

Complaints, feedback and Compliments Policy

Policy details

Policy Title	Complaints Policy
Current Revision	
Policy Owner	Sam Gunnarsson, Assistant Principal Learner Experience
Linked Policies	
Relevant Legislation	

Approval and Review

Approval	Via College Executive Board
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Date of Issue	August 2024
Next review due	August 2026

Equality

The College will comply with all statutory duties in respect of The Equality Act 2010 and its Protected Characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. The college will work within the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Human Rights Act 1998 and any subsequent enactments or modifications.

Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out at the drafting stage for new policies and where existing policies are reviewed and updated.

Sustainability

The college will comply with all statutory duties in respect of sustainable development by seeking to improve the long-term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities. This needs to be done in ways which promote social justice, equality of opportunity and which enhance the natural and cultural environment while respecting its limits.

Welsh Language

The College will comply with its Welsh Language Scheme, which is a statutory document, in all of its activities. This includes conducting Welsh Language Impact Assessments for all new and revised policies and initiatives.

Our commitment to being a Trauma Informed Organisation

The College is committed to transforming into a trauma-informed institution where safety, collaboration, choice, trust and empowerment are central to our culture and practices, ensuring the wellbeing and resilience of all learners and staff. We prioritise the wellbeing of all, fostering positive relationships and experiences which develop and uphold the resilience of learners and staff.

Our commitment to becoming an Antiracist Organisation

Our approach will tackle racism on many levels. We will engage all members of our College community to support transformational change.

We are determined to tackle racial discrimination in all its forms and will be referring to the [Race Relations Act 1976](#) and to achieve the actions set out in the Black Further Education Leadership Group (BFELG) 10 Point Plan.

We are committed to making sure that our College is inclusive. We want the experience of studying and working here to be positive and welcoming for everyone, of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.

We understand that this is the responsibility of all of us and we expect everyone to play an active part.

1.0 Scope and Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any complaints or compliments - whether about teaching and learning, support or general college services, are responded to promptly, fairly and effectively to the best of our ability and within the resources of the College.

This policy applies to any complaints, concerns or compliments from all College Merthyr Tydfil customers, i.e., prospective learners, learners, parents/carers, employers and members of the public, as well as all aspects of college activity, e.g. further and higher education courses, work-based learning, and adult community education. The procedures are designed to deal with any aspect of our services including teaching and training, support services, advice and guidance and college facilities. College customers can also complain if they feel they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately, or if they feel that the service they have received does not meet their expectations.

Please note that the college cannot accept any complaints made after three years of the issue arising or three years after the learner has left the college.

These procedures do not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist that can be found on the college website and intranet

- Representation by learners against decisions made in examinations and assessments (**Academic Appeals System**)
- Allegations of misconduct by a learner (**Responsible at Study Policy**)
- Allegations of misconduct by a member of staff (**Responsible at Study Policy & Disciplinary Procedure**)
- Complaint by a member of staff against another member of staff or the College (**Concerns & Complaints Policy & Procedure and the Dignity at Work Policy**)

2.0 Introduction and Context

The College Merthyr Tydfil is committed to delivering the highest quality education and training in a safe, friendly, professional and inclusive environment, ensuring that all learners, staff, stakeholders and partners have the best customer experience possible.

As a college we strive to continually build upon and enhance the services and support we provide, taking into consideration feedback from Learner Voice surveys, Learner Senedd, Course Representative meetings, National Student Survey, employer surveys and the staff forum to help us improve our learner and wider customers' experience of the college.

This policy outlines the framework we operate for all of our customers, should we fail to meet our standards of service.

This Policy is underpinned by several key principles:

- The college is committed to providing an environment which removes or minimises disadvantage, takes steps to meet their needs and which encourages participation. The wellbeing of our learners is central so they feel good about themselves and respect others.
- The college is committed to ensuring all groups of learners, including those with protected characteristics, have accessible and appropriate support to enable them to achieve their full potential. We consistently seek to remove potential barriers and ensure that the duty to advance equality of opportunity for all protected characteristics is addressed so that all learners are able to access and properly pursue any complaints they have.
- The college is committed to resolve complaints and concerns as quickly and as fairly as possible regarding the services we provide.
- The college is committed to being a trauma informed organisation which will enable us to foster good relationships and promote fairness, equity and understanding.

