

COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Equality Assessment: HEAD OF QUALITY

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Version and Date		Actions/Notes
1.0	August 2024	Updated scope, process & changes to job titles

Approved by SMT: SEPTEMBER 2024

Approved by Corporation: 22.10.24

Date of Next Review: August 2025

Related policies or procedures or parent policy if applicable: Academic Appeals Procedure
HE Refund and Compensation Policy

Groups/bodies consulted in the development of the policy: OIA
Awarding Bodies

To be published on College Website: Yes

To be published on Student Hub: Yes

COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

This policy provides a procedural framework for learners to raise complaints and compliments. The College welcomes the opportunity to celebrate compliments from learners and share these internally and externally.

The College welcomes the chance to investigate any circumstance where a learner feels the College standards have failed to meet expectations. If, through investigation, information comes to light of an error, poor judgement, or unfair or irregular action, the College will endeavour to use a common-sense approach when judging the appropriate course of action.

The College will make every effort to correct any circumstances found to disadvantage a learner and take action to ensure there is no repeat of the same circumstance so far as is practicable.

Scope

This policy covers all learners on Further Education courses.

This policy will not discriminate either directly or indirectly against any individual on grounds of gender, race, ethnicity or nationality, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability, socio-economic status, or any other personal characteristic.

Compliments Procedure

The college assumes that most compliments from learners to teachers or managers will be given informally. To ensure these compliments are officially recorded, staff members should email them to the Senior Executive Assistant. There is also a feedback form on the website that can be completed

Complaints Procedure

1. Stages of complaint

1.1 Early resolution

This is the preferred stage of resolution where the response is swift and given at a local level and is mutually agreed by the staff member approached and complainant.

1.2 Formal resolution

If early resolution is not possible due to the nature or seriousness of the complaint or the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response the formal stage of the process will begin. The Head of Quality will manage the formal process and will act on behalf of the complainant to ensure the procedure is followed at all times. The Head of Quality will also ensure any responses sent to the complainant satisfy this policy. If the complaint is regarding the Head of Quality it will be investigated by the Deputy Principal.

2. Complaints Process

2.1 Stage 1 (Informal): The College expects most minor complaints to be dealt with informally with the manager concerned. If the learner feels the matter has not been resolved, the following policy applies.

2.2 Stage 2 (Formal): For a complaint to be considered formal, it must be submitted to the College in writing within six weeks of the event that gave rise to it, or within six weeks of the end of the course for current students. The College may extend this time limit in extenuating circumstances.

2.3 Stage 3 (Appeal): If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, they may appeal to the principal within 5 working days of receiving the full response.

2.4 Stage 4: If the complaint is about the Principal or a member of the governing body, the complainant should write to the Director of Governance.

2.4 Stage 5 (External): If the complainant has exhausted the College complaints process and remains dissatisfied, they may complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

3. Role of Investigating Officers

3.1 Investigating Officers will be appointed by the Head of Quality for specific complaints. Officers should have no conflicts of interest with the case. New appointees will receive briefing and mentoring on procedures.

3.2 Investigations must fully respect fairness, consistency, and impartiality. Complainants should be able to represent their case. Judgements should align with policy and consider previous cases.

4. Conducting Investigations

4.1 A swift yet thorough investigation should interview all involved parties and gather documentary evidence like emails, reports, and pro-monitor comments.

4.2 Complainants must be contacted for clarity if the complaint is complex or serious. Discussion records should be retained.

4.3 The policy permits 10 working days to investigate, concluding with a draft report and response letter. If more time is required, the Head of Quality should be consulted on extensions.

4.4 Investigators finding complaints justified wholly or partially should agree specific remedy actions with the Head of Quality to resolve issues.

5. Reporting Requirements

5.1 Investigators must submit the following within 10 working days:

Formal written investigation report

Draft response letter for complainant

Full interview and evidence notes

Completed investigation template (Appendix B)

Suggested follow-up actions if complaint upheld

5.2 Outcome letters will be approved by the Investigator, Head of Quality, and an SLT member prior to sending.

5.3 The Head of Quality will update complaint records, identify potential improvements, and arrange agreed follow-up actions.

6. Appealing Outcomes

6.1 If dissatisfied with the investigation outcome, the complainant may register a written appeal with reasons to the Principal within 5 days of receiving the decision letter.

6.2 An impartial manager will review whether the conclusion aligns with available evidence. Any extension or revision of outcomes must have a clear rationale.

6.3 The Principal issues an outcome letter after appeal, concluding College procedures. Further options like referral to external bodies may be covered.

7. Support for Learners

7.1 Learners should be directed to support services available, such as the Welfare Team, who could provide independent advice on accessing systems or procedures to assist with concerns or documenting a complaint.

7.2 All procedures should be available in accessible formats, and a case-by-case assessment should take place for each learner to ensure fair access to procedures.

7.3 Learners will be advised of the need to complete name and contact details with all complaints to allow the College the opportunity to investigate and feedback in full.

