

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS PROCEDURE

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Our aim at Oaklands College is to provide you with an outstanding service and we welcome feedback from students, parents, guardian, employers and members of the public about the services we provide as a College. However, we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong, and we would like to know how we can always improve our services.
- 1.2 The Complaints Procedure enables stakeholders who have concerns and/or complaints to have them addressed in the interests of continually improving the service we offer. Through the Complaints Procedure, the College seeks to provide an accessible, fair and straightforward system which enables individuals to raise concerns and which ensures an effective, timely and appropriate response.
- 1.3 This procedure can be used by all stakeholders of the College who may be students, employers, sponsors, partner organisations, neighbours, visitors and any other members of the community served by the College.
- 1.4 Compliments let the college know when stakeholders are happy with a College service and tell us when something is working well. The good practice can then be shared with other college services.

2. Scope of this policy:

- 2.1 This policy applies to all stakeholders of Oaklands College
- 2.2 A complaint is defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more stakeholders about the College’s action(s) or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College”
- 2.3 This procedure will be used for all complaints relating to any aspect of the College’s services except:
 - Academic appeals, including marking or assessment decisions – instead please use the College’s [Assessment Appeal Procedure](#)
 - Complaints about bullying/harassment by staff of other staff– these will be dealt with under grievance procedures by the HR department.
 - Complaints about bullying/harassment by staff of students – this would be dealt with under our safeguarding procedures
 - Whistleblowing complaints – these will be dealt with under whistleblowing procedures by the HR department.
 - *Complaints arising from disciplinary policy - instead, please see the [staff disciplinary policy](#), [the senior staff disciplinary policy](#) or the [student behavioural policy](#)*
 - *Complaints arising from the 42 day process*
 - *Complaints about criminal convictions decisions – staff should instead consult the [disclosure of criminal convictions procedures](#)*
 - *Complaints about admissions – instead, please refer to the [admissions policy](#)*
 - **Complaints against Corporation Members of Clerk** Complaints received against the Corporation shall be made, in the first instance, to the Clerk. Complaints to any

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employee or member shall be referred immediately to the Clerk without discussion or discourse. The Clerk shall write to the complainant within 5 working days, from receipt or referral, and detail actions to investigate the matter.

- **Complaints against the Clerk** shall be referred to the Chair and the above procedure followed as closely as possible. Full written details of subsequent actions, and the decision of anybody established to investigate the complaint, shall be made available to all concerned and retained for the record. The College Complaints procedure shall be followed as far as appropriate.
- Please note that there will be a separate HE complaints policy as per the Office for Students (OFS) regulations

3. Feedback

- 3.1 If you wish to make a comment of a general nature, whether it is a compliment or complaint and wish to remain anonymous or do not wish to receive an individual response, then please use the form provided on the website [online complaints form](#). This will then be reviewed by the Quality Department.
- 3.2 Where appropriate you are also encouraged to voice your compliments and concerns by:
- Speaking to a member of staff
 - Speaking to a member of the Student Union Team

4. Complaints

- 4.1. **Definition:** The College defines a formal complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction received in writing (including social media), requiring a formal written response.
- 4.2 **Purpose:** The formal complaints procedure is to ensure that all complaints are handled consistently, fairly and in a non-discriminatory way and resolved with a satisfactory and just outcome.

5. Safeguarding

5.1 If the College receives information that a student is, or has been, put at risk of harm, the matter will be addressed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will then appropriately refer, if required, to external agencies.

5.2 If the complaint is made against a member of staff, the complaint will be forwarded to Human Resources and the Designated Safeguarding Lead to determine whether the complaint contains; and safeguarding concerns, is in need of impartial investigation and who will take responsibility for leading the response/action to the investigation. If the person is a student under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult under the age of 25 parents/carers will be contacted to get consent to investigate and interview the person. This will involve sharing information with parents/carers on the lawful basis of legitimate interests.

5.3 If after discussion with the person involved, the information may have been shared with the relevant statutory agency (LADO) in accordance with Safeguarding. If the complaint meets the LADO threshold they

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will lead the investigation. If the complaint does not meet the LADO threshold then, the response and actions will be led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and The Human Resources team.

5.4 If the complaint involves a member of staff and contains no safeguarding concerns, the complaint will be dealt with as per the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure for staff.

6. Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

6.1 The College may reject any complaint without full consideration if it is considered frivolous or vexatious. Examples of what the College considers to be frivolous or vexatious include:

- Complaints which are obsessive, harassing, or repetitive
- Insistence on pursuing unmeritorious complaints
- Seeking unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
- Insistence on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value

If the College considers your complaint falls into this category, you will be advised that your complaint will not be considered further. You will be given the opportunity to appeal against the decision by submitting a written response to quality@oaklands.ac.uk or via the form on the website within 5 working days of receipt of the email from the College.

7. Responsibility

7.1 The Quality Office is responsible for the administration and overall control of the complaints procedure.

7.2 Oaklands College will ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and reasonably

7.3 Oaklands College will keep an accurate record of complaints received to ensure that the analysis of complaints helps continuously improve our services to students, staff, employers and the community.

7.4 The Governing Body at Oaklands College is responsible for ensuring that the complaints policy and procedure is operating effectively.

7.5 It is the College's policy to respond formally to all complaints and the service standard is to respond within 20 working days. Any person asked to investigate a complaint is responsible for taking prompt action to do so in accordance with the service standard of 20 working days for response.

