

Apprenticeship Complaints Procedure for Employers, Apprentices, Parents/Guardians of Apprentices

Policy owner:

Assistant Principal Quality, Teaching and Learning

Policy Last Updated:

July 2019

Next review date:

July 2020

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester Institute is committed to excellent service and endeavours to ensure that requirements are met for all its employers, customers' and apprentices' and the parents/guardians of apprentices'.

1.2 In order for us to improve our services we welcome compliments, comments or complaints.

1.3 We are happy to receive feedback in a number of ways which are outlined in this procedure.

2. Apprentices Enrolled on Higher Apprenticeship Programmes

2.1 This policy also applies to complaints relating to higher level apprenticeships; it should be noted that where a higher level apprenticeship includes elements of a degree programme, depending on the nature of the complaint, complainants may be referred to the affiliated HE provider.

3. Guidance for staff

3.1 In the case of concerns raised, the college would want to ensure a swift resolution. Ideally concerns are addressed at source to avoid them becoming formal complaints; staff are advised to contact the Quality team support staff if concerns appear too complex to ensure swift resolution.

3.2 When a formal complaint is received a coordinator from the Quality Team will provide the single point of contact for the complainant and will support the staff involved in the investigative process. The Quality Team coordinator will act as an independent arbiter to ensure that the procedure is followed.

4. Making it Easy to Comment

4.1 There is an online process which can be accessed at www.colchester.ac.uk; the on-line form is located on the home page of the College portal and is accessed via the pink feedback button.



5. Other Methods

5.1 Compliments, comments or complaints cards' are placed at the following locations so that they are clearly visible and available for use by customers/apprentices, apprentices' parents/guardians and employers:

Main Reception (all sites)

Student Services (Colchester and Braintree) Library (Colchester and Braintree)

The cards can be handed in at any of the locations above or sent directly to the Teaching & Learning Improvement Manager: Quality, via the address on the card.

6. Customer/ Apprentices Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure

- 6.1 The College would encourage employers, apprentices, apprentices' parents/guardians and customers to raise any issues or concerns in the appropriate area/department directly with the appropriate person.
- 6.2 Apprentices raising a complaint may wish to speak to the Student Union; student union representatives are not trained in legal matters and may not be familiar with the particular issues the apprentices is raising but they are happy to provide a listening ear and/or support at any meetings which may form part of the process. A range of different support services can also be accessed via the Student Services area; apprentices may access these services independently or can request a staff referral.
- 6.3 The College would always strive to address any concerns appropriately to ensure a positive outcome however it is recognised that, in a small number of cases, it may be necessary to escalate matters using the formal complaints procedure.
- 6.4 Should any employer, customer, apprentices, apprentices' parent/guardian wish to pay a compliment, make a comment or lodge a formal complaint, he/she may make contact using the methods outlined above but where this is inappropriate, face to face or telephone complaints or other feedback may be made.
- 6.5 In the case of verbal complaints, notes of main points will be made and the complainant will be asked to confirm the accuracy of the notes before an investigation commences. A request may be made for an appropriate email contact address to ensure that an effective and swift line of communication is established. Details of the complaint will be retained for 3 academic years in accordance with the College's Data Retention Policy. Where personal information is provided, this will be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.
- 6.6 On behalf of the Assistant Principal, Quality and Teaching & Learning Improvement, the Quality Team coordinator will acknowledge a complaint, compliment or comment within 3 working days of receipt and copy this to relevant members of staff. In the case of a complaint, the coordinator will also send a complainant a copy of this policy. In line with the sustainability policy, general practice is to send a link to an electronic copy of the policy.
- 6.7 The Director of Apprenticeships and Business Solutions will be responsible for instigating an investigation into the complaint, which may involve meeting with the complainant. The Director of Apprenticeships and Business Solutions will liaise with the Head of Area who will undertake an investigation into the

concerns raised. Once the investigation has been concluded; a response from the Head of Area will be sent to the Quality Team coordinator who will forward this on to the complainant. The College aims to provide a formal response within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgment.

6.8 Where complaints are complex and/or more time is needed to investigate, the complainant will be advised and regular progress updates will be provided.

6.9 Please note: *Where concerns are raised by a third party relating to an apprentice who is aged 18 or over the college will normally need to seek permission from the apprentices before formulating a response. Where concerns are raised by a third party relating to an apprentice who is aged under 18 the college will normally need to seek permission from the named next of kin, as recorded on EBS.*

7. Procedure if an Employer, Customer/ Apprentice /Parent/Guardian of an Apprentice Remains Dissatisfied

7.1 Should an employer, customer, apprentice or parent/guardian of an apprentice, believe that their complaint has not been handled properly and fairly, following the stated procedures, he/she may request an internal review.