8. Frivolous or Vexatious complaints

If a complaint is considered to be frivolous or vexatious the College will have the right to terminate consideration of the complaint and associated procedures. In such cases the College will write to the learner concerned and explain why termination of procedures is appropriate. The College will consider a complaint to be frivolous or vexatious if:

- complaints are obsessive, harassing or repetitive
- insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and or unrealistic outcomes occurs
- insistence on pursuing what may be unmeritorious complaint in an unreasonable manner occurs
- complaints are designed to cause disruption
- demands for redress without purpose or value occur

9. Recording and Learning from Complaints

9.1 Complaint records should be sufficient and proportionate in detail, allowing identification of issues and training requirements where necessary.

9.2 The Head of Quality will ensure there is a procedure in place to act on any issues identified, including: - Use of data to identify root causes of complaints - Action to reduce the chance of recurrence of problems - Recording of corrective actions - Systematic review of complaints to improve performance and enrich self-assessment

9.3 Reports will be presented to the Senior Management team termly and to Corporation annually.

10. Policy Review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Corporation to ensure it remains fit for purpose and aligned with best practices.

Appendices

Appendix A: Complaints Process Flow Diagram

Appendix B: HE Complaints Process Flow Diagram Appendix C: Investigating Officer's report Template

Anonymous Complaints

Complaints sent without names and contact details will not be investigated further but will be filed by the Head of Quality

Higher Education Complaints

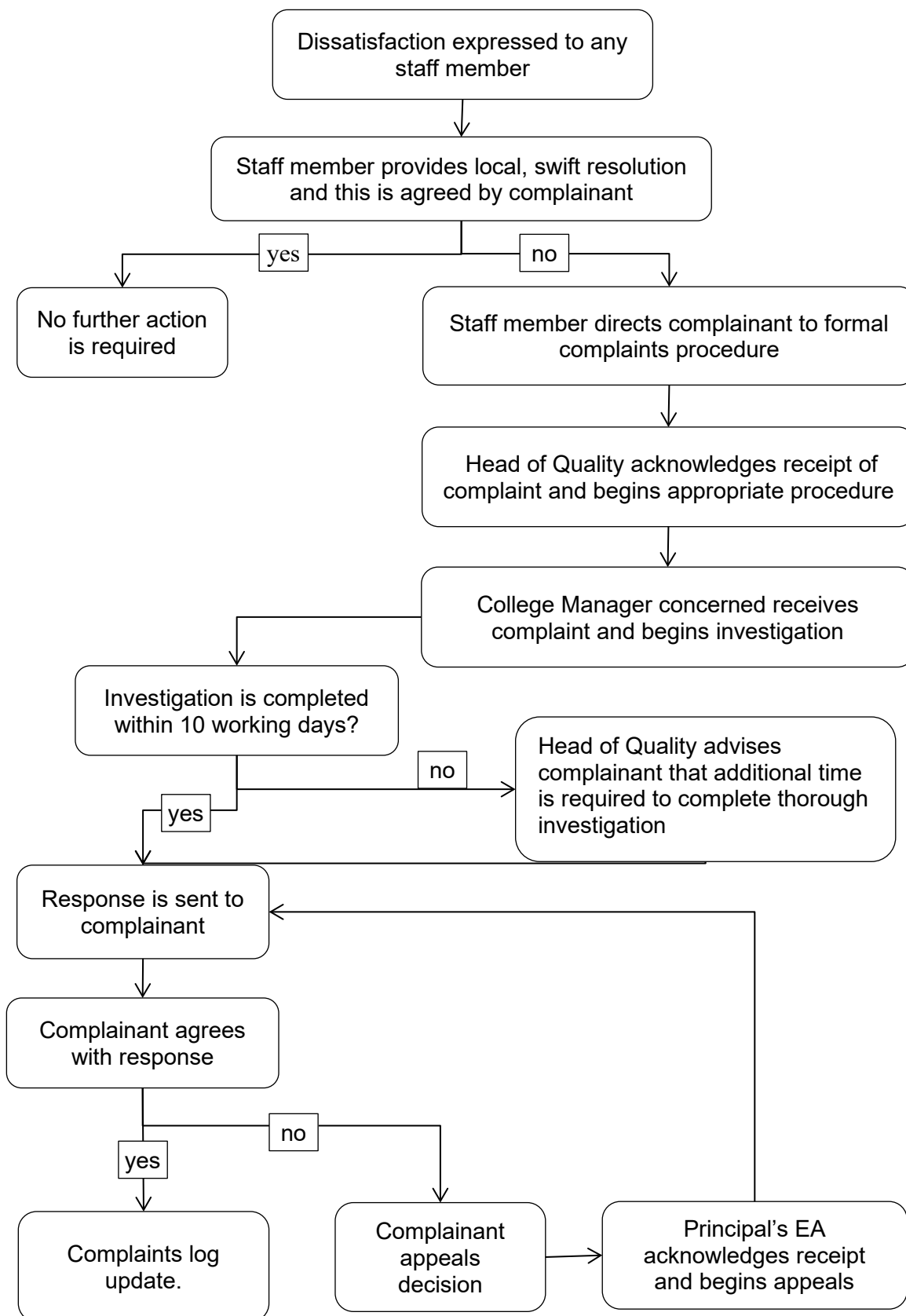
The College complies with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and will issue all HE complainants with information on how to access support from the OIA when appealing a final response regarding HE provision at Macclesfield College if all College procedures have been exhausted.