3.0 Our Pledge:

In order to fulfil its responsibilities under this policy, the College will:

- Make clear to learners and others how to pay us a compliment, provide feedback or make a complaint.
- Publicise our Complaints Policy & Procedures to prospective learners, parents/carers, employers, members of the public and college staff via the college website and staff portal.
- Have an easily accessible on-line form and process for individuals to complete when they wish to make a complaint.
- Have a dedicated feedback and complaints email address: feedback@merthyr.ac.uk and complaints@merthyr.ac.uk

- Investigate complaints quickly, effectively and confidentially in line with our Safeguarding and GDPR policies.
- Monitor complaints regularly and use this information to improve our systems and services in the future.
- Ensure that our policy and procedures reflect the requirements of our franchise partners i.e. the University of South Wales and the Office for Independent Adjudicators (OIA).
- Make reasonable adjustments to this policy in accordance with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and ALN Act.
- Set up procedures where complaints, comments and compliments will be regularly reported on to the College Executive Team, the Curriculum and Quality Committee and the Board of Directors and scrutinised alongside other key college performance indicators and feedback surveys.

4.0 Welsh Language

The College will comply with its Welsh Language Scheme, which is a statutory document, in all of its activities. The college has conducted a Welsh Language Impact Assessment for this policy and any concerns and complaints regarding the Welsh language standards will be automatically referred to the college's Welsh Language Officer. A copy of this complaints policy is also available through the medium of Welsh. We welcome correspondence regarding complaints and concerns through the medium of Welsh and this will not lead to a delayed response.

Any complaints relating to our compliance with the Welsh Language standards service delivery standards, operational and policy making standards will be dealt with through this complaints policy and will be directed to our Bilingual Champion.

A copy of this policy is available on our Website at <https://www.merthyr.ac.uk/en/the-college/complaints/> and also available upon request by contacting complaints@merthyr.ac.uk.

5.0. Learners studying University of South Wales (USW) HE courses:

- Where the complaint relates to academic issues learners will follow The College Merthyr Tydfil's complaints process in the first instance. If the learner/customer is not satisfied with the college's response to the complaint, then they may escalate this up to USW's Student Complaints Regulations and Procedures.
- Where the complaint relates to matters which are the responsibility of the college, for example resources, nursery, and learners, they should access The College Merthyr Tydfil Complaints Procedures.

6.0 Process and Procedures for submitting a compliment, concern or complaint

Stage 1 – Submitting a compliment, concern or complaint

All customers are able to submit a compliment, concern or complaint via:

- Completing the dedicated feedback form on the Complaints, Concerns and Compliments page on the college Website: <https://www.merthyr.ac.uk/en/the-college/complaints/>

Or clicking on the direct link to the form here: <https://bit.ly/3fKLWjn>

- Sending an email to the college's dedicated email addresses:
 - Feedback@merthyr.ac.uk – for compliments
 - Complaints@merthyr.ac.uk – for concerns and complaints
- A paper-based form which can be accessed on the college's Website or through the college's complaints officer, situated in the Learning Zone on the first floor.
- Bringing it to the attention of your course tutor or an appropriate member of staff
- Via written correspondence to:

Caroline Donaldson
Complaints Officer
College Merthyr Tydfil
College Boulevard
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1AR

There are instances where a concern may be relatively minor and your course tutor or a member of the business support staff will be able to take appropriate action and resolve the matter quickly.

If your complaint is of a more serious nature that cannot be dealt with informally, then it will be escalated to stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

The college's Complaints Officer will log your complaint and send you an acknowledgement of the complaint, within five working days, indicating:

- The person who will be dealing with your complaint
- How the complaint will be dealt with

We aim to resolve any concerns quickly and to your satisfaction and will come back to you within 15 working days with a response. However, if you are not satisfied with our response, you can move onto Stage 3 (Appeals). You must submit your appeal within 10 working days of receiving our response.

Stage 3 - Appeals

You may appeal against our response to your complaint by:

Writing to the Principal's PA:

Tracy Woods
PA to the Principal
The College Merthyr Tydfil
Ynysfach
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1AR

Or, email:

T.woods@merthyr.ac.uk

Please note that all appeals must be submitted within 15 working days of the date of our response.

Requests for an Appeal will only be considered where any of the following conditions have been met:

- New evidence can be presented which was not made available to the Nominated Person/s dealing with the complaint at Stage 2, and/or
- The investigation was not carried out fairly or thoroughly, and/or the findings were not borne out by the evidence.

