions when individuals have cause for complaint about the services received, when this happens, the Complaints Procedure is intended to provide an accessible, fair and straightforward system which ensures an effective, prompt and appropriate response.

The College aims to handle complaints in a way that:

- Encourages informal conciliation and facilitates early resolution;
- Ensures a full and fair investigation;
- Addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress;
- Provides a prompt resolution within established timescales;
- Positive actions can be taken to continuously improve services.

It is hoped that all users of the College's services have a positive and rewarding experience at the. If, however, concerns are brought to our attention, individuals can be assured that they will be treated in a serious and constructive manner and that every effort will be made to ensure a satisfactory resolution.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about any programme of study or related facility or any other service provided by the College, which has materially affected the complainant's experience at the College.

This procedure also covers complaints made against the College Governing Body/Corporation Board.

All complaints must be channelled to Student Services, who will ensure they are handled in accordance with the policy.

This Procedure does not apply where there are separate mechanisms in place:

- *Appeals Against Assessment Board Decisions - contact the Chair of the Assessment Board;
- Staff Grievances - contact Human Resources;
- Freedom of Information or Data Protection - contact Information and Administration Services.

*This Procedure will not be used for matters relating to assessment performance and academic judgement, except where there is a complaint about a service provided which has to be resolved before an appeal decision can be made. The College reserves the right to reclassify a complaint as an academic appeal or vice versa, if the submission falls properly within the remit of one procedure rather than the other.

Special Cases

In the event of a complaint being made against a member of the Directorate or the College Board, all complaints should be in writing and addressed to the Principal. Any complaint against the Principal should be in writing and addressed to the Clerk to the College Board, who will determine how to deal with the complaint.

Who can complain?

The complaints procedure is open to all people served by the College, to include parents, customers, employers, staff, neighbours and community members. Former learners may complain within a reasonable time period, normally 3 calendar months from leaving the College.

Matters of concern may be raised individually or collectively and complainants should feel assured that they will not encounter any disadvantage having lodged a complaint in good faith.

Where complaints are raised collectively, the complaint should include a signed statement from all parties confirming that they have been materially affected by the alleged incident and authorising the College to correspond with a single named spokesperson.

Learners registered for an award at a partner university who are dissatisfied with the provision, should pursue their complaint in accordance with the College's procedure in the first instance. In the event of dissatisfaction upon exhaustion of the College's procedure, learners will be entitled to submit their complaint to the respective university under stage 3 of this Procedure within 15 working days of the date of the College's final response.

Anonymous or third party complaints will not be dealt with under this Procedure. It is at the discretion of the College as to how these are handled.

Separate procedures apply in relation to allegations against staff of a safeguarding nature. If you feel worried about yourself or others, then you can talk to your Tutor, Safeguarding Officer or the Designated Safeguarding Officer, Tina Southworth. Tina is based in Student Services and her contact details are as follows: 01772 225658 | 07919 628570 | tsouthworth@preston.ac.uk. You can also click on the Safeguarding Alert button on the Student Home Page on the College Intranet. This will send a confidential message to Tina. Further information can be obtained from the on-line student Handbook at <http://ehandbook.preston.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=5>

Where there is reason to believe that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, the matter will be referred to the Head of Learner Experience who may decide to reject the complaint without full consideration of its merits. Reasons will be given as to why the complaint is considered to be an abuse of process. You should also note appendix 1 which sets out the College's approach when dealing with unacceptable behaviour by a complainant.

Advice and Support

Advice on the scope and operation of this Procedure may be obtained from Student Services, located in the Earnshaw building.

Each School has a Head of School and Programme Team Leaders whose roles are to help complainants to resolve any issue(s), and there is a College Counselling Service.

Complainants may seek independent advice and support.

Where a complainant has declared a disability to the College, all endeavours will be made to ensure that information is available in appropriate formats and reasonable adjustments are made to the proceedings and facilities to accommodate their needs.

All stages of this Procedure are internal proceedings. These proceedings are intended to be fair and to comply with the rules of natural justice, and should not be adversarial or overly legalistic. There is no need for anyone to have formal legal representation. Legal representation during complaint hearings is not permitted, unless in exceptional cases where it must be agreed in advance.

