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Edinburgh College Complaints Handling Procedure

Part 4: Governance

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Roles and responsibilities

1. All staff will be aware of:

- the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP)
- how to handle and record complaints at the frontline response stage (Stage 1).
- that all Stage 2 and staff complaints must be sent directly to the Complaints Handling Coordinator (CHC) to process. The college actively encourages **ALL** complaints to be handled by the CHC.
- who they can refer a complaint to, in case they are not able to handle the matter
- the need to try and resolve complaints early and as close to the point of service delivery as possible; and
- their clear authority to attempt to resolve any complaints they may be called upon to deal with.

2. Training around the CHP will be part of the induction process for all new staff. All staff will be made aware of the new procedures on the staff intranet and complete a mandatory training course through EC Learns. Refresher training will be provided for staff on a regular basis through EC Learns.

3. The Senior Management Team will ensure that:

- Edinburgh College's final position on a Stage 2 complaint investigation is signed off by the Vice Principal, in order to provide assurance that this is the definitive response of Edinburgh College and that the complainant's concerns have been taken seriously
- it maintains overall responsibility and accountability for the management and governance of complaints handling (including complaints about contracted services)
- it has an active role in, and understanding of, the CHP (although not necessarily involved in the decision-making process of complaint handling)
- mechanisms are in place to ensure a consistent approach to the way complaints handling information is managed, monitored, reviewed and reported at all levels in Edinburgh College; and
- complaints information is used to improve services, and this is evident from regular publications.

4. **Principal/chief executive:** The principal/chief executive supports leadership and direction in ways that guide and enable us to perform effectively across all services. This includes ensuring that there is an effective Complaints Handling Procedure, with a robust investigation process that demonstrates how we learn from the complaints we receive. The principal/chief executive may take a personal interest in all or some complaints, or may delegate responsibility for the CHP to senior staff. Regular

management reports assure the principal/chief executive of the quality of complaints performance.

5. The principal/chief executive is ultimately responsible for ensuring that there are governance and accountability arrangements in place in relation to complaints about contractors. This includes:
 - ensuring performance monitoring for complaints is a feature of the service/management agreements between Edinburgh College and contractors
 - setting clear objectives in relation to this complaints procedure and putting appropriate monitoring systems in place to provide Edinburgh College with an overview of how the contractor is meeting its objectives
6. **Vice Principals, Heads of Faculty/Function, and all other managers** : On the principal/chief executive's behalf, may be responsible for:
 - managing complaints and the way we learn from them
 - overseeing the implementation of actions required as a result of a complaint
 - investigating complaints; and
 - deputising for the principal/chief executive, as required.
 - ensuring that all complaints received in their department are logged officially with the Complaints Handling Co-ordinator
7. **Vice Principals, Heads of Faculty/Function and all other managers** may also be responsible for preparing decisions for customers, so they should be satisfied that the investigation is complete and their response addresses all aspects of the complaint. However, they may decide to delegate some elements of complaints handling (such as investigations and the drafting of response letters) to other senior staff. Where this happens the Vice Principal, Manager or Head of Faculty/Function should retain ownership and accountability for the management and reporting of complaint. The Vice Principal is responsible for signing off all Stage 2 complaints.
8. **Complaints Handling Coordinator** is responsible for:
 - Leading the complaints process
 - Ensuring all complaints received are designated, investigated and responded to in accordance with the colleges CHP.
 - Recording and reporting complaint data and statistics
 - Action Learning from Complaints and raise awareness of trends
 - Update policies and procedures
 - Provide advice and guidance on the complaints process
 - Responding to SPSO requests for further information within requested timescales.