If the Principal is satisfied that either of the above conditions applies, a further investigation will be undertaken. You will be notified of the result of the investigation in writing within 15 working days of receipt of your Appeal.

The Principal's decision will be final.

Note: If your complaint directly concerns the College Principal you should send your complaint directly to:

Mr Stephen Forster

Chair of the Board of Directors
C/o The College Merthyr Tydfil.
Ynysfach
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1AR

7.0 Malicious or Unfounded Complaints

Where the College has investigated a complaint and the outcome is that the complaint is malicious or unfounded, the College reserves the right to consider whether to bring action against the complainant if false statements and/or allegations have been made.

Where it is likely that a learner of the College has made false statements and/or allegations against the College or its members of staff, then the matter may be further pursued under the Disciplinary Policy.

7.1 Vexatious Complaints

A vexatious complaint is one that is pursued, regardless of its merits, solely or principally to harass, annoy or subdue somebody; it is one that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, burdensome or unwarranted.

Identifying vexatious complaints

The Complaints Officer, acting under college disciplinary procedures, may conclude that a complaint is vexatious if a member of college, employee, or another complainant:

- i. Persists in pursuing a complaint which has already been investigated by another or the same manager and provides no new or material information;
- ii. Seeks to prolong contact by continually changing the substance of a complaint or by continually raising further concerns or questions whilst the complaint is being addressed;
- iii. Fails to clearly identify the substance of a complaint, or the precise issues which may need to be investigated despite reasonable efforts by the Complaints Officer to assist them;
- iv. Complains solely about trivial matters to an extent which is out of proportion to their significance; or
- v. makes excessive contact with the Complaints Officer or seeks to impose unreasonable demands or expectations on resources, such as responses being provided more urgently than is reasonable or necessary.

Procedures to be followed

- a. Vexatious and malicious complaints can be very difficult to identify. Largely, this must be a matter of professional judgement for the Complaints Officer or Assistant Principal Learner Experience. However, once identified, such complaints should be tackled as soon as possible.
- b. Any complaint under the College's processes should be fully conducted notwithstanding the

suspicion of the Complaints Officer that a complaint may be in whole or part vexatious or malicious.

c. The report completed by the Complaints Officer should include identification of those aspects of a complaint that are, on the balance of probabilities, vexatious or malicious.

8.0 Monitoring and reporting of complaints

All formal complaints will be logged, tracked and managed by the Complaints Officer.

