

Complaints Handling Procedure

Document Control

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Oldham College

Procedure Owner: **Nick Middleton**

Scope

1.1 Complaints may be made by any party accessing any aspect of service from the organisation, or with any other association with the organisation or the services it provides. Such parties may include learners, parents, employers or other users of the organisation's services. This Procedure does not cover complaints which constitute bullying, harassment or staff grievances. These are dealt with under separate procedures.

1.2 Types of Complaint

1.2.1 All complaints which are logged and dealt with through this Procedure are considered to be formal complaints. The Procedure defines two levels of formal complaint: -

Level 1 Complaints: those that can be resolved within twenty-four hours by the member of staff logging the complaint, and to the satisfaction of the complainant, and

Level 2 Complaints: those that cannot be resolved within twenty-four hours due to complexity or seriousness, and which require allocation to a Manager for investigation.

Responsibilities

2.1 The Complaints Handling Officer will be responsible for the allocation of complaints for investigation to the appropriate Faculty Head, Unit Manager or cross-College Manager, and for day to day monitoring and management of the Procedure, including timely issue of internal and external communication.

2.2 The Investigating Manager is responsible for undertaking the timely investigation into a complaint allocated to them (refer to Appendix flowchart for timescales).

2.3 The Investigating Manager is responsible for resolving the complaint and compiling the resolution letter. The Investigating Manager is also responsible for recommendation of future preventative measures.

2.4 The Director of Quality is responsible for monitoring the complaints process.

2.5 The Vice Principal 16-19 and Adult Programmes or appropriate other senior manager is responsible for arbitration where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way in which it has been handled.

2.6 Complaint loggers (i.e. Student Services staff or in the case of Work Based Learning WBL/UCO Administration staff) are responsible for initial clarification and recording of complaints on the i-Complain system either when received in person from the complainant, by any other means from the complainant or by referral from another member of staff.

Student Input

3.1 Students may register their cause for concern or complaint face to face at Student Services, by

telephoning the main Reception or by using the links on the College/UCO Website(s).

Procedure (see also Appendices 1 to 3)

- 4.1 Complaints may be received by any member of staff; if they are not able to resolve the complaint they should refer the complainant to Student Services or in the case of WBL/UCO an appropriate administrator, who will log the complaint as a Level 2 type on the i-Complain system. They may also refer students to the complaints form on the website.
- 4.2 Where it is not possible or appropriate to refer a complainant to Student Services, the member of staff receiving the complaint may take full details (see i-Complain Required Details in Appendix) and send them through to Student Services or WBL (or UCO staff) for logging, or may offer the complainant the option to use the complaint form on the College website.
- 4.3 Level 1 Type Complaints (definition at 1.2.1)
 - 4.3.1 Level 1 complaints received by authorised complaint loggers must be recorded on the i-Complain system and the complainant is given a receipt for the logging of their complaint.
- 4.4 Level 2 Type Complaints (definition at 1.2.1)
 - 4.4.1 Level 2 Type Complaints have five main elements: initial clarification and recording, allocation, investigation, resolution and monitoring. For responsibility see Section 2 – Responsibility; for further information on each element see Appendix 2.
- 4.5 Level 2 Complaint Handling Timescales
 - 4.5.1 The Complainant will be given a receipt as the Complaint is logged, which details the Complaints Handling process. They will receive an acknowledgement by way of a letter, email or telephone call from the Complaints Handling officer within two working days.
 - 4.5.2 The Complaints Handling Officer will allocate the complaint within twenty-four hours to an Investigating Manager; this will be either the appropriate Head of Faculty, Unit Manager or cross College manager. The Investigating Manager should contact the complainant within the first three working days of the investigation window.
 - 4.5.3 The Complaint will be investigated within ten working days, and where possible a resolution made and entered onto the i-Complain system. The resolution letter is generated by the Investigating Manager and sent for approval to the Complaints Handling Officer; upon approval the letter will be immediately sent to the complainant.
- 4.6 Complaints to the Principal
 - 4.6.1 Where a complaint is made directly to the Principal, the complaint should be referred to an appropriate member of staff for logging on the i-Complain system, and the Complaints Handling Officer informed.
- 4.7 Appeals Against the Decision
 - 4.7.1 Where a complainant is dissatisfied with how their complaint has been handled they may request that a review be undertaken. This will be undertaken by the appropriate Vice Principal or other senior manager.

- 4.7.2 The appeal will be logged on the i-Complain system by the Complaints Handling Officer: it should be logged as a new complaint, but with reference made within the entry to the fact that it is an appeal. The process will be managed by the Complaints Handling Officer from that point forward, and the appropriate Vice Principal or other senior manager should be notified immediately upon the appeal being logged.
- 4.7.3 The Vice Principal or other senior manager will acknowledge receipt of the request within two working days and after discussion with the complainant will investigate the handling of the complaint.
- 4.7.4 A response will be made to the complainant within ten working days. If a final response cannot be made within this timescale reasons for this will be stated and a revised timescale provided. The outcome of the appeal process is final, and no further appeal will be considered by the organisation.
- 4.7.5 If the complainant is still dissatisfied, the matter may be referred to the awarding organisation (if appropriate), and if still dissatisfied the complainant should be referred to the appropriate funding body (if the student is funded).

