



Policy Name	Concerns and Complaints
Policy Version	1
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Policy Audience	Staff, students, public
Date Approved	14/08/24
Review Date	14/08/27

Revision History		
Version	Summary of Changes	Date

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1. Introduction

1.1 At The City of Liverpool College we are committed to addressing all concerns and complaints fairly and impartially, providing a high quality service. We welcome any opportunity to review, change and improve our practice. This Policy and Procedure aims to support students, potential students, employers, stakeholders and the general public in communicating with and bringing matters of concern or dissatisfaction to the attention of the College.

1.2 This document outlines how our concerns and complaints procedures work to ensure that a person making a complaint gets a resolution within a reasonable timeframe. To seek help in making a complaint, or to request this document in a different format, please contact either complaints@liv-coll.ac.uk or ask at one of our centre reception desks or Learning Resource Centres (LRC).

1.3 This policy will be applied consistently to all students, employers, and any other stakeholders such as parents or carers, visitors or members of the community. This is regardless of their age, disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, status and marriage or civil partnership status in respect of unlawful discrimination.

1.4 The College will respond to any complaint fairly and promptly. Information regarding timeframes can be found in section three.

2. Scope and Definition of Terms

2.1 The complaints policy and procedure are for all people served by the college. The process of how to make a complaint is detailed in section three. The process is categorised into the following sections:

- students
- employers
- other stakeholders (such as parents, contractors, prospective students, and members of the public).

2.2 The policy does not replace College policy and procedures, such as those for academic appeals or the positive behaviour policy; these procedures should be applied where appropriate. The complaints policy should be used where it is the most appropriate policy and should not be used to overrule decisions made in line with other College policies, such as those outlined above.

2.3 The policy does not relate to student safeguarding concerns. If you have a safeguarding concern, please refer to the College's safeguarding information which can be found by following this [link](#).

2.4 The policy does not cover the Higher Education provision within the College, this is covered by a separate policy which can be found [here](#).

2.5 For the purpose of this policy, a concern is defined as “the fact of feeling worried about something, or something that makes you worry” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024a). Whereas a complaint is defined as “a written or spoken statement in which someone says that somebody has done something wrong or that something is not satisfactory” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024b)

3. Process for Raising a Concern or Complaint

3.1 Process for Students

3.1.1 Concerns

Most student concerns and issues are possible to resolve by initially talking to a relevant member of staff, such as a tutor or progress leader. If you have a speech, language or communication need, you can raise your concern through an advocate or a nominated intermediary. The advocate can, with your consent, communicate with the College on your behalf, and attend any face-to-face meetings with you. The advocate could be a fellow student, member of the student union, family member or friend.

3.1.2 Early Resolution Complaints

If it is felt that a concern has not been addressed, or you feel that the matter is sufficiently serious, then a complaint can be made to either the Assistant or Deputy Head of School that manage the course on which you are enrolled. If the Assistant or Deputy Head of School are unavailable, then complaints may be directed to the Head of School. Verbal complaints made to reception staff, and requests to meet the Principal, will be referred to the relevant Assistant or Deputy head of school. The Assistant or Deputy Head of School will seek to resolve the matters that the complaint pertains to and will contact the student or students concerned to inform them of the actions taken. A response to an early resolution complaint should be made within 10 working days, either with an outcome or an update.

3.1.3 Formal Complaints

If an issue has not been resolved following the early resolution complaints procedure, you can make a formal complaint. A formal complaint must relate to an issue that has occurred within the last twelve months. Formal complaints can be made in the following ways:

- Online using this [formal complaints form](#)
- By asking a member of staff at reception, student formal complaint forms are available here and can be returned to reception at any of our sites.

If you would like assistance in completing this form, then please talk to a representative of the Student Union, which is situated within the Learning Exchange.

