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OAKLANDS  
COLLEGE



# Compliments, Complaints & Feedback Policy & Procedure – 46

January 2024

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# COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK POLICY & PROCEDURE - 46

## 1. Policy Statement/Purpose/Introduction

1.1. This policy outlines Oaklands College’s approach to compliments and informal and formal complaints. Quality of service is an important measure of our effectiveness. We understand that feedback is a valuable tool and should be treated sensitively and respectfully. We believe that learning from feedback is a powerful way of helping us to safeguard, improve and increase trust and open communication amongst the people who use our services. We treat a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, from a user of or partner. We have learned that compliments indicate the parts of our service that are most appreciated and often result in a welcome opportunity to recognise and praise our members of staff and spread good practice.

## 2. Strategic Plan Objective and Themes Links

- Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Beneficial Partnerships
- Inclusive, Thriving Community

## 3. Scope of this policy

3.1. Our policy covers feedback received from:

- Learners
- Applicants
- Parents/Carers/Guardians
- Employers or other users of facilities
- Members of the public
- Staff (for those issues not already covered through HR procedures)

3.2. Our policy does not:

- Normally cover anonymous complaints – this will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- Normally cover ex-students unless the complaint is received by the College within eight weeks of the end date of the course.
- Cover some staff complaints, which are more appropriately dealt with through HR procedures.
- Manage Safeguarding concerns which are, dealt with through the College Safeguarding Procedures.
- Cover exclusions and student disciplinary complaints covered by the Student Positive Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy.
- Normally cover complaints made outside the time limit of 3 months since the issue originally occurred.
- Cover complaints or claims that have been dealt with by proceedings outside of the College, such as an external court or tribunal.
- Cover complaints or claims that are or have already been settled by agreement between the Complainant.
- Cover complaints where evidence of recordings or conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

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3.3. The College reserves the right to refuse any complaints that are deemed vexatious (i.e. manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or improper use of a formal procedure). The procedure for making a complaint against a Corporation member or the Clerk is detailed in the College’s Standing Orders. Complaints relating to Senior Postholders will be referred to the Clerk, who will facilitate Corporation involvement in the process where required.

3.4. Compliments/general feedback

Those that wish to make a compliment or provide some general feedback on the College as a whole, who do not necessarily wish to have an individual response, should feedback to the Quality Administrator.

## 4. Monitoring Impact

4.1. It will be monitored as part of operational curriculum meetings and also monitored through the Corporation Curriculum and Quality Strategic Meeting.

4.2. Departmental quality improvement plans will monitor themes coming out of the compliments and complaints and share best practice within teams.

## 5. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

5.1. The Stages of the Complaints Procedure

At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any supporting documents/correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure. See **Appendix A: COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK PROCESS FLOWCHART.**

5.2. Stages:

- Stage 1 – Informal Complaint (verbal complaint)
- Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint
- Stage 3 – Review of Formal Complaint

5.3. At Oaklands, we aim to investigate and resolve all complaints in a fair and reasonable manner. If you are not satisfied with the outcome or any action taken relating to your formal complaint, you have the right to request an appeal on one or more of the grounds set out below:

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**Table 1: Making a complaint – Procedure**

Stages	Action
Stage 1 Informal/Local Issue	<p>It is anticipated that most complaints can be resolved informally and close to their point of origin (face to face or on the telephone).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a student, by talking with a teacher, tutor or Curriculum Team Manager.</li> <li>As a parent, guardian, visitor, employer or prospective student by asking to talk to an appropriate member of staff.</li> </ul> <p>Any concern will be listened to and taken seriously. Every effort will be made to assist in addressing the issue(s) raised. No formal record will be kept at this stage, but we aim to resolve your complaint within 10 working days.</p>
Stage 2 Formal Written	<p>Where your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction at the informal stage, you can make a formal complaint which must be made in writing/via email (please see the 'Contact Us' page within this policy). Your complaint letter or email should include clear detailed reasons for your complaint, an indication of the resolution or outcome you seek, and copies of any documents upon which you wish to rely upon. Complaints will be logged by the Head of Quality before being acknowledged.</p>
Stage 3 Appeal of Formal Complaint	<p>The College aims to investigate and resolve all complaints in a fair and reasonable manner. If you are not satisfied with the outcome or any action taken relating to your formal complaint, you have the right to request a Review on one or more of the following grounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New material evidence has come to light which was not reasonably available at the time of the complaint investigation.</li> <li>You believe the outcome of the complaint was manifestly unreasonable and/or any resulting action was disproportionate.</li> <li>The complaints procedure was not followed.</li> </ul> <p>A written request to begin Stage 3 of the procedure must be made to the Vice Principal Quality, Student Experience &amp; Progression within 5 working days of you receiving your Stage 2 response. A member of the Senior Leadership Team (independent to the investigation so far), will be nominated to formally review your complaint to date. A written response, detailing the findings of this investigation, will be sent to you, along with a decision on whether your complaint has been upheld. This decision is final and marks the end of our internal complaints process. There is no further right of appeal within our process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledgement within 5 working days</li> <li>Full response within 20 working days</li> </ul>