Anyone who lodges a complaint or against whom a complaint is made will be entitled to be accompanied by a person of their choosing at any stage in the Procedure. Complainants may choose to be accompanied by a friend or parent/carer. Complainants who lodge a complaint may not be represented in absentia.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be preserved during the investigation of a complaint to safeguard the interests of everyone concerned unless disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint. The College expects that all parties will respect the confidentiality of the process.

Any individual about whom a complaint is made will have the right to be informed of the fact and nature of the complaint by their line manager.

Actions

In the case of all complaints, the College seeks to ensure that appropriate and reasonable action is taken. Where a complaint is found to be justified, any appropriate remedial action will be notified as

part of the decision. If a complaint is found to be not justified at any stage, the reasons for the decision will be communicated, together with details of any further recourse that is available via this Procedure or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

Investigations will normally be conducted during main term time.

Time Limits

Complaints should be raised as early as possible, since any delay may affect the College's ability to properly investigate the complaint or provide an appropriate remedy.

Stage 1

Complaints should be raised with the relevant member of staff immediately where possible, and normally not later than 10 working days after the incident giving rise to the complaint.

Stage 2

Stage 2 complaints should be lodged within 15 working days of the Stage 1 response or within 15 working days of the incident giving rise to the complaint.

Stage 3

Stage 3 complaints should be lodged within 15 working days of the Stage 2 response from the College or the final response from the partner college.

Former Students

Former students may complain within a reasonable time period. Normally, this will be within 3 calendar months of leaving the College.

The College will exercise discretion where there is good reason for a complaint to be submitted outside these time limits.

It is the College's aim that all complaints are dealt with in a timely manner. Complainants will be informed if there are likely to be any delays in the process.

Monitoring the Process

In order that the College can improve services to complainants, the receipt of formal [stage 2 and 3] complaints and responses will be monitored. A report on the outcome of the monitoring process will be made monthly and annually to ELT and College Governors. This will enable the College to continuously improve its services and ensure an inclusive, consistent and constructive approach to complaints. The effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure will also be kept under review and, where appropriate, changes will be made.

P R O C E D U R E

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis and close to their point of origin. However, the College recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where this is not appropriate e.g. where the issues are complex and will require detailed investigation e.g. where a complaint relates to the conduct of staff members or covers a number of different incidents. In these circumstances, a formal complaint should normally be made within 15 working days of the alleged incident or concern.

Initial contact should normally, therefore, be made with the relevant member of staff who is responsible for dealing on a day-to-day basis with the matter being complained about. For example, if the complaint refers to an academic matter, the first point of contact should normally be the teacher, Complainant Manager, Programme Team Leader or Head of School. A complaint may also be informally raised with another senior member of staff. Initial contact can also be by a spokesperson on behalf of a group including by the Learner Voice (and at this stage of the procedure would not require a signed statement from the individuals concerned).

In order that a complaint can be dealt with effectively and efficiently, it must be drawn to the attention of the relevant member of staff immediately where possible and normally not later than 15 working days after the incident giving rise to the complaint.

At this stage, the relevant member of staff will discuss the complaint with you and other persons involved, to determine whether it can be resolved without recourse to more formal procedures.

A verbal, and sometimes written, record of the outcome will normally be provided to you. This will be notified to the Head of School, where the effectiveness of the School/Service could be improved, and may also be referred to in the event that the complaint is progressed to stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage

If, having pursued the matter informally, you have reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction, you may pursue the matter through the formal stage within 15 working days of the informal response being given.

There may be circumstances where it is appropriate to progress directly to the formal stage 2, in particular, where the issues are complex and will require detailed investigation e.g. where a complaint relates to the conduct of staff members or covers a number of different incidents. In these circumstances, a formal complaint should normally be made within 15 working days of the alleged incident or concern.

Your complaint should be submitted in writing Student Services, using the Stage 2 Complaint Form at the back of this booklet. Where complaints are raised collectively at this stage, the complaint should include a signed statement from all parties confirming that they have been materially affected by the alleged incident and authorising the College to correspond with a single named spokesperson.