Following a formal complaint being submitted:

- You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt, with a complaint reference number, this will usually be within two working days of the complaint being received, although may take longer during periods of college holiday due to annual leave. Where required, the acknowledgment will clarify the specific details of the complaint, to ensure that it is dealt with appropriately.
- If the complaint relates to alleged professional misconduct by a member of staff, at this point the complaint would be referred to Human Resources before the process detailed below commences.
- An appropriate member of the Wider Leadership Team (WLT) will be designated as the investigating officer. This will usually be the Head of School for the relevant curriculum area. However, if the Head of School dealt with the issue as an early resolution complaint, this will likely be the relevant Director of Faculty.
- The investigating officer will respond to your complaint in writing or by email. This will usually be within 10 working days during term time. However, this may take longer over the 'college holidays' due to staff availability, or if the nature of the complaint requires a longer investigation period. Should the scope of the investigation require a longer timeframe to complete, this will be communicated to the complainant.

You will, in most cases, be able to withdraw your complaint at any point. Under certain circumstances however, an investigating officer may be required to complete an investigation even if the complainant requests to withdraw the complaint or ceases communication with the investigating officer. Such instances could include the nature of the complaint being sufficiently serious, or when the outcome of the investigation is likely to be of benefit to college practice and student experience more widely.

On completion of an investigation, the investigating officer will submit a report to the complainant, this may:

- Propose an amicable resolution.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, and take appropriate steps to address the issue.
- Close the complaint as not upheld, providing reasons.

3.2 Process for Employers

The procedure below outlines the complaints process for employers working in partnership with the college's apprenticeship provision. Students who are studying with the college on an apprenticeship programme should follow the process for students, outlined in section 3.1.

3.2.1 Concerns

Most employer concerns will be possible to resolve in an effective and amicable way by raising them with the Apprenticeship Manager who is coordinating the apprentice provision with them. Concerns can be raised in person, verbally and/or in writing.

3.2.2 Early Resolution Complaints

If it is felt that a concern has not been addressed, or the matter is sufficiently serious, then it can be raised as a complaint. Complaints from employers should be made, in the first instance, directly to the Apprenticeship Manager who is coordinating the apprentice provision with them, either verbally or in writing. Complaints from employers that are made via other channels and have not yet been dealt with as an early resolution complaint, will be referred to the Apprenticeship Manager to be addressed. The apprenticeship manager will seek to resolve the matters within the complaint and respond to employer outlining the issues taken to resolve the matter.

3.2.3 Formal complaints

If an employer complaint has been raised under the guidance in section 3.2.2, and the employer feels that this has not been sufficiently addressed. Then a formal complaint can be submitted in the following ways:

- Online using this [formal complaints form](#)
- By asking a member of staff at reception, employer formal complaint forms are available here and can be returned to reception at any of our sites.

If you would like assistance in completing this form, then please email complaints@liv-coll.ac.uk.

Following a formal complaint being submitted:

- You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt, with a complaint reference number, this will usually be within two working days of the complaint being received, although may take longer during periods of college holiday due to annual leave. Where required, the acknowledgment will clarify the specific details of the complaint, to ensure that it is dealt with appropriately.
- If the complaint relates to alleged professional misconduct by a member of staff, at this point the complaint would be referred to Human Resources before the process detailed below commences.
- An appropriate member of the Wider Leadership Team (WLT) will be designated as the investigating officer. This will usually be the Head of School for Apprenticeships. However, if the Head of School dealt with the issue as an early resolution complaint, this will likely be issued to the Director of Faculty.
- The investigating officer will respond to your complaint in writing or by email. This will usually be within 10 working days during term time. However, this may take longer over the 'college holidays' due to staff availability, or if the nature of the complaint requires a longer investigation period. Should the scope of the investigation require a longer timeframe to complete, this will be communicated to the complainant.

You will, in most cases, be able to withdraw your complaint at any point. Under certain circumstances however, an investigating officer may be required to complete an investigation even if the complainant requests to withdraw the complaint or ceases communication with the investigating officer. Such instances could include the nature of the complaint being sufficiently serious, or when the outcome of the investigation is likely to be of benefit to college practice and student experience more widely.

