

HEREFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Manager Responsible: Linda Watkins

Issue Number: 3 (Three)
Replacement to May 2005, October 2006

Approval Date: May 2005 (Board)
October 2006 (CMG)
August 2007 (Update to reflect College name change)

**HEREFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Issue Number: Three
Approval Date: May 2005 (Board)
October 2006 (CMG)
August 2007 (Update to reflect College name change)

1. Definition

- 1.1 This procedure has been developed to address any complaint the College should receive regarding any dissatisfaction identified in any aspect of the College. In this event, the College should be contacted immediately.
- 1.2 A complaint may be made by the following methods: -
 - 1.2.1 **In person** – The complainant shall be directed to the Principal's office, where the Principal, or PA to the Principal, shall take full details of the complaint.
 - 1.2.2 **By telephone** – The Receptionist shall transfer such telephone calls to the PA to the Principal who shall endeavour to obtain enough information to log the complaint.
 - 1.2.3 **By letter** – Letters outlining complaints shall be forwarded directly to the Principal.

2. Objectives

2.1 Recording and Monitoring Complaints

- 2.1.1 The PA to the Principal shall log all complaints and correspondence in the Complaints File.
- 2.1.2 The Principal shall periodically review the complaints to identify any common patterns or themes to complaints and appropriate actions to address these.
- 2.1.3 The Principal shall present a summary report outlining the number of complaints received and issues raised. This shall be presented to the Board annually.

3. Actions and Responsibilities

3.1 Initial action by the College

- 3.1.1 The Principal shall send a letter to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the complaint. This letter shall state that the Principal is commencing proceedings to investigate and address the complaint; this process shall be completed within 10 days when the Principal shall send a further response to the complainant.

- 3.1.2 Any complaint which may lead to a financial claim against the College shall be notified to the College insurers at the discretion of the Principal. All complaints will also be referred to the College Marketing Manager who will take responsibility for any customer care and PR aspects of the complaint in consultation with the Principal.

3.2 Investigating the Complaint

- 3.2.1 The Principal shall investigate the complaint and shall decide if there are grounds for complaint, either in whole or in part, or if there are no grounds for complaints although the complainant feels aggrieved.

In doing so, the following principles shall be taken into account: -

- the customer's perspective is valid;
- staff do not intend to provide a poor service;
- complaints are a valuable source of information.

- 3.2.2 The Principal shall hold discussion with the relevant member of staff and their Manager to establish further detail of the situation. In resolving this, those concerned shall consider: -

- The potential risk of continuing customer dissatisfaction;
- Whether there is any need to support staff more effectively, perhaps through staff training and development;
- Whether resources need to be reallocated;
- Whether procedures need to be changed.

3.3 Implementing a Solution to the Complaint

- 3.3.1 The Principal shall write to the complainant within ten working days of receiving the complaint. If the investigation is likely to take longer than ten days, the Principal shall inform the complainant of this within ten days.

- 3.3.2 The Principal's letter to the complainant shall include the following where appropriate: - an apology, an explanation of findings and appropriate action implemented to rectify the situation (where possible) and prevent a recurrence of similar complaints in the future. The complainant should be notified that they could lodge an appeal if they remain dissatisfied.

4. Appeal against Decisions

- 4.1 The complainant has the right to appeal if they are not satisfied that the matter has been properly resolved. If the complainant wishes to lodge an appeal against the decision made in response to a formal complaint, the following process shall be followed: -

- 4.1.1 An Appeal Panel shall be established consisting of up to three members of the Corporation, but excluding any person involved in the previous handling of the complaint or who is a subject of the complaint.

- 4.1.2 The Principal, or their appointed deputy, and the person appealing (appellant) both have the right to be accompanied or represented by a 'friend'. If the 'friend'

is a legal representative, the College must be informed of this before the panel meets.

- 4.1.3 Unless agreed otherwise by the appellant, ten days notice of the appeal hearing shall be given
- 4.1.4 Each party shall be given the right to make a statement and ask questions.
- 4.1.5 The decision of the appeal panel is binding and both parties, who shall be informed in writing, of the outcome within five working days of the hearing.

4.2 Appeals are not possible if: -

- 4.2.1 The College has no discretion in the matter such as the level of certain fees, some course requirements and legal restraints.
- 4.2.2 It concerns a disciplinary matter that has already been the subject of an appeal.
- 4.2.3 The complaint can be better made to an outside body that is responsible such as an examination board, the local authority, or funding body.
- 4.2.4 The issue is the subject of legal proceedings.

5. Dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Complaint

- 5.1 Only after all College procedures have been exhausted can certain types of complaint be taken to the Learning and Skills Council or the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The complaints must relate to quality of service or unreasonable actions by the College or the College failing to do what is expected of it as noted above.
- 5.2 Details are available in 'Complaints about Colleges of Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges' available for Learning and Skills Council, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.

6. Summary

- 6.1 The College seeks to provide quality learning accessible to all. The procedure outlines the processes to address any dissatisfaction identified in any aspect of the College.
- 6.2 This procedure has been developed to ensure that the College shall address complaints quickly, fairly and effectively.

Person responsible: Linda Watkins, Clerk to the Governors
Next Review: August 2009
Approval Date: **Issue 1:** May 2005 (Board)
Issue 2: October 2006 (CMG)
Issue 3: August 2007 (To reflect College name change)