8. Procedure

8.1 Receipt & Recording

8.1.1 Complaints may be made in a variety of ways (e.g. telephone, letter, visit, e-mail).

8.1.2 All complaints will be formally recorded. The person receiving the complaint must record the following details:

- Name (person & organisation if appropriate)
- Address
- Telephone number

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- Campus attended (if relevant)
- Course attended (if relevant)
- Details of complaint
- Any action/outcome requested
- Complaint title

- 8.1.3 Alternatively, if the complainant wishes to complete the complaint detail themselves they may be given a complaint registration form for the purpose.
- 8.1.4 Either the complainant or the member of staff taking the complaint down should sign the complaint registration form (if appropriate)
- 8.1.5 The completed complaint registration form, with any relevant documentation, should be forwarded to the Quality Office.

8.2 Registration

- 8.2.1 All complaints will be logged by the Quality Office on ServiceDesk Quality.
- 8.2.2 The Quality Office will enter summary details on ServiceDesk and the complaint will be allocated a reference number. The Quality Office will classify the complaint for reporting purposes.
- 8.2.2 The Quality Office will determine who should be assigned the responsibility to investigate/resolve the complaint (usually the appropriate Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager) and record this on ServiceDesk.
- 8.2.3 The Quality Office will send an acknowledgement letter or email to the complainant within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint, enclosing or attaching a copy of the complaints procedure as outlined in Policy 46a: Information for Oaklands College Complainants.
- 8.2.4 On the same day as the acknowledgement is sent, the Quality Office will send an e-mail (via ServiceDesk Quality) to the senior manager who is to carry out the investigation and respond to the complainant. Complaints referring to a staff member or members will be copied to HR.

8.3 Investigation & Resolution

- 8.3.1 The Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager will either personally investigate the complaint or assign the investigation to the relevant Head of Department. The Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager must co-ordinate the investigation including responding to the complainant, with the aim of closing the complaint within 20 working days. If it is apparent that this will not be possible the Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager must inform the complainant and the Quality Office of the expected timescale, within the 20 working days.
- 8.3.2 If the complaint is about a member or members of staff, the investigating manager will need to liaise with HR to ensure that the correct investigation methodology is followed.
- 8.3.3 The Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager /assigned Head of Department will carry out an investigation of the issues raised in the complaint and:
- Record findings (if the complaint is about a member of staff the correct investigation report template should be used).
 - Agree action to be taken (NB: The Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager is also responsible for ensuring implementation of the action plan and confirming this with the Quality Office when completed)

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- Draft a written response to the complainant (summarising resolution and closure of complaint) and send via email to Head of Quality (or nominee) for approval prior to sending out.

8.3.4 The Head of Quality will approve the response, after discussion with the investigating manager if required. The Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager will then:

- Forward approved response to the complainant
- Copy the final response to the Quality Office
- Where complaints refer to a staff member, send a copy of the response and all investigation documentation to HR
- Confirm with the Quality Office the closure of the complaint.

8.3.5 If the investigation identifies that actions are required to rectify the issues raised in the complaint, the Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager Director of Faculty, Deputy Director of Faculty or a Course Team Manager will:

- Manage, monitor and close necessary action
- Confirm completion of the action to the complainant and copy in/inform the Quality Office
- If outcome potentially requires Disciplinary action, HR will take this process forward.

8.4 Referral and review

8.4.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response or action taken, the complainant must provide the Quality Office with the reasons for this. The Quality Office will then refer the complaint to the Principal for consideration. The Deputy Principal will consider the details within the complaint file and, if necessary, investigate further before writing to the complainant with a final outcome within 20 working days of receiving the request for review.

8.4.2 The College annually reviews and analyses the number of complaints and nature of all official complaints. The monitoring and review of complaints contributes to our self-assessment process, which leads to on-going improvements.

8.4.3 If the complainant is still not satisfied they can then refer their complaint to either:

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)- you should contact the ESFA if your complaint refers to any aspect of your education at Oaklands College other than higher education (HE)

[Complaints about post 16 education and training funded by ESFA](#)

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) – you should contact the OIA if your complaint refers to any aspect of higher education (HE) at Oaklands College.

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/complaints-about-our-service.aspx>

The OIA run an independent scheme to review student complaints. You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right at <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>. The College will issue you with [a Completion of Procedures letter](#) to confirm that you have completed the College's internal processes to support you with your complaint to the OIA.

OFSTED- you should contact the Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement team at OFSTED if you are a residential student at Oaklands College.

Telephone- 01633 657393

Email- CIE@ofsted.gov.uk

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Pearson Higher Education Higher Nationals (HNs) - you should contact Pearson if your complaint refers to an academic matter relating to Pearson Higher Nationals.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html#>

Please note If you're unhappy with the way the College is delivering a Pearson qualification, or with a decision that's been made, Pearson advise that you give your learning provider the opportunity to investigate and respond to your concerns before getting in touch with them.

8.5 Management Review

8.5.1 The Quality Office will produce a monthly summary report for SMT review.

8.5.2 The College is committed to learning from complaints to improve the quality of College services.

Data Protection:

All complaints will be kept and stored according to the relevant data protection legislation. If you have concerns about how your personal data is used or stored, or you wish to exercise your rights under the Data Protection Act 2018, please write to the Quality Department. quality@oaklands.ac.uk