The Complaint Form requires details of: the nature of the complaint; the informal steps taken to resolve it (or the reasons why informal steps have not been taken) and a statement as to why you remain dissatisfied; and the reasonable steps that you would wish to see taken to resolve the

matter. Appropriate evidence should be appended e.g. copies of relevant letters, e-mails, signed witness statements and any other supporting documentation.

Student Services will acknowledge your complaint within three working days and assign an appropriate manager to deal with it.

The manager will investigate the complaint and may request a meeting with you to discuss the matter. The manager will notify you in writing of his or her conclusions and of any action the School or Service intends to take.

It is the College's aim that most complaints dealt with under this stage will be resolved within 20 working days. You will be informed if there is likely to be any delay in the process.

All formal complaints and responses will be monitored by Student Services.

Stage 3 – Final Stage

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2, you may submit a request for a review of the decision to Student Services under stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

Stage 3 may only be invoked where the preceding stage 2 has been. No new complaints may be introduced at stage 3.

A request for a review should be submitted to the Complaint Liaison Officer using the Stage 3 Complaint Form within 15 working days of the date of the stage 2 response and must be based on one (or more) of the following grounds:

- a. that new evidence or circumstances have become known, which the complainant could not have reasonably made known at the time of the stage 2 complaint;
- b. that the stage 2 investigation was not conducted fairly and/or in accordance with due process, and this materially affected the outcome;
- c. that the decision and outcome of the stage 2 complaint were manifestly unreasonable in the light of the evidence provided.

The Stage 3 Complaint Form also requires details of: the nature of the complaint; the steps already taken to resolve it and a statement as to why you remain dissatisfied; and the reasonable steps that you would wish to see taken to resolve the matter. Appropriate evidence should be appended e.g. copies of relevant letters, e-mails, signed witness statements and any other supporting documentation.

Student Services will acknowledge receipt of the request for a review within three working days appoint a Complaint Appeal Manager who has not been previously associated with the complaint.

The Appeal Manager will review the case and may request further information from the complainant and/or the School/Service, and will decide on the appropriate action of:

- i. dismissing the request for a review, in which case the reasons for the decision will be communicated. With respect to Higher Education complaints, details of how to access the partner universities complaints procedure or details of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, will be communicated as appropriate, or

- ii. convening a hearing to hear the case by the complainant and the response by the appropriate manager

The Appeal Manager will aim to communicate this decision in writing within 15 working days of the receipt of the request for review.

If the Appeal Manager decides to proceed with a hearing, it will aim to convene the hearing within a further 15 working days. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Notes for Guidance on the Conduct of a Stage 3 hearing, see appendix 3.

Stage 3 is a review of the complaint to determine whether it is justified in full or in part and the School/Service should implement recommendations and whether the School/Service has conducted a fair investigation and provided a reasonable response or resolution at stage 2.

The decision and outcome of the stage 3 complaint will be communicated by the Appeal Manager to the complainant and the relevant manager in writing, normally within 5 working days of the hearing.

Complainants, other than those studying Higher Education courses, will be notified that they have exhausted the College's internal complaints procedure and that if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome will need to seek advice externally to the College.

Independent Review for Higher Education Students Only

A Completion of Procedures letter or referral to a partner university's procedure, will be issued within 10 working days of the decision and outcome of the stage 3 complaint, or the decision of the Appeal Manager to dismiss the stage 3 complaint.

Higher Education students studying one of Preston's College's **Higher Education Institution** accredited courses, will be made aware that you have now exhausted Preston's College's complaints procedure. Should you wish to appeal the College's decision, you will need to follow the complaints procedure of the relevant HEI, details of which can be found on your MyCourse site.

Higher Education students studying one of Preston's College's **Edexcel** accredited courses will be informed that in the event of dissatisfaction with the stage 3 outcome, you are entitled to pursue the matter further by submitting a Scheme Application form to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

Preston's College subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint you may be able to apply for a review of your complaint 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 the Stage 3 letter.

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.

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.

Further Information

The Complaint Forms for all stage 2 and stage 3 complaints are attached at appendices 1 and 2. Additional copies are available at Student Services, on the eHandbook <http://ehandbook.preston.ac.uk/> or via the College's website, <http://www.preston.ac.uk/>

The Complaint Forms can also be completed on-line for submission to Student Services.