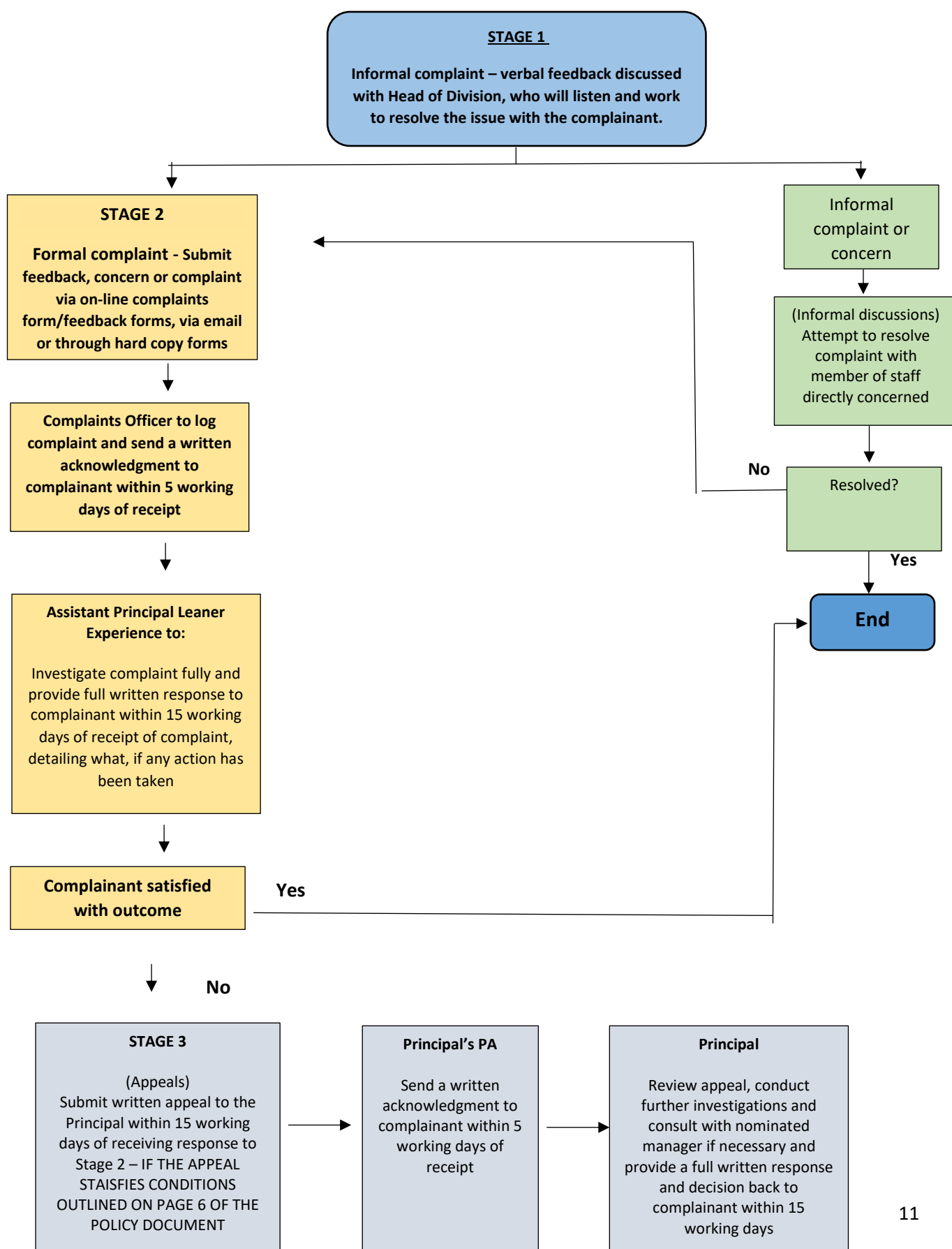
The number and nature of complaints will be recorded and monitored by the Assistant Principal Learner Experience and used as the basis for a termly Complaints Report. This will detail the number and nature of formal complaints and will be presented to the College Executive Team, the college's Curriculum and Quality Committee and the Board of Directors for scrutiny.

9.0 Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We will accept a complaint from a representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our services such as a friend or relative, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

We are committed to making our services easy to use for everyone. In line with our statutory equalities' duties, we will ensure to make reasonable adjustments to help customers access and use our services. If you encounter problems submitting the on-line complaints form, putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, please contact our Complaints Officer, complaints@merthyr.ac.uk.

Flowchart of complaints, concerns and compliments policy





Appendix 1 - Customer Complaint Form – hard copy version

College Merthyr Tydfil Complaints Form - Strictly confidential

Name:	
Learner ID / Number if applicable:	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Email:	

Complaint: *Please provide as much detail as possible, e.g. as much as you can about the complaint, what has gone wrong and how you would like us to try and resolve the matter. (Use overleaf or separate sheet if necessary)*

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Signed:	
Date:	

Appendix Two - Our Useful Contacts:

	Telephone	E-mail
Complaints policy and on-line submission form	https://www.merthyr.ac.uk/en/the-college/complaints/	
Dedicated complaints email address	complaints@merthyr.ac.uk	
Tracy Woods PA to Principal	01685 726004	t.woods@merthyr.ac.uk
Caroline Donaldson, Complaints Officer Learner Support Services	01685 726140	c.donaldson@merthyr.ac.uk
Samantha Gunnarsson – Assistant Principal Learner Experience	01685 726022	sgunnarsson@merthyr.ac.uk

Please forward any written appeals to:

The Principal's PA, The College Merthyr Tydfil, Ynysfach, Merthyr Tydfil. CF48 1AR

Appendix 2

Equality Impact Assessment

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Neither positive or negative	Negative impact	Comment
Disability		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Gender Reassignment		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Marriage or Civil Partnership		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Pregnancy and Maternity		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Race	x			It is intended that this policy will have a positive impact on race and will address any instances of racism effectively.
Religion or Belief	x			It is intended that this policy will have a positive impact on religion and belief and will address any instances of behaviours that could be categorised as a hate crime.
Sexual Orientation	x			It is intended that this policy will have a positive impact on sexual orientation and will address any instances of behaviours that could be categorised as a hate crime.
Sex (Gender)		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Age		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group