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For the future you want

College Policy

Compliments and Complaints



Curriculum Planning & Performance

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Our Complaints Handling Procedure reflects the Edinburgh College commitment to valuing complaints. It seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints, so that where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case, as presented.
- 1.2 We recognise that all feedback is valuable information we can use to improve customer satisfaction, make improvements to our services and boost staff morale. The new complaints procedure enables us to address a customer's dissatisfaction quickly, meaning they are less likely to escalate to a stage 2 complaint.
- 1.3 The complaints procedure was first developed by College staff who are experienced complaints handlers, working closely with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHPs) were revised in 2019 by the SPSO, in consultation with all sectors. This new edition includes a core text, which is consistent across all public services in Scotland, with some additional text and examples specific to this sector. As far as possible, we have produced a standard approach to handling complaints across Scotland's public services, which complies with the SPSO's guidance on a MCHP. This procedure aims to help us 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early responses by capable, well-trained staff. The new procedures were effective from 1st April 2021, however the college did not fully implement until August 2021.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy covers all aspects of College management, learning and teaching and corporate services.
- 2.2 Students and members of the public may use this procedure.

2.3 The exceptions are:

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a disagreement with academic judgement
- a claim for compensation against the College
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal
- disagreement with a decision where a right of appeal exists, for example the academic appeals process
- a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information Acts
- an attempt to have us reopen or reconsider a complaint we have concluded or given our final decision on.

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

3.1 All Edinburgh College staff must engage with the complaints procedure as part of their induction and must be given refresher training as required, to ensure they are confident in identifying complaints, empowered to resolve simple Stage 1 complaints on the spot, and familiar with how to apply this procedure (including how to record complaints).

3.2 SPSO have introduced a **Resolved** outcome in the new MCHP. This means:

A complaint is resolved when both the organisation and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld.

3.3 The timescales applied will be five working days for Stage 1 and 20 working days for Stage 2 complaints. Extension to the timeline will only occur when there are clear and justifiable reasons for doing so.

3.4 All Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints will be logged so that the College can monitor trends, learn from and identify necessary quality improvements. Implementation of remedial action to address complaints will be monitored. Compliments will also be logged to show where we are exceeding.

- 3.5 All Stage 2 investigations must be managed by the Complaints Handling Coordinator (CHC) and recorded on a complaint investigation plan by the investigating officer to enable the CHC to draft a satisfactory response to the complainant.
- 3.6 All responses to Stage 2 complaints will be signed off by the Vice Principal.
- 3.7 A report on all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received and the outcomes will be presented to Senior Management quarterly and the College's Board of Management yearly.
- 3.8 There will be no internal appeal against the outcome of a Stage 2 complaint. Any appeals against how a Stage 2 complaint was handled will be directed to the SPSO or if appropriate the SQA.
- 3.9 All Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received on behalf of another will require a Data Subject Authorisation form to be completed and returned to the CHC to allow any information pertaining to the complaint to be released to the nominated individual/organisation.
- 3.10 Appropriate training will be provided to staff on how to compile an appropriate investigation.

4. LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.1 The Executive team and Senior Management team has responsibility to ensure compliance with the policy and procedures.
- 4.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has the responsibility to ensure it monitors the frequency and outcomes of complaints to ensure the College has taken appropriate corrective actions as part of any resolution.
- 4.3 Anyone can make a complaint either verbally, in writing, face-to-face, by phone, letter or email, directly to the service involved or to the CHC. To ensure all complaints are formally logged, the CHC must receive a completed Frontline Resolution Form from the person dealing with the complaint within 2 working days after closure. The CHC will contact the complainant to make sure they are happy with the service they have

received and are satisfied with the outcome. The CHC must deal with all Stage 2 complaints.

5. SPECIFIC POLICIES/RELATED DOCUMENTS

5.1 Complaints Handling Procedure Parts 1-5.

5.2 The Further Education Model Complaints Handling Procedure (SPSO).

6. DIRECTLY RELATED LEGISLATION

6.1 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsmen Act 2002:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2002/11/contents>

Also related (although not directly) – information law, especially General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

7.1 This policy becomes effective from April 2021 and supersedes all previous policies and procedures relating to complaints handling.

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Jon Buglass, Assistant Principal

Date: / /