On completion of an investigation, the investigating officer will submit a report to the complainant, this may:

- Propose an amicable resolution.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, and take appropriate steps to address the issue.
- Close the complaint as not upheld, providing reasons.

3.3 Process for Other Stakeholders

The procedure below outlines the process for other stakeholders, this could include, but is not limited to, parents of students, contractors, members of the public and prospective students.

3.3.1 Concerns

Most concerns are possible to resolve by initially talking to a relevant member of staff, where appropriate, or if this is not possible then with a relevant manager for the area of the College about which you have a concern. Concerns that are raised with a member of reception staff or via the College helpline, will be forwarded onto the relevant member of staff or management.

3.3.2 Early Resolution Complaints

If it is felt that a concern has not been addressed, or you feel that the matter is sufficiently serious, then a complaint can be made to the relevant manager, that manages the area of the College about which you would like to complain. Verbal complaints made to reception staff, and requests to meet the Principal, will be referred to the relevant manager. The relevant manager will seek to resolve the matters that the informal complaint pertain to and will contact the complainant to inform them of the actions taken.

3.3.3 Formal Complaints

If an issue has not been resolved following the procedure outlined in 3.3.2, you can make a formal complaint. A formal complaint must relate to an issue that has occurred within the last twelve months. Formal complaints can be made in the following ways:

- Online using this [formal complaints form](#)
- By asking a member of staff at reception, stakeholder formal complaint forms are available here and can be returned to reception at any of our sites.

If you would like assistance in completing this form, then please email complaints@liv-coll.ac.uk.

Following a formal complaint being submitted:

- You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt, with a complaint reference number, this will usually be within two working days of the

complaint being received, although may take longer during periods of college holiday due to annual leave. Where required, the acknowledgment will clarify the specific details of the complaint, to ensure that it is dealt with appropriately.

- If the complaint relates to alleged professional misconduct by a member of staff, at this point the complaint would be referred to Human Resources before the process detailed below commences.
- An appropriate member of the Wider Leadership Team (WLT) will be designated as the investigating officer. If the complaint relates to a curriculum issue, this will usually be the head of school for the relevant curriculum area. However, if the head of school dealt with the issue as an informal complaint, this will likely be the relevant director.
- The investigating officer will respond to your complaint in writing or by email. This will usually be within 10 working days during term time. However, this may take longer over the 'college holidays' due to staff availability, or if the nature of the complaint requires a longer investigation period. Should the scope of the investigation require a longer timeframe to complete, this will be communicated to the complainant.

You will, in most cases, be able to withdraw your complaint at any point. Under certain circumstances however, an investigating officer may be required to complete an investigation even if the complainant requests to withdraw the complaint or ceases communication with the investigating officer. Such instances could include the nature of the complaint being sufficiently serious, or when the outcome of the investigation is likely to be of benefit to college practice and student experience more widely.

On completion of an investigation the investigating officer will submit a report to the complainant, this may:

- Propose an amicable resolution.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, and take appropriate steps to address the issue.
- Close the complaint as not upheld, providing reasons.

3.4 A Complaint Against the Principal, the Board or an Individual Governor

Complaints against the Principal, the board or an individual governor should be addressed to The Clerk to the Board of Governors, The City of Liverpool College, The Learning Exchange, Roscoe Street, Liverpool, L1 9DW.

Complaints against The Clerk to the Board should be addressed to The Chair of the Board of Governors, c/o The Principal, The City of Liverpool College, The Learning Exchange Roscoe Street, Liverpool L1 9DW.

4. Appeals

4.1 If you are not satisfied with the response to your formal complaint, you can appeal. Details of how to submit an appeal form will be contained in the investigation report that you will receive from the investigation officer. If you have any questions about this process, you can contact complaints@liv-coll.ac.uk.

