



Weston College **Group**

Student Services

Complaints Policy and

Procedure

**(Non-Academic & FE Academic
Matters)**

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Change Control

Version:	1.1
Date approved by CLB:	17/09/2020
Date approved by Corporation:	24/09/2020  Chair of Corporation
Name of policy holder:	Andrea Greer – Deputy Principal
Date issued:	September 2020
Review date:	July 2022

Version	Type – New/Replacement/Review	Date	History
	Updated policy		16/11/2018 last version

This policy applies to Weston College Group and all wholly owned subsidiary companies of the Weston College Corporation which include Prison Education, Forward Futures, SOMAX and Inspirational Events and Investments

This policy does not apply to Higher Education which has its own policies in line with the HE Ombudsman (OIA – Office of the Independent Adjudicator)

1 INTRODUCTION

Weston College Group strives to meet and exceed customer expectations and seeks to continually improve the quality of its services. Weston College Group works to form good relationships within our communities which enables all parties to feel comfortable with communicating concerns or complaints. This may be via email or a letter to the Principalship.

We recognise that there is a difference between a concern and a complaint and many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. It is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved at the informal stage.

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action'.

Weston College Group will endeavour to positively respond to all written customer complaints where it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally.

Weston College Group strives to meet the needs of learners in accordance with Government policy.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

A complaint will be taken to be any formal written expression of dissatisfaction with the College, its services, equipment or staff made by a member of the public, a student or their parent/carer.

Formal complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant College procedures. In the event that a complaint concerns the well-being or safeguarding of a learner, the College has a duty to report this to the Local Authority, and any action taken will be in accordance with the College's Safeguarding Policy.

If it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are required to resolve an issue, the complainant will only be informed that action is being taken and the outcome of any such action. The complainant will not be entitled to participate, and the details of the proceedings will remain confidential to the Principal/Deputy Principal and/or the individual's line manager.

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, Weston College Group requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, it is expected that complainants also observe confidentiality.

To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the College as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than six months after the event being complained of will not be considered. However, this may be extended in exceptional circumstances, such as the level of complexity of information needed to review the complaint, or difficulties regarding individuals' availability. A mutually acceptable timeframe will then be agreed with all involved.

To ensure a fair and comprehensive process the College is not obligated to respond to anonymous complaints.

3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Non-academic complaints may include but shall not be limited to: -

- The discharge of responsibility by college staff
- The behaviour of students on campus/in residential buildings and outside of the College environment
- Finance, the provision of commercial services or the sale of goods
- Policy issues where the substance of the complaint lies with a policy decision made by the Corporation or an external organisation.

FE Academic Matters complaints may include but shall not be limited to: -

- A member of staff (academic or support)
- Another student
- Appeal against internal assessment / grading
- Appeal against an NVQ assessment

Appeal against an Exam based decision.

4 POLICY REVIEW

The Deputy Principal – Human Resources, Prison Education and College Reputation shall:

Publish annually, an internal review of complaints and their resolutions to inform the College on customer's views of the service. They shall also, provide a report annually to the Corporation Committee and;

- Ensure this Policy is reviewed every two years.
- Ensure access to the online complaints system will be restricted to relevant key staff.
- Ensure the use of personal data in the most efficient and effective way to deliver better services, ensuring it is accurate and needed.
- Ensure information is not kept for longer than is necessary and securely destroy the online data which is no longer needed (after 6 years)
- Ensure to take appropriate technical and organisational security measures to safeguard information (including unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss or damage of data)
- Ensure that the rights of people about whom information is held can be fully exercised under the General Data Protection Regulations.

5 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (NON – ACADEMIC)

These procedures apply when it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally through line management response.

All formal complaints should be addressed in writing to the **Principals Office, Weston College Knightstone Campus, BS23 2AL** or Principals.office.enquiries@weston.ac.uk, except for a complaint against the **Principal or Clerk to the Corporation** which should be addressed in writing to the **Chair of the Corporation**.