**A record of any actions/correspondence/supporting evidence and outcomes of Stage 2 and Stage 3 will be copied to the Vice Principal Quality, Student Experience & Progression, to update the Complaints/Feedback Tracker and file via the Quality Administrator.**

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## 5.4. Extending time limits

We aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex, where delay may cause potential harm or, if a complaint is received during a holiday period, it may be necessary to extend or expediate the time limits. If this is the case, we will keep you informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay and inform you of the new deadline.

## 5.5. External Agencies

Following the conclusion of a Review, you may be able to take the matter further with one of the following external agencies:

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), from FE complaints
- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE), if you are on a Higher Education course, with your college partner University.

## 6. Policy

6.1. The College is committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of its work. Our policy covers feedback about:

- The standard of service we provide
- The behaviour of our staff, and
- Any action or lack of action by the Oaklands College.

## 7. Delivery of this Policy

### 7.1. Our Standards for Handling Complaints

We treat all complaints seriously provided that they are not made abusively or offensively and comply with the guidance above. You will be treated with courtesy, fairness and with your safeguarding and wellbeing uppermost at all times. We would hope, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings the College.

We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your: sex or marital status; this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed) sexual orientation colour or race; this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality, disability, religious or political beliefs, trade union affiliation, or other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties or age.

### 7.2. Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the relevant data Protection Act 1998. In some cases related to Safeguarding, it may be necessary to refer a complaint to external child protection agencies in accordance with our Safeguarding procedures. If a complaint is about a member of staff, details will be shared with the staff member's line manager (where this may differ from the person investigating the complaint). In some circumstances, the College Designated Safeguarding Lead may also be notified. In most cases, the complaint will be investigated with the member of staff being asked for their participation in the investigation. In some circumstances, the nature of the complaint may require the College to approach the investigation more formally, referring to the College Student Positive Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy and other relevant policies to guide the investigation and any actions where appropriate.

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In all other respects, the College will maintain confidentiality regarding complaints and request that students, apprentices and employers do the same.

## 7.3. Unreasonable behaviour

All complaints will be processed in accordance with this policy. However, if during this process, unreasonable complainant behaviour and/or unreasonable and persistent complainants are experienced, we reserve the right to end the process and reject the complaint. We believe in some circumstances it would be unreasonable that a complaint is pursued if the complainant owes the College fees. The College has the right not to accept complaints (e.g., where a complaint is judged by the College to be frivolous, vexatious or malicious).

## 7.4. Recording and monitoring feedback

We will log the feedback we receive so that we can monitor good practice and problems, this also helps us to take a closer look at what we are doing well and how we can further improve our own service delivery. Our Quality Department will analyse the complaint information and feedback to identify complaint patterns and issues. The Senior Leadership Team and the College corporation will receive reports on this analysis to enable it to monitor this information on a termly basis.

## 7.5. The Policy is available on the College portal and College website and all students will be made aware of the Policy and process at induction.

## 8. Related Documents

### 8.1. Other documents which should be read in conjunction with this Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy and which may override what the policy covers are:

- The College's: 'Oaklands College Assessment Policy and Guidelines', which outline student and staff responsibilities, and the process students should follow if they wish to appeal against a grade/mark awarded by an assessor.
- The College's formal 'Disciplinary Staff Policy'.
- The College's 'Grievance Policy' for staff.

### 8.2. Contacting us

All complaints and requests for review under our compliments, complaints and feedback policy should be sent using one of the following:

- By telephone - 01727 737000
- Using the online complaints form
- By email to [quality@oaklands.ac.uk](mailto:quality@oaklands.ac.uk)
- In person directly to a member of staff
- By filling in a complaints form (these are available at reception on both campuses)

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## 8.3. Contacting External Agencies

**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.

## 9. Key definitions / glossary

- 9.1. Complaints - an expression of dissatisfaction, whether oral or written, and whether justified or not, from an individual or group of individuals about the provision of education or services by the college.
- 9.2. Compliments – a compliment is a polite expression of praise, admiration, or approval conveyed to someone to acknowledge their qualities, achievements, or positive attributes. Compliments show appreciation, or express goodwill.
- 9.3. We will use both complaints and compliments to learn from in order to constantly improve our service.

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## Appendix A: COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK PROCESS FLOWCHART



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