4.2 An appeal will only be considered if the complaint has initially been considered at the formal stage. An appeal should be submitted within 10 working days of receiving the investigation outcome and report, except where extenuating circumstances mean that this would not be possible.

4.3 An appeal will:

- Review the procedures followed at the formal complaint stage.
- Consider whether the complaint outcome and investigating officer response was appropriate.
- Consider new information and material evidence which was unavailable or not considered at the formal complaint stage.

4.4 The complainant will be contacted within two days of receipt of the appeal request, to confirm that the appeal request has been received.

4.5 We aim to respond to complaint appeals within 10 working days. Occasionally, an appeal investigation may extend beyond 10 days due to the nature of the complaint and/or the information required to fully investigate the complaint. In these cases, the complainant will be informed of the timescales involved and, if appropriate, may receive intermediary information regarding progress of the complaint appeal.

4.6 Upon completion of the appeal investigation, the investigating officer will submit a report to the complainant, which will outline the outcome of the appeal investigation and any proposed actions.

5. External Appeals

5.1 For learners aged 18 and under, external appeals should be directed to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The EFSA (2018) states that a complainant

“must issue a formal complaint to your provider and exhaust their complaints procedure, including any appeals processes” before referring a complaint to them. It is therefore important that all relevant previous stages of this policy have been followed.

5.2 If you have fully exhausted the provider’s complaints procedure, have evidence of this and remain dissatisfied, you can contact ESFA. The ESFA will need you to provide evidence that you have fully exhausted this process and will generally only review complaints that relate to an occurrence within the last twelve months.

5.3 The ESFA only accept complaints in writing, by email or letter, except where they are required to make reasonable adjustments. You should email complaints to complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk, or put them in a letter to: Customer Service Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.

5.4 For learners aged 19 and above, external appeals should be directed to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA). The LCRCA (2020) states “If you have fully exhausted the provider’s complaints procedure, have evidence of this and remain dissatisfied, you can contact the Combined Authority.” The Combined Authority will only consider complaints that relate to an issue within the last twelve months.

5.5 The Combined Authority only accept complaints in writing, by email or letter, except where we are required to make reasonable adjustments. Complaints should be emailed to aeb@liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk or posted to Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Adult Education Budget Commissioning Team No 1 Mann Island Liverpool L3 1BP.

6. Unacceptable Complainant Behaviour

6.1 The College is committed to addressing all complaints impartially, fairly and in a timely manner. However, in dealing with a complaint, it is not expected that college employees and staff should be subject to behaviour from a complainant which is considered to be unacceptable. For example, this could include any form of communications that is:

- Abusive, offensive, defamatory, or distressing.
- Aggressive, threatening, coercive, malicious, or intimidating.
- Unreasonably persistent or demanding.

6.2 When it is considered that the behaviour of a complainant is unacceptable, the College will outline why the behaviour is unacceptable and the complainant will be asked to modify their behaviour. If the behaviour continues, or where exceptional circumstances are such that the initial behaviour has been significantly concerning

(such as a physical assault), action will be taken to restrict their contact with staff and students at the College.

6.3 The decision to restrict access will be taken by a member of the College's Strategic Leadership Team after careful consideration of all the relevant circumstances. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate, fair, and proportionate and may include, but will not be limited to:

- Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct.
- Requesting contact in a particular form e.g. letters only.
- Requiring contact to take place with a named person.
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times.
- Asking the complainant to appoint a representative to correspond with the College.

6.4 The complainant will be informed why their behaviour is unacceptable, what action is being taken and the duration of that action. Any action will be proportionate to the nature and circumstances of the incident.

6.5 Where a complainant continues to behave in a way that is considered to be unacceptable, it may be decided to terminate contact with them. This may mean that the college will not continue with the handling of their complaint.