Receipt of a letter/email of complaint will be acknowledged within three working days.

5.1 Formal Complaint Procedure

In all cases a formal response will usually take place within ten working days of receipt of a request, but there will be occasions when this could be extended due to College holidays, operational demands, staff availability or the need to secure additional information. If for any reason more time is required this will be explained to the complainant

The investigation will be carried out by the person/s outlined below.

5.2 Complaints about the discharge of responsibility by college staff

- Staff at Senior Management level or below – the **Deputy Principal – Human Resources, Prison Education and College Reputation and College Reputation** or nominated deputy will investigate the complaint
- **Directors/Deans of Faculty** – the **Deputy Principal – Human Resources, Prison Education and College Reputation** will investigate the complaint
- **Vice/Deputy Principal** – the **Principal** will investigate the complaint.
- **Deputy Principal – Human Resources, Prison Education and College Reputation** – the **Principal** will investigate the complaint.
- **Principal or Clerk to the Corporation** – the **Chair of the Corporation** will investigate the complaint

5.2 Complaints about the behaviour of students on campus/in the College's residential provision and outside of the College environment

- If a named student(s) or faculty identified student – their respective **Dean of Faculty** will investigate the complaint
- If students in general – the **Director - Catalyst Development: School Engagement & Learner Growth** will investigate the complaint.

5.4 Finance and the provision of commercial services or sale of goods

- The **Deputy Principal – Human Resources, Prison Education and College Reputation** will nominate a **Senior Staff Member** (whose own responsibility does not lie within the area to be investigated) to investigate the complaint.

5.5 A member of the Governing Body or the general governance of the College

- The **Clerk to the Corporation** will liaise with the **Chair of Governors** who will investigate the complaint.

5.6 Chair of Governors

- The **Clerk to the Corporation** will liaise with the **Chair of Audit Committee** who will investigate the complaint.

5.7 Complaint about a person not directly employed by Weston College

- The matter will be referred to the **relevant agency** who will investigate the complaint in accordance with their policy and procedures.

6 APPEAL

If it is felt that the College has not dealt with a complaint satisfactorily then an appeal made be made, in writing, to the relevant senior investigating officer (as detailed above) who will respond within three working weeks, but there will be occasions when this could be extended due to College holidays, operational demands, staff availability or the need to secure additional information.

If for any reason more time is required this will be explained to the complainant

7 OTHER COURSE OF ACTION

If following written appeal to the Principal and Chief Executive a complainant is still not satisfied that a complaint has been dealt with appropriately then the details can be forwarded to:

- **ESFA complaints team** complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Complaints team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

The ESFA will not consider complaints unless they have already been fully considered by the College; a response from them can be expected within 12 working weeks.

8 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (FE ACADEMIC MATTERS)

These procedures apply when it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally through line management response.

All formal written complaints from students or their parents / carers (if under 18 years or under 25 years if they have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities) should be addressed to the **Principals Office, Weston College Knightstone Campus, BS23 2AL** or Principals.office.enquiries@weston.ac.uk,

Receipt of a letter of complaint will be acknowledged within three working days.

8.1 Formal Complaint Procedure

In all cases a formal written response will usually take place within ten working days of receipt of a request, but there will be occasions when this could be extended due to College holidays, operational demands, staff availability or the need to secure additional information. If for any reason more time is required this will be explained to the complainant.

The investigation will be carried out by the person outlined below:

8.2 Complaints about a member of staff (academic or support)

The complaint will be investigated by the member of staff's **Line Manager** (Investigating Officer) in accordance with Appendix A (below).

8.3 Complaints about a student

Unless falling under the remit of the Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy & Procedure for Students or the Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedures (Academic Matters and Misconduct) the complaint will be investigated by the Student's **Curriculum Manager** (Investigating Officer) in accordance with Appendix A.