A request for an internal review will only be granted on the following grounds:

- Evidence/indications that there was a procedural irregularity of such nature creating doubt that the investigation/response would have been different had such an irregularity not occurred
- New material evidence which was not available for valid reasons, earlier in the process

The request for an internal review should be sent within 10 working days of receiving the response; it should be sent to the Quality Coordinator marked for the attention of the Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum Planning and Quality who will undertake a review before replying to the complainant. The review will include whether the grounds for appeal are valid as set out in this procedure and, if that is the case, consider the grounds presented by the complainant. Depending on the nature of the complaint, in some cases it may be more appropriate to refer the request to another member of the College Executive. The College would aim to respond to any appeal within 10 working days; if additional time is required the Quality coordinator will provide updates on progress and advise of any revised deadlines.

7.2 If the complainant feels that decisions that have been made are unreasonable, they may escalate their complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The Agency will not substitute its decision for the provider's where the provider has followed its procedures and the decision is

reasonable. In the case of a higher level apprenticeship which has an affiliated HE provider, the complainant will be advised of the appropriate procedure for escalation.

- 7.3 Further details including a copy of the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints about Providers of Education and Training may be found [here](#)

8 Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

8.1 All individuals involved in a complaint need to act reasonably and fairly towards one another and treat the process itself with respect and not abuse it. It is recognised that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress, however, the organisation also recognises its duty to ensure the safety and welfare of its staff and apprentices. Consequently, the organisation has a zero tolerance towards complainants whose behaviour is deemed to be unacceptable and action will be taken to protect staff and associated workers. The term 'complainant' also includes anyone appointed as a third party to act on the complainant's behalf.

8.2 The definition of 'unacceptable behaviour' might include, but is not necessarily restricted to, cases in which there is clear evidence that the complainant has behaved in one or more of the following inappropriate ways or the complaint itself is considered to be frivolous, vexatious or motivated by malice:

- Complaints which are obsessive, harassing or repetitive
- Communicating in an abusive, offensive, defamatory, distressing, aggressive, threatening, coercive or intimidating manner
- Submitting a complaint containing materially inaccurate or false information or evidence
- Insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes
- Insistence on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value

8.3 When a complainant's behaviour, or the complaint itself, is considered to be unacceptable, as a first step, the College will normally tell the complainant why their behaviour or complaint is considered to be unacceptable and will ask them to desist. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, action will be taken to restrict contact.

8.4 Any decision to restrict a complainant's access will be communicated to the complainant by the Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching & Learning

Improvement. In such cases the Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching & Learning Improvement must seek confirmation and approval from the Principal & Chief Executive.

The options most likely to consider are some/or all of the following:

- Requesting contact in a particular form
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff
- Restricting phone calls/emails to specified days/times
- Restricting access to the college's campus
- Requiring the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct
- Requiring the complainant to appoint a representative to correspond on their behalf

There is no right of appeal to this decision.

- 8.6 In some cases, it will be appropriate to move straight to the action described in the section 8.5. In instances where a complaint is considered to be frivolous and/or unnecessarily repetitious and/or vexatious, or where a complainant has agreed restrictions but still continues to behave in a way that is considered to be unacceptable, the Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching & Learning Improvement will consider whether to terminate contact forthwith with the complainant. In exceptional circumstances, this may mean that consideration of the complaint is also terminated and complainants must be informed that they have reached the end of the College procedure.
- 8.6 The Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching & Learning Improvement must seek confirmation and approval from the Principal & Chief Executive for this action. There is no right of appeal to this decision.
- 8.7 Where a complainant submits multiple complaints on substantially the same issue, the College reserves the right to treat the matter as a single complaint and to decline to respond to each separate subsequent complaint. This decision can be made by the Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching & Learning Improvement who must seek confirmation and approval from the Principal & Chief Executive for this action. There is no right of appeal to this decision.
- 8.8 At all stages of dealing with unacceptable behaviour, the college reserves the right to involve other agencies as required, including the police.

COLLEGE FEEDBACK
FOR ANY COMPLIMENTS,
COMMENTS *you opinion* OR COMPLAINTS *matters...*

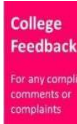


General Compliments, Comments or Complaints

At Colchester Institute, we do everything we can to make sure our apprentices and customers get the best possible service. If you have been particularly pleased with the service you have received, we would like to know, as it helps us to maintain our high standards.

We do, however, recognise that we do not always get it right. When this happens, we encourage you to tell us so that we can make things better.

How to contact us:

- Online at www.colchester.ac.uk and click on “Contact us” and complete the College Feedback form.
- On Colchester Institute portal, home page and click on  College Feedback
For any compliments, comments or complaints
- Manually by completing the form on the following page giving details of your compliment, comment or complaint. Detach the form and hand it into the Main Reception (all sites), Student Services, or the Library. Alternatively, post it to us by folding in half and using the address at the back of the form.

If this is a complaint, it will be acknowledged within three working days and the College aims to provide a full written response within 10 working days.

Please note: where concerns are raised by a third party relating a student who is aged 18 or over the college may need to seek permission from the student before formulating a response.

Please give us the details of your
compliment, comment or complaint

Name:

Address:

Course title(if applicable):

Email:

Telephone number:

Date:

Please fold on line

Quality Officer
B304
Colchester Institute
Sheepen Road
Colchester
CO3 3LL