In the event of any uncertainty about the scope of this Procedure or who to contact in the first instance, please visit or contact Student Services

Customer Relations
Student Services
Preston's College
St Vincents Road
Fulwood
Preston PR2 8UR

Tel: 01772 225656
E-mail: studentservices@preston.ac.uk

Please contact Student Services if you require a copy of the Complaints Procedure in an alternative format or if you have difficulty in completing the Complaint Form.

This Complaints Procedure has been approved by the College's Quality and Standards Committee and the College Management Team and forms part of the College's overall quality assurance framework.

Equality Impact Assessment and Monitoring

The operation of this policy will be monitored for its impact on different staff groups in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This annual review will enable the College to assess whether any differences have an adverse impact on a particular group, such that further action would be required

Appendices

Appendix 1	Complaint Form: Stage 2
Appendix 2	Complaint Form: Stage 3
Appendix 3	Notes for Guidance on a Stage 3 Complaint Hearing
Appendix 4	Policy on Unacceptable Complainant Behaviour



Complaint Form

(for all Stage 2 Complaints)

A Stage 2 complaint form should be completed:

- i. if, having pursued the matter informally, you feel there are reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction; or
- ii. if there are circumstances where it is appropriate to progress directly to stage 2 (see the Complaints Procedure).

Section A

Full Name
ID Number (if applicable)

.....
.....

School of Study

.....

Course
Contact Email
Address

.....

Year of Study

Contact Address

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.....

Daytime telephone no.

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Section B

Summary of the key points of your complaint:

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Summary of the steps already taken to address your complaint (or the reasons why informal steps have not been taken):

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Reasonable steps you would wish to see taken to resolve your complaint:

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Signed: **Dated:**

Please submit the following documents with this form:

- **Copies of relevant letters, e-mails, notes and other supporting documentation**
- **A list of the key events in date order**

Completed forms should be submitted to:

Customer Relations
Student Services
Preston's College
St Vincents Road
Fulwood
Preston PR2 8UR

E-mail: studentservices@preston.ac.uk

Stage 3 Complaint Appeal Form

Guidance Notes for applicants

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2, complete this appeal form to request a review of the decision of the complaint manager under stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure. A request for appeal must be submitted to the Student Services within 15 working days of the date of the stage 2 response.

The request for an appeal must state the grounds on which the appeal is sought and should be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence.

The Complaints Review Panel will meet in closed session initially, to determine whether there are grounds for appeal.

Section A

First Name Surname

ID Number (if applicable)

Course Title Year of study.....

School

Contact e-mail address

Current Address

.....

Daytime ☎

Section B

The grounds for appeal against the stage 2 decision are detailed below. Please tick which ground(s) you wish to seek a review of the stage 2 outcome (Ground a, b or c detailed above) and state the reasons why on the following page:

- a) that new evidence or circumstances have become known, which the complainant could not have reasonably made known at the time of the stage 2 complaint;
- b) that the stage 2 investigation as not conducted fairly and/or in accordance with due process, and this materially affected the outcome;
- c) that the decision and outcome of the stage 2 complaint were manifestly unreasonable in the light of the evidence provided.

Note: The receipt of complaints and responses to them will be monitored. As part of this process, the College may contact you to seek your views on how your complaint was handled. **If you do not wish to be contacted**, please tick this box

Section C

Complainant's Case:

Please note that the purpose of stage 3 is to REVIEW the decision made at stage 2 - no NEW complaints can be introduced at stage 3.

Please provide a brief summary of the nature of your complaint and the steps already taken to resolve it:

Reason for Appeal: *(Please use additional sheets if necessary)*

Please state the reasonable steps you would like to see taken to resolve your complaint:

Please submit this form along with:

- a list of key events in date order
- all supporting evidence, e.g. copies of relevant emails, letters, notes etc.

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

PRESTON'S COLLEGE

Notes for Guidance on the Conduct of a Stage 3 Appeal

1. Purpose

The purpose of an appeal is to review the decision taken by the Manager (or nominee) at Stage 2. This will involve hearing the case by the Complainant and the response from the Stage 2 Manager.

