



Title	Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure
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Please contact The College if you require a copy of this Policy in an alternative format.

1. Policy Statement

York College welcomes compliments, comments and complaints from students, apprentices, parents, carers, employers, staff and members of the public. Feedback helps us recognise good practice, improve services and maintain high standards across the College.

The College is committed to ensuring that:

- Compliments are acknowledged and shared appropriately.
- Comments and suggestions are considered and used to inform improvement.
- Complaints are handled fairly, consistently, proportionately and promptly.
- Individuals raising concerns are treated with respect and are not disadvantaged for doing so.
- Investigations are conducted objectively and confidentially.
- Lessons learned are used to improve services, policies and practices.

The College seeks to resolve concerns informally wherever possible. Where this is not possible, a formal complaints process will be followed.

2. Definitions

Compliment

An expression of praise, recognition or appreciation regarding the College, its staff, students or services.

Comment

Feedback, suggestion or observation about the College that does not require formal investigation.

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction regarding a service, action, decision or omission by the College where the individual seeks a response and/or resolution.

3. Scope

The policy applies to:

- Prospective students and apprentices.
- Current students and apprentices.
- Former students and apprentices.
- Parents and carers.
- Employer partners.
- Members of the public where there is a significant and legitimate interest.

The policy covers complaints relating to:

- Teaching, learning and support services.
- Customer service.

- Communication.
- College facilities and resources.
- Administrative processes.
- Conduct of staff, students or apprentices where appropriate.

4. Matters Excluded from this Policy

This policy does not apply to:

- Academic appeals relating to assessment decisions, awards or progression.
- Matters governed by the Behaviour Management Policy.
- Staff grievances and employment matters.

5. Time Limits

Complaints should normally be submitted:

- Within two calendar months of the incident occurring; or
- Within two calendar months of the final incident in a series of related incidents; or
- Within two calendar months of the end of a course or apprenticeship programme.

The College reserves the right not to investigate complaints submitted outside these timescales unless exceptional circumstances exist.

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled in accordance with UK GDPR and Data Protection legislation. Information will only be shared with those who need it to investigate and resolve the matter. The College may be unable to provide detailed information about disciplinary action or outcomes involving staff, students or apprentices due to confidentiality obligations.

7. Third-Party Complaints and Consent

The College expects complaints to be submitted by the individual directly affected wherever possible.

Students and Apprentices Aged 18 and Over

Complaints must be submitted by the student or apprentice themselves.

Students and Apprentices Under 18

Students and apprentices should be encouraged to raise concerns themselves wherever possible.

Where a parent, carer or employer submits a complaint on behalf of a student or apprentice, the College will seek consent from the individual before investigating and responding. Typically, communication will only be with the named parental contact recorded on the college systems.

Students with an EHCP

For students and apprentices with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the College may accept third-party involvement up to the age of 25 where appropriate. Consent from the student will still be required.

8. Anonymous, Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated unless they:

- Raise serious safeguarding concerns;
- Indicate significant risk to individuals; or
- Suggest serious breaches of policy or legislation.

The College reserves the right not to investigate complaints that are:

- Malicious;
- Vexatious;
- Repetitive;
- Abusive; or
- Submitted using offensive, discriminatory or threatening language.

The College may require clarification where a complaint is unclear, contains factual inaccuracies, or does not appear to represent the complainant's genuine concerns.

9. Governance and Responsibility

The Director of Quality has overall responsibility for:

- Oversight of this policy.
- Appeal Reviews.
- Monitoring trends and themes.
- Reporting outcomes and improvements to senior leaders and governors, including:
 - Complaint volumes.
 - Themes.
 - Outcomes.
 - Lessons learned.
 - Response time compliance.

The College Leadership and Administrative Support Team will administer the process and maintain records, overseen by the Executive Assistant.

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure

1. Submitting Feedback

Compliments, comments and complaints should normally be submitted using the College's designated online form available on:

- The College website.
- Student SharePoint.

