



It is intended that this policy is 'fair to all'. Where any part could potentially lead to unequal outcomes, the policy then justifies why this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

SWINDON COLLEGE: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Title:	Compliments & Complaints Policy and Procedure (non-staff)
Reference:	PP10
Owner:	VPDP
Date:	July 2017
Review Date:	July 2018

1. Objectives

- 1.1 We welcome feedback from all our customers and take feedback seriously. We want customers to let us know when we get things right and when we don't. When things go wrong we want to have the opportunity to put things right and improve. Our aim is to respond quickly and positively and to reach an outcome that is satisfactory and fair for all.
- 1.2 Swindon College strives to give all customers the same high standards of service in response to any compliment or complaint.
- 1.3 This document aims to:
 - Help customers understand College procedure.
 - Provide efficient and timely handling within established time scales.
 - Keep customers informed of the progress of their complaint.
 - Ensure commitment to a full and fair investigation.
- 1.4 The College views all feedback as positive and aims to resolve complaints quickly and effectively within set time limits. Feedback received will be dealt with promptly and fairly even if the outcome may not be to the customer's satisfaction.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This document provides guidance to all non-staff users of Swindon College services.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Vice-Principal Development & Progression is responsible for monitoring compliments and complaints and will analyse trends and actions annually.
- 3.2 Any compliment/complaints letter or e-mail should be directed to the Vice-Principal Development & Progression.
- 3.3 The Senior Management Team may review a complaint and give a decision without formal investigation where it is considered to be deliberately repetitious or vexatious. The College reserves the right to refer any matter to the College solicitors.
- 3.4 The Vice-Principal Development & Progression will review this document and the quality of responses to customers on an annual basis.
- 3.5 Customers should bring compliments and complaints to the attention of the College as soon as possible. Complaints should be written and submitted within 28 working days of any alleged incident.
- 3.6 Compliments and complaints raised by representatives are only permitted if an individual is under 18 years old or if the individual has a learning difficulty or disability.
- 3.7 The Vice-Principal Development & Progression will ensure all compliments are passed onto the staff/teams to whom they are directed.
- 3.8 Where a complaint is fully or partially upheld, the College will take positive action to put things right, make every effort to prevent the same thing happening again and will ensure the customer is kept fully informed. If a complaint is not upheld, the customer will be notified accordingly.
- 3.9 In order to address and contain complaints, the Vice-Principal Development & Progression will contact any complainee to discuss concerns and, if appropriate, negotiate an acceptable solution.

4. Procedure - complaints

Stage 1 – Informal Concerns

- In the first instance individuals should discuss issues with the member of staff directly involved at a mutually convenient time and appropriate action should be agreed.
- In academic matters the concern will be dealt with by the Personal Tutor, Course Leader or Higher Education (HE) Programme Leader.
- In other areas, staff or manager of the service area involved will manage the concern.
- The concern should be noted by the member of staff dealing with it alongside any agreed remedial action on the appropriate spreadsheet in the Cause for Concern Folder on K drive.
- If there is no satisfactory outcome or agreed action after the response has been received by the customer, a formal complaint (stage 2) can be made via the Vice-Principal Development & Progression.
- Customers should receive a response to their concern within 10 working days.

Stage 2 – Formal complaints

- If the outcome of Stage 1 is unsatisfactory, contact should be made with the Vice-Principal Development & Progression.
- Customers wishing to make a formal complaint should be directed to do so in writing and address it to the Vice-Principal Development & Progression in the first instance.
- Upon receipt of any formal complaint a record will be entered on the appropriate tracking sheet in the Compliments and Complaints Folder. An acknowledgement of receipt will be set to the complainee within 3 working days.
- The Vice-Principal Development & Progression will identify the most appropriate member of the College Management Team to direct the complaint to.
- The Vice-Principal Development & Progression will then proactively monitor progress in order to ensure timescales are being adhered to.
- The customer will receive a formal response to their complaint within 10 working days of receipt. If the matter is particularly serious or complicated it may take longer to provide an adequate response. If this is the case, the customer will be provided regular updates. In the case of Higher Education (HE) complaints, the relevant university may need to be kept informed and, on occasion, further advice sought.
- The outcome of any complaint investigation will be classified in one of three ways:-
 - **Substantiated** – complaint was fully justified and will result in corrective action being taken.
 - **Partially substantiated** – certain aspects of the complaint were considered justified and will involve some corrective action to be taken.
 - **Not substantiated** – the complaint was not found to have sufficient grounds for further action.

Stage 3 – Escalated formal complaints

- If a complaint is not resolved by the College Complaints Procedure, students have the right, in the case of academic disputes, to appeal to the appropriate awarding body or in the case of an HE complaint, to escalate it to the appropriate university.

5. Appeals

- 5.1 If customers are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint they can request a review of the matter which will be undertaken by a member of the Senior Management Team, overseen by the Principal.
- 5.2 Appeals should be made in writing to the Principal within 15 working days from the date that the final response was sent by the College. The letter of appeal must indicate the reasons for the appeal and should include any new information that has since come to light.
- 5.3 The appeal will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt, and responded to within 10 working days of the appeal notification being received.
- 5.4 If the complainant has exhausted all avenues within the College Policy and remains unsatisfied with the resolution and or outcome provided by the College, then they can seek redress from the awarding body (e.g. 1st4Sport) or seek further guidance from the Skills Funding Agency for post 19 provision at complaintsteam@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk, or the Education Funding Agency for pre 19 provision at EFA institutions – complaints, Providers, Standards and Intervention, Education Funding Agency, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH

6. Complaints for Higher Education Courses at Swindon College

- 6.1 Swindon College offers Higher Education students a range of ways in which to raise concerns relating to their time at college through both formal and informal mechanisms. The Complaints Procedure recognises and adheres to the QAA Quality Code (B9) and aims to provide procedures which are fair, accessible and timely and enable enhancement through the monitoring of complaints and the improvements made as a result.
- 6.2 Informal concerns will be dealt with and recorded under the processes highlighted in Section 4 (above). However, we understand that some individuals or groups may wish to escalate concerns via a formal complaint to the College.
- 6.3 Swindon College HE students submitting a complaint who are enrolled on an HE programme such as HNC/HND will have their complaint dealt with under the College Policy and Procedures identified in this document.
- 6.4 All HE complaints will be reviewed by members of the HE management team in the first instance. Thereafter, other members of the Curriculum staff and other Senior Management Team members may become involved as appropriate.
- 6.5 The response provided to the students will be entitled 'Completion of Procedures'. This denotes that the college has exhausted the internal complaints procedure. This does not prevent the complainant from appealing to the college (as detailed in Section 5 above), or referring their complaint to the University.
- 6.6 Students attending Swindon College who are also enrolled on a partner University's programme will have their complaint progressed through the procedures outlined in this document in the first instance. Where a customer feels that their complaint has not been dealt with appropriately by Swindon College they can then raise their complaint directly with the relevant University. Once internal procedures have been exhausted (or the University procedures) and the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant, advice can be sought from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator who operate an independent review scheme acting as an appeal body. Details can be found at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>
- 6.7 In the case of a student enrolled on an Oxford Brookes programme having been unsatisfied with the college's response to their complaint, they may refer the complaint to the University by writing to the Student Disputes Officer and enclosing the college 'Completion of Procedures' letter.
- 6.8 If the Student Disputes Officer is satisfied that the student has shown sufficient grounds, they shall refer the complaint to Level 2 of the Oxford Brookes Student Complaint Procedure.