9. **Heads of Faculty/Function, Middle Managers and Curriculum Managers:** May be involved in the operational investigation and management of complaints handling. As senior officers they may be responsible for preparing decision letters to customers, so they should be satisfied that the investigation is complete and their response addresses all aspects of the complaint. All Stage 2 complaints must be signed off by the Vice Principal.
10. **Complaints investigator** is responsible for:
- Notifying the CHC of the frontline stage complaint if the complaint was made directly to them and they are dealing with it by completing a Frontline Resolution form within 2 working days from the closure of the complaint.
 - The accurate reporting for the management of the investigation and will be involved in the investigation and in coordinating all aspects of the response to the customer.
 - Completing a Complaint Investigation Plan for Stage 2 complaints.
 - Completing a Learning from Complaints form if requested by the CHC to ensure that any actions/training or recommendations have been implemented and if there has been any improvement since implementation.
11. **Organisation Development Business Partners:**
- Are responsible for ensuring all new staff receive training on the CHP as part of their induction process.
 - Ensuring that mandatory initial and refresher training on the CHP is completed by staff through the Staff Academy (training will be created by the CHC).

Recording, reporting, learning from and publicising complaints

12. Complaints provide valuable customer feedback. One of the aims of the CHP is to identify opportunities to improve services across Edinburgh College. By recording and analysing complaints data, we can identify and address the causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements.
13. We also have arrangements in place to ensure complaints about contractors are recorded, reported on and publicised in line with this CHP.

Recording complaints

14. It is important to record suitable data to enable us to fully investigate and respond to the complaint, as well as using our complaint information to track themes and trends. As a minimum, we should record:
 - the customer's name and contact details
 - the date the complaint was received
 - the nature of the complaint
 - the service the complaint refers to
 - staff member responsible for handling the complaint
 - action taken and outcome at frontline response stage
 - date the complaint was closed at the frontline response stage
 - date the investigation stage was initiated (if applicable)
 - action taken and outcome at investigation stage (if applicable)
 - date the complaint was closed at the investigation stage (if applicable); and
 - the underlying cause of the complaint and any remedial action taken.
 - the outcome of the SPSO's investigation (where applicable).
15. If the customer does not want to provide any of this information, we will reassure them that it will be managed appropriately, and record what we can.
16. Individual complaint files will be stored in line with our document retention policy. Information is held for six years after closure of your complaint or three years from the date of your compliment. After that, your information will be destroyed securely and in line with College procedures.

Learning from complaints

17. We must have clear systems in place to act on issues identified in complaints. As a minimum, we must:
 - seek to identify the root cause of complaints
 - take action to reduce the risk of recurrence; and
 - systematically review complaints performance reports to improve service delivery.
18. Learning may be identified from individual complaints (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not) and from analysis of complaints data.
19. Where we have identified the need for service improvement in response to an individual complaint, we will take appropriate action.
 - The CHC issue a Learning from Complaint form to the complaint investigator and/or HOF on completion of the investigation if there have been recommendations for improvement.
 - Actions/training/recommendations must be implemented within six weeks of the outcome to the complaint.
 - The CHC will follow up to ensure that the action/training/recommendations has been implemented.
 - Learning points will be shared with the relevant staff by the line manager?
20. SPSO has guidance on [Learning from Complaints](#).
21. Senior management will review the information reported on complaints regularly to ensure that any trends or wider issues which may not be obvious from individual complaints are quickly identified and addressed. Where we identify the need for service improvement, we will take appropriate action (as set out above). Where appropriate, performance in the service area should be monitored to ensure that the issue has been resolved.

Reporting of complaints

22. We have a process for the internal reporting of complaints information, including analysis of complaints trends. Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of where services need to improve.
23. We will report at least quarterly to senior managers on:
 - performance statistics, in line with the complaint's performance indicators published by SPSO
 - analysis of the trends and outcomes of complaints (this should include highlighting where there are areas where few or no complaints are received, which may indicate either good practice or that there are barriers to complaining in that area).

Publicising complaints information

24. We publish on a quarterly basis information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services.
25. This demonstrates the improvements resulting from complaints and shows that complaints can help to improve our services. It also helps ensure transparency in our complaints handling service and will help to show our customers that we value their complaints.
26. We will publish an **annual** complaints performance report on our website in line with SPSO requirements, and provide this to the SPSO on request. This summarises and builds on the quarterly reports we have produced about our services. It includes:
 - performance statistics, in line with the complaint's performance indicators published by the SPSO; and
 - complaint trends and the actions that have been or will be taken to improve services as a result.
27. These reports must be easily accessible to members of the public and available in alternative formats as requested.