The Appeal Manager will have due regard for previous attempts to resolve the complaint and shall determine whether the complaint is justified in whole or in part and whether the School/Service has provided a reasonable response or resolution.

2. The Complaints Appeal Meeting

The Appeal Manager will chair a meeting with the complainant and Stage 2 complaint manager. An administrator will also be present at the meeting to take minutes.

The Appeal Manager should be independent and must not have been previously associated with the complaint.

3. Notice of a Stage 3 Complaint Hearing

If the Appeal Manager decides to proceed with a hearing, the Complainant will be given 15 days' notice of the hearing date and will be notified of his/her right to be accompanied by a friend, colleague or parent/carer in the case of students aged under 18.

The Complainant will be invited to submit a one page summary/chronology of the complaint and any documents on which he or she relies, including witness statements, by no less than 7 days before the hearing. The Stage 2 complaints manager will then compile a bundle of all documents generated by the previous stages of the Complaints Procedure, and any additional documents upon which the manager seeks to rely, including a report on the conduct of stage 2 investigation and the reason for his/her decision and witness statements from witnesses or staff named in the complaint. Student Services will circulate copies of all documentation to the Panel and both parties not less than 3 days before the hearing.

Where the complaint is about a member of staff, the response of the member of staff may be incorporated in the response of the manager.

4. Conduct of a Stage 3 Complaint Hearing

The following procedure will normally apply at a stage 3 hearing:

- (i) The Chair will invite all those present to introduce themselves and will explain the purpose of the hearing.

- (ii) The Complainant (or representative) will present the complaint.
- (iii) The Panel and Manager will have the opportunity to question the Complainant.
- (iv) The Manager will present the response.
- (v) The Panel and the Complainant (or representative) will have the opportunity to question the Manager.
- (vi) The Panel may ask questions of either party at any stage during the hearing.
- (vii) Summing up by the Complainant (or representative).
- (viii) Summing up by the Manager
- (ix) The Panel may, at its discretion, depart from the normal procedure, if it appears to be in the interest of fairness to do so.
- (x) The Panel may: retire to consider its decision; or seek further information; and/or adjourn to a later date.

Student Services will act as advisor to the Panel.

5. Documentation and Witnesses

The Panel will receive copies of all documents generated by the previous stages of the Complaints Procedure. The Panel may request additional documentation from either party either before or at the hearing.

Otherwise additional documentary evidence, other than that which was submitted by the Complainant and that included in the bundle prepared by the Manager under paragraph 3 above, will be admitted only at the discretion of the Panel.

The Complainant and the Manager are entitled to submit any statements by witnesses in writing. Witnesses may be invited to give evidence in person at the discretion of the Panel.

6. Conclusion

The Panel may decide:

- (i) that the complaint is justified in full or in part and that the School/Service should implement recommendations; or
- (ii) that the School/Service has no case to answer and has provided a reasonable response or resolution at Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

The Panel may also recommend any changes to the College policies and procedures.

Any conclusions or recommendations will be communicated by the Chair of the Panel to the Complainant and the Manager in writing, normally within 10 working days of the hearing.

The Complainant will also be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter informing them of their right of recourse to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education within twelve months, if applicable.

Policy on Unacceptable Complainant Behaviour

1. This Policy sets out the College's approach to the relatively few complainants whose actions or behaviour it considers to be unacceptable. The term complainant includes any person acting on behalf of a complainant or who contacts the College in connection with a complaint. The principles set out in the Policy also apply to the College's dealings with people other than complainants.
2. The College understands that making a complaint can be a stressful experience for complainants, however, we also have a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of our staff.
3. The College is committed to dealing with all complainants fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service, but we do not expect staff to tolerate behaviour which we consider to be unacceptable, for example, any communication which is:
 - abusive, offensive, defamatory or distressing;
 - aggressive, threatening, coercive or intimidating;
 - unreasonably persistent or demanding.
4. The College will take action to protect staff from such behaviour, and this may include action under this policy.
5. Complainants can contact the College by letter, e-mail or telephone. We cannot correspond with anyone who is not confirmed in writing as the representative of the complainant.
6. When we consider that the behaviour of a complainant is unacceptable, we will tell them why we find their behaviour unacceptable and we will ask them to change it. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, we will take action to restrict their contact in connection with the complaint.
7. The decision to restrict access will be taken by the Head of Learner Experience, with advice from the College Solicitor where appropriate. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The College will take account of any reasonable adjustments as a consequence of any declared disability. The options which will be considered are:
 - asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct;
 - requesting contact in a particular form e.g. letters only;
 - requiring contact to take place with a named person;
 - restricting telephone calls to specified days and times;
 - asking the complainant to appoint a representative to correspond with us;
 - in exceptional circumstances, invoking the procedures for malicious or vexatious complaints as outlined below.
8. We will write to tell the complainant why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