Where an individual cannot access the form, they should contact the College Leadership and Administrative Support Team. To arrange an alternative way to submit their feedback. The form can also be used to record any reasonable adjustments that are required for any formal complaint process.

2. Compliments

Upon receipt:

- Compliments will be recorded.
- Relevant staff, students or apprentices will be informed.
- Managers will be notified where appropriate.
- Themes and examples of excellent practice may be shared across the College.

3. Comments

Comments and suggestions will be reviewed and, where appropriate:

- Referred to the relevant manager.
- Used to inform service improvement.
- Responded to where a response has been requested.

Where repeated comments indicate a pattern of concern, the Director of Quality may initiate further review or investigation.

4. Informal Resolution

The College expects concerns to be raised with the relevant department or staff member first wherever reasonable.

Examples may include:

- Discussion with a tutor.
- Contact with a curriculum and standards manager.
- Communication with the relevant professional services area.

Many concerns can be resolved quickly without requiring a formal investigation.

This expectation will not apply where the complaint concerns safeguarding, harassment, discrimination, bullying, serious misconduct, or where the complainant could reasonably feel uncomfortable approaching the staff member concerned.

5. Initial Review of a Formal Complaint

Following receipt of a submission, the Executive Assistant will review the information and determine whether it should:

a) Be Recorded as a Comment

Where the matter does not meet the definition or scope of a complaint.

b) Remain at Informal Resolution Stage

Where further local resolution should reasonably be attempted.

c) Progress as a Formal Complaint

Where a formal investigation is necessary.

The complainant will normally be informed of the outcome of the initial review within **five working days**.

6. Formal Investigation

Where a formal complaint is accepted:

- An investigating manager, from the College Leadership Team, will be appointed.
- Relevant evidence will be gathered.
- Individuals involved may be interviewed.
- Records and documentation may be reviewed.

The investigation will seek to establish:

- What happened.
- Whether procedures were followed.
- Whether service standards were met.
- What action, if any, is required.

A written response will normally be issued within **20 working days** of receipt of the formal complaint.

Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of the reason and revised timescale.

7. Delayed Investigations

The College may pause or delay a complaint investigation where there is an ongoing:

- Safeguarding investigation.
- Disciplinary process.

- Criminal investigation.
- Legal proceeding.

The complainant will be informed of the reason for any delay.

8. Communication During Investigations

Once a formal investigation has commenced, communication will normally be coordinated through the College Leadership and Administrative Support Team to ensure consistency and accurate record keeping, unless otherwise agreed.

9. Appeal Stage

A complainant may appeal only on one or both of the following grounds:

1. The complaint was not investigated in accordance with this policy.
2. Relevant evidence available at the time of the investigation was not considered.

Appeals cannot be made solely because the complainant disagrees with the outcome.

Appeals must:

- Be submitted in writing to the Director of Quality.
- Be received within ten working days of the outcome letter.
- Clearly state the grounds of appeal.

10. Appeal Review

Appeals will be reviewed by the Director of Quality unless they have had significant prior involvement in the complaint. Where this is the case, the appeal will be considered by another member of the Strategic Leadership Team ((SLT).

If accepted, the Director of Quality (or other member of SLT) will undertake either:

- A desk-based review; or
- A review meeting with the complainant.

A written appeal outcome will normally be issued within **20 working days**.

The appeal decision is final and concludes the College's internal procedures. No further investigation will take place or correspondence on the same matter be entered into on conclusion of the appeal review.

11. Completion of Procedures

Following conclusion of the appeal stage, the College will issue a **Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter** where applicable.

This letter confirms that internal procedures have been exhausted and provides information about any relevant external review routes. This letter will only be issued on completion of the appeal review.

For Higher Education provision, complaints may subsequently be considered by:

- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA); and/or
- The Open University (OU) where the programme is validated through the OU.