6.6 Where the behaviour threatens the safety and welfare of college staff and/or students, other options will be considered, for example, but not restricted to:

- Action under the positive behaviour policy (including suspension from the College).
- Reporting the matter to the police.
- Taking other legal action.

7. Procedure for Recording of Complaints

7.1 All complaints received from students, employers, or any other stakeholder should be recorded, by the manager who received the complaint, via the "early resolution complaint" log on the staff SharePoint. The relevant category of the early resolution complaint should be selected, and a short summary of the complaint and action taken provided. This will allow a record of the actions taken to resolve a complaint to be maintained.

7.2 Formal complaints will be allocated a reference number and be recorded in the formal complaints report. Complaints received via the formal complaints form will automatically filter into this report, whilst those received in paper form and email will be entered manually by a member of the Pedagogy and Insight team. This report will also record the current status and outcome of formal complaints.

7.3 Managers and investigating officers must complete a written investigation proforma, which will detail actions taken and outcomes. This, and any supporting evidence, should be stored in the secure SharePoint folder linked to the complaint reference number. The secure folder and the proforma will be shared with the investigating officer at the commencement of a formal complaint investigation.

7.4 Senior managers and investigating officers for complaint appeals must complete a written appeal investigation proforma, which will detail actions taken and outcomes. This, and any supporting evidence, should be stored in the secure SharePoint folder linked to the complaint reference number. The secure folder and the proforma will be shared with the investigating officer at the commencement of an appeal investigation.

8. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

8.1 All staff have a responsibility for receiving complaints and treating them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedure above. Staff are expected to provide assistance to support a complainant where necessary.

8.2 The Head of Quality and Insight will monitor the operation of the procedure to ensure that it is effective.

8.3 The Director of Pedagogy and Insight is responsible for providing periodic analysis reports to the Strategic Leadership Team.

8.4 The Governing body will receive an overview of complaints and appeals on an annual basis.

8.5 The Board of Governors is responsible for over-seeing the complaints policy and procedures and may become involved if a complaint is received regarding the Principal, The Clerk or any member of the Board.

9. References and External Links

Cambridge dictionary. (2024a). *Concern*. Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/concern> Access on: 13/01/2024

Cambridge Dictionary. (2024b). *Complaint*. Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/complaint> Accessed on: 13/01/2024

ESFA. (2018). *Complaints about post 16 education and training provision funded by ESFA*. Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-post-16-education-and-training-provision-funded-by-esfa/complaints-about-post-16-education-and-training-provision-funded-by-esfa> Accessed on 14/01/24

LCRCA. (2020). *Adult Education Budget*. Available from: [Complaints-Procedure-AEB-July-2020-v2.pdf \(liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk\)](https://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/complaints-procedure-aeb-july-2020-v2.pdf) Accessed on 13/02/24

10. Appendix

10.1 Flowchart of Complaints Process

Included below is an illustrative flowchart of the complaints process. This provides only an outline of the process that is covered in detail during section three of this policy.

Stage One (Concern)

Where concerns arise, they should be raised with the relevant member of staff. Most issues will be possible to resolve at this stage.



Stage Two (Early Resolution Complaint)

If it is felt that a concern has not been addressed, a complaint should be raised with the relevant assistant or deputy head of school. They will then investigate the issue raised and will respond within 10 working days (either with an outcome or an update).



Stage Three (Formal Complaint)

If the complainant feels that the issue has not been resolved, having raised the complaint with the deputy or assistant head of school. They may submit a formal complaint. This will be allocated to a suitable member of the wider leadership team.



Stage Four (Internal Appeal)

Once the complainant has received a response to their complaint, and a report of the outcome, they may appeal this outcome if they believe it to be incorrect. The appeal will be allocated to a member of the strategic leadership team.



Stage Five (External Appeal)

After a complainant has received a response to their appeal, and a report of the outcome, they have exhausted the College's complaints process. If a complainant has evidence that they have exhausted this process, then they may appeal externally to the The Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) or Combined Authority as appropriate.