9. Where a complainant behaves unacceptably during a telephone conversation, we may as a last resort terminate the call.
10. Where a complainant continues to behave in a way which we consider to be unacceptable, we may decide to terminate contact with them. This may mean that we will not continue with the handling of their complaint.
11. Where the behaviour threatens the safety and welfare of College staff and/or complainants, we will consider other options, including suspension from the campus, reporting the matter to the police, and/or taking other legal action.
12. This Policy and its implementation will be reviewed in line with the Complaints Policy and Procedure

Definitions:

Vexatious Complaints

A complaint may be considered to be vexatious when it may or may not be the latest in a series of requests and it:

- clearly does not have any serious purpose or value;
- is designed to cause disruption or annoyance, or gives rise to disproportionate inconvenience or expense;
- has the effect of harassing the College and/or its staff;
- can otherwise fairly be characterised as obsessive or manifestly unreasonable.

Frivolous Complaints

A complaint may be considered to be frivolous where:

- it is clear that is not serious or sensible in content, attitude or behaviour;
- there is an absence of clear desire for a sensible or reasonable form of redress.

Malicious Complaints

A complaint may be considered to be malicious where:

- there is evidence of intention to do harm or mischief;
- it is reasonable to assume that the complainant intended to do harm or mischief;
- malice may be implied where e.g. it is clear that no redress is sought.

Unsubstantiated Complaints

A complaint may be considered to be unsubstantiated where:

- after investigation of the complaint where during the course of which the complainant was given full opportunity to provide evidence in support of the complaint, no prima facie evidence has been provided to the College.

The decision to deem a complaint as vexatious, frivolous, malicious or unsubstantiated will be taken by the Head of Learner Experience (or nominee), with advice from the College Solicitor where appropriate. The decision will be given in writing with associated summary reasons. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued at the same time, as applicable.

Complaints Management and Service Standards

Student Services will provide a courteous, efficient and professional support services for the College. Student Services is often the first point of contact with service users and as such can shape the way the College is viewed.

The College's definition of a complaint is broad-based and can be interpreted as *'any written or spoken expression of dissatisfaction from our customers in connection with the service provided by the College.'*

The College will treat complaints seriously and will accurately record complaints received from our customers. The College will deal with all complaints promptly, in accordance with the College's Complaints Procedure, and will learn from complaints by taking action to improve performance and services.

Student Services is responsible for handling of complaints, whilst all College staff are responsible for ensuring a positive customer experience. To enable us to be effective, we set ourselves a range of Service Standards which we strive to meet. We will also monitor our success in achieving these standards and maintain the corporate image of the College when dealing with complaints, ensuring the College is not compromised legally.

Service Standards

1. All complaints – whether made in person, by email or by telephone, will be courteously and politely handled.
2. All complaints received by mail or email will be acknowledged within 3 working days during term time.
3. All telephone calls will be answered promptly and messages taken where staff are not available.
4. Student Services will take ownership of the complaint and ensure that customers are not subject to non-customer friendly systems such as being passed from one department to another.
5. All complaints will be fully investigated.
6. Student Services will manage complaints in accordance with the complaints procedure, notifying the complainant of any delays and the reasons why.
7. We will use plain language and no jargon.
8. If the complainant disagrees with the outcome of their complaint, an Appeal will be undertaken upon receipt of a Stage 3 Complaint Form.
9. Student Services will compile monthly and annual complaints reports, reporting to the College Management Team and Board of Governors.
10. We will pursue equal opportunities in all activities.
11. Complainants will be informed when the College's procedure has been exhausted and what options are available to them.