

CLIENT FEEDBACK POLICY

1 Introduction

This Policy concerns client feedback (complaints and compliments) and relates directly to the College's Quality Improvement Framework. Its purpose is to recognise that all users of the College's services have a right to comment on the services provided and to have any issues raised investigated and acted upon. Likewise, users of the College's services may wish to express their satisfaction with the service they have received and to be assured that their comments will be forwarded to those concerned and inform excellent practice elsewhere in the College.

The College is committed to dealing with comments and complaints in a fair and transparent manner and to having accessible procedures, which enable:

- Complainants to be clear of the process, timescales and actions taken
- Staff to be clear about their responsibilities within this process

The College encourages client feedback and gathers and analyses this as part of the drive to improve the quality of service. Similarly, the College views feedback as an additional method of measuring the effectiveness of its service and where appropriate highlighting good practice.

Not all issues turn into formal complaints and often an issue can be resolved quickly and helpfully by staff. However, if the response is unhelpful or slow then this may result in a formal complaint. It is important that the College recognises that informal or low level issues may be symptomatic of a negative trend; therefore all departments strive to capture such feedback and assess any underlying problem. Such feedback is held in the curriculum management file and is reported on at Curriculum and Performance Reviews.

When a client believes that the service provided is not as would normally be expected, it is important that the focus is placed on identifying what has happened, where the service may have failed, what can be done to put things right, informing the complainant and learning from the experience.

It is also important that clients are kept informed of a change to College service and mitigating action in a timely way - for example, arrangements to rearrange a class. This should prevent unnecessary complaints.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all clients of the College services – internal and external.

There is a procedural 'client feedback' document for the management of complaints and compliments, which accompanies and is a guide to this policy.

3 Responsibility for implementation

The overall responsibility for the management of feedback lies with the Vice Principal Curriculum and Standards at ESC and the Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality at JRC. However, it is the responsibility of each manager to maintain the quality of the College's services in their area. Similarly, it is recognised that complaints and compliments are received through a variety of routes and therefore any member of staff may, at some time, be in receipt of these. It is therefore expected that all members of staff be familiar with the procedure and their responsibility for ensuring complaints are resolved as quickly as possible.

4 Policy Statements

The College welcomes and encourages feedback from students, members of the public, employers and other stakeholders and makes every effort to resolve complaints quickly at the most appropriate level. Members of the College management view complaints and compliments as robust management information that input into the ongoing review of the quality of provision.

4.1 Compliments

It is important that compliments are recognised and shared about the service provided. A compliment from a customer may be made to any member of staff by:

- Telephone
- Electronically; by email or via website or College social media pages
- Feedback forms
- Letter
- In person

The line manager should be advised and the Marketing department informed of all compliments received into the College as they may be of value in enhancing the corporate image.

4.2 Complaints

4.2.1 Methods of making complaints

A customer who is dissatisfied with the service for whatever reason or who has made a comment/asked a question but remains unhappy with the response may wish to make a formal complaint. Those wishing to complain may do so by a variety of methods as shown above.

The College will treat with equal seriousness any complaint received, regardless of the route chosen. The procedural 'A Guide to the College's Client Feedback Policy – What to do if things go wrong' document details how complaints should be progressed, irrespective of by whom and how they are received.

For level 4 and above courses there is a separate procedure entitled, 'How do I raise concerns about my HE course at East Surrey College?' that covers concerns on higher education level courses and is available on the College website.

The College undertakes to:

- Acknowledge complaints within five working days of receipt
- Conduct an internal investigation to establish the facts and timelines.
- Provide a final written response with the results of the investigations, except in exceptional circumstances, within 10 working days.
- If the investigation is conducted over a holiday period when relevant key staff maybe absent, providing a remedy may not be possible within 10 working days but will be provided as soon practicable.
- Occasionally, a very complex complaint will need more time to investigate – at all times the complainant will be kept informed of the progress.
- Provide information on how the College will deal with the matter if your complaint is upheld.
- Report to College Executive on complaints and the action taken by the College and to provide an annual report to the Learning and Quality Committee of the College Corporation.

4.2.2. Information about complaints

Details of complaints should be kept confidential and shared only with:

- The complainant
- Those being the subject of the complaint
- The line manager of the area concerned
- Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards (ESC) and the Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality (JRC)

Only when it is necessary to involve others in the investigation of the complaint will the information be shared and then only on a 'need to know' basis. The single exception to this is if a member of staff, who is the subject of a complaint, wishes to solicit the involvement of a representative.

All complaints will be held on a central log for the current year plus six previous years.
All complaint documentation will be held for the current year plus two previous years.

4.3 Client feedback reports

Directorate Administration at both campuses are the central collection points for complaints. There will be a record of each complaint to track its progress and where relevant, to assist action planning processes to improve services.

Regular reports and a formal annual report will contain statistical analysis of all complaints and compliments received.

The Cross College Quality Lead will review complaints received, overview investigation and provide reports to the Executive and to the Learning and Quality Committee of the Corporation Board.

4.4 Time limits

Complaints should be made through the appropriate channels as soon as an issue arises. The time limit for bringing a complaint is one month from the date of the original incident.

The timings for the acknowledgement and resolution of complaints will be reviewed annually.

4.5 Complaints about staff

Complaints about staff must be handled sensitively and confidentially and referred to the appropriate line manager who may involve Human Resources.

A record of the complaint will be kept on file in Human Resources.

4.6 Key Features of the Procedures for Complaint

The Procedures for dealing with complaints are designed to ensure that:

- All complaints are treated seriously and with discretion;
- Complainants can be sure that their concerns are being treated fairly and in confidence;
- Complainants receive initial and, where appropriate, regular feedback about the progress of their complaint;
- All complaints are properly documented and are dealt with as quickly as possible;
- Appropriate investigations are carried out by the Vice Principal (ESC) and the Assistant Principal (JRC) who are responsible for implementing remedial action. The Cross College Quality Lead may nominate another manager to conduct the investigation on their behalf;
- All records of complaints will be evaluated to identify service improvements

Information about this Policy and the procedural 'client feedback' document are available to staff and students

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The response from the Vice Principal (ESC) or Assistant Principal (JRC) is final and no further correspondence will be entered into.

4.7 Equality & Diversity Monitoring

In accordance with the Equality Policies and Scheme, the College will seek to monitor comments and complaints for issues of age, gender, ethnicity and disability as well as time taken to resolve.

5 Access to Policy

This Policy is available from Client Services and on the College Intranet.

6 Mechanisms for Feedback

Constructive comments on the continued improvement of this Policy are welcomed and should be forwarded to the Cross College Quality Lead.

7 Training and Guidance

Questions about this policy and/or procedure, and requests for training, guidance or information on this policy and/or procedure should be directed to the HR Team.

8 References

Single Equality Policy for Employees
Equality Scheme
Single Equality Policy for Learners
Grievance – Employee's Policy
Data Protection Policy
Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy
Quality Improvement Policy
Client Feedback Document

9 Further information

Guide to the College's Complaints Procedure 'What to do if things go wrong' Feedback document.

Student Handbook on Ezone

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