4.8 Monitoring Complaints

- 4.8.1 The monitoring of each complaint will be undertaken by the Complaints Handling Officer on a daily basis to ensure that the timescales within this Procedure are adhered to. Where a complaint is outstanding, the Director of Quality will intervene to ensure the Complaint is resolved as quickly as possible.
- 4.8.2 The Complaints Handling Officer will provide a summary of complaints data on request for the Principalship.

4.9 Recommendations Following Complaints

4.9.1 **Removed from this version.**

4.10 Vexatious Complaints

- 4.10.1 Complaints which may be deemed by the College to be vexatious will be dealt with under the guidance in appendix 4 to this procedure.
- 4.10.2 Vexatious complaints are those which are likely to be seen as one or more of the following:
- obsessive;
 - harassing or likely to cause distress to staff;
 - designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
 - lacking any serious purpose or value.

Associated Documentation

- 5.1 [Appendix 1: Definitions and Implementation Detail](#)
- 5.2 [Appendix 2: Flow Chart detailing roles, timescales and actions](#)

Related Procedures

- 6.1 Anti-Harassment Procedure

6.2 Disciplinary Procedure

6.3 Assessment Appeals Procedure

6.4 Staff Discipline, Code of Conduct

Change History Record

Issue	Description	Approval (author signature)	Date of Issue
1	Issued in new format		2/10/12
1.1	Minor amendments made: inclusion of BDU and title changed to 'Complaints Handling Procedure	Nick Middleton	29/01/13
1.2	Amendment to 4.7.5 – referral to Awarding Organisation added to Appeal stage.	Nick Middleton	26/04/13
1.3	Assistant Director Quality Ownership statement removed from footer and replaced with document control statement.	Nick Middleton	20.09.13
1.4	Revised for May 2013 Restructure including replacement of 'Head of Quality', change of 'Complaints Handling Officer' to Customer Care Manger, and inclusion of Director Transitions and Partnerships. Clause 4.8.3 removed.	Nick Middleton	02.06.14
1.5	Confirmed by G. Carpenter as fit for 2014/15	Nick Middleton	12.08.14
1.6	Clause 4.9 added – Recommendations following Complaints	Nick Middleton	16.09.14
1.7	'Assistant/Vice Principal' changed to 'Assistant Principal' throughout the document. 2.1 – amended to indicate Client Care Manager responsible for allocation. Clause 2.2 removed. 4.3.1 – Level 1 Complaints to be logged when received by authorised loggers. Clause 4.6.2 removed. 4.1.5.2 added. 4.6.1 – Complaints to the Principal to be dealt with only within this Procedure.	Nick Middleton	04.11.14
1.8	4.9.2 added regarding Complaints outcomes target in the Quality Strategy.	Nick Middleton	08.04.15
1.9	Updated for 2015/16 Director Transitions and Partnerships replaced by Director of Quality and Learning Resources Assistant Principal Quality replaced by Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality. 4.1 BDU Customer Service Manger replaced by Customer Care Manager 4.7 Assistant Principal replaced by Vice Principal	Nick Middleton	12.08.15

1.10	Updated for 2016/17 Director Quality and Learning Resources replaced by Director of Quality throughout. Customer Care Manager replaced by Student Experience Manager throughout. 'Appropriate Senior Manager' added to Vice Principal roles. 4.7.5 – Principal stage removed from Appeals process. 'Appropriate funding body' replaced Skills Funding Agency. 4.8.4 removed.	Nick Middleton	19.08.16
1.11	2.5 truncated. 2.6 Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality replaced by Assistant Principal Curriculum.	Nick Middleton	17.08.17
1.12	'Student experience manager' replaced throughout by 'Complaints Handling Officer'. 4.2 Reference to Moodle-based form replaced by College website. 4.9.2 removed.	Nick Middleton	24.09.18
1.13	'Assistant Principal Curriculum' replaced by 'Assistant Principal Curriculum and Learning'. 4.1 'Complaints Handling Officer' replaced by 'an appropriate administrator'.	Nick Middleton	11/09/19
1.14	Updated for 2020/21. Minor typographical amendments.	Nick Middleton	09/09/20
1.15	Updated for 2021/22 3.1 – reference to Moodle removed.	Nick Middleton	31/08/21
1.16	Updated and section 4.10 added along with a link to appendix 3.	Nick Middleton	07/06/22
Draft 2.0	Ghost clauses removed, numbering updated and procedure document re-baselined.	Nick Middleton	07/06/22
Version 2.1	Approved by Senior Postholders. Minor updates to role titles. 4.7.5 extended to clarify closure of complaint at appeal outcome stage.	Nick Middleton	13/06/22
Version 3.0	Ghost clause 2.2 removed; Procedure renumbered and re-baselined.	Nick Middleton	10.08.22
Version 3.1	Minor formatting issues resolved. Confirmed as fit for purpose for 23/24.	Nick Middleton	31.08.23
Version 3.2	Vice Principal Curriculum Teaching and Learning replaced by Vice Principal 16-19 and Adult Programmes. 4.1 Complaints form on website added. 4.5.1 Initial acknowledgement changed to CHO from Investigator. 4.5.2 Three working days initial contact window added for Investigator. 4.8.2 Termly report to Principalship changed to 'on request'. 4.9.1 removed.	Nick Middleton	04.09.24