Appeal against internal assessment /grading

8.4 Please refer to the Assessment, Malpractice and Internal Verification Policy.

Appeal against an NVQ/Work Based Learning Assessment

8.5 Please refer to the Assessment, Malpractice and Internal Verification Policy

Appeal against an Exam Board Decision

- 8.6 A student may appeal against Examination Board decisions as outlined, and time scaled, in the Joint Council for Qualifications booklet 'Post Results Services', a copy of which may be viewed at the Examinations Office.
- 8.7 Students should personally contact the Examinations Office who will act as the nominated Head of Centre for their appeal within the key date period of the official publication of results data.
- 8.8 Students will complete a college disclosures and appeal form outlining:
- Their name and contact details
 - Their programme of study
 - The component or unit mark they are appealing against
 - The action they are seeking (e.g. clerical re-check, re-mark, priority re-mark or re-moderation of original example of Centre amended coursework)
 - The grounds on which they wish to appeal, attaching any evidence they wish to use to support their appeal
 - Their willingness to meet the costs incurred should the grade remain the same or be downgraded (if the grade is raised the College will meet the cost).
- 8.9 The Examinations Office will then follow the procedures as set out in the booklet referred to in 6.1 above and notify the student of the outcome of their appeal as soon as it is known.
- 8.10 If a tutor is requesting a re-mark on behalf of a whole class or a substantial proportion of the class they must seek permission from their Head of Faculty and the students concerned, because in re-mark situations grades can go up as well as down. If the students and the Head of Faculty agree to a re-mark, the Head of Faculty will then act as the 'Student' following the process above. In this situation only the costs incurred will be met by the College.

9 APPENDIX A

The Investigating Officer will meet/talk with/email with the complainant and / or their parents / carers (if under 18 years or under 25 years if they have identified as have learning difficulties or disabilities) within five working days recording in writing: -

- The date of the meeting
- Details of the complaint
- The outcome sought

Within five working days, of meeting the complainant, the Investigating Officer will meet the staff member or student about whom the complaint has been made to:

- Discuss the details of the complaint
- Identify which issues are justified
- Agree and record, in writing, which action should be taken to overcome the issues
-

(NB – Response times may vary due to College holidays, operational demands, staff availability or the need to secure additional information. If for any reason more time is required this will be explained to the complainant).

The Investigating Officer will write to both parties and the **Deputy Principal – Human Resources, Prison Education and College Reputation** notifying them of the outcome of the complaint and then informally monitor the situation to ensure implementation of the agreed actions and progress towards them.

Appeal

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the initial investigation they should appeal in writing to:

- In the case of a complaint against a staff member – the Investigating Officer's **Line Manager**
- In the case of a complaint against a student – the student's **Dean of Faculty**

A further investigation will be undertaken within ten working days which will involve two separate meetings, one with the complainant and one with the staff member or student about whom the complaint has been made. Both parties and the **Deputy Principal – Human Resources, Prison Education and College Reputation** will be written to notifying them of the outcome of the appeal.

Where a member of staff is found to be at fault, the issue may be resolved by involving either the Capability Policy or the Disciplinary Policy. However, the details will remain a private internal matter for the College.

10 GUIDANCE FOR REPORTING COMPLAINT DETAILS

A complaint should include all details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that a clear statement of the actions that the complainant would like the College to take to resolve the concern are included in the written detail.

- Complainants Name
- Learner Name (where applicable) and number
- Relationship to learner (if applicable) – if the complainant has no formal relationship to the learner we cannot investigate. If the learner is complaining and they are over 18 years or over 25 years (if they have learning difficulties or disabilities) than they must make the complaint themselves.
- Preferred contact information (phone/letter/email)
- Details of the complaint
- What action, if any, has the complainant already taken to try to resolve their complaint?
- Who did they speak to and what was the response?
- What actions do they feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
- Are they attaching any supporting paperwork/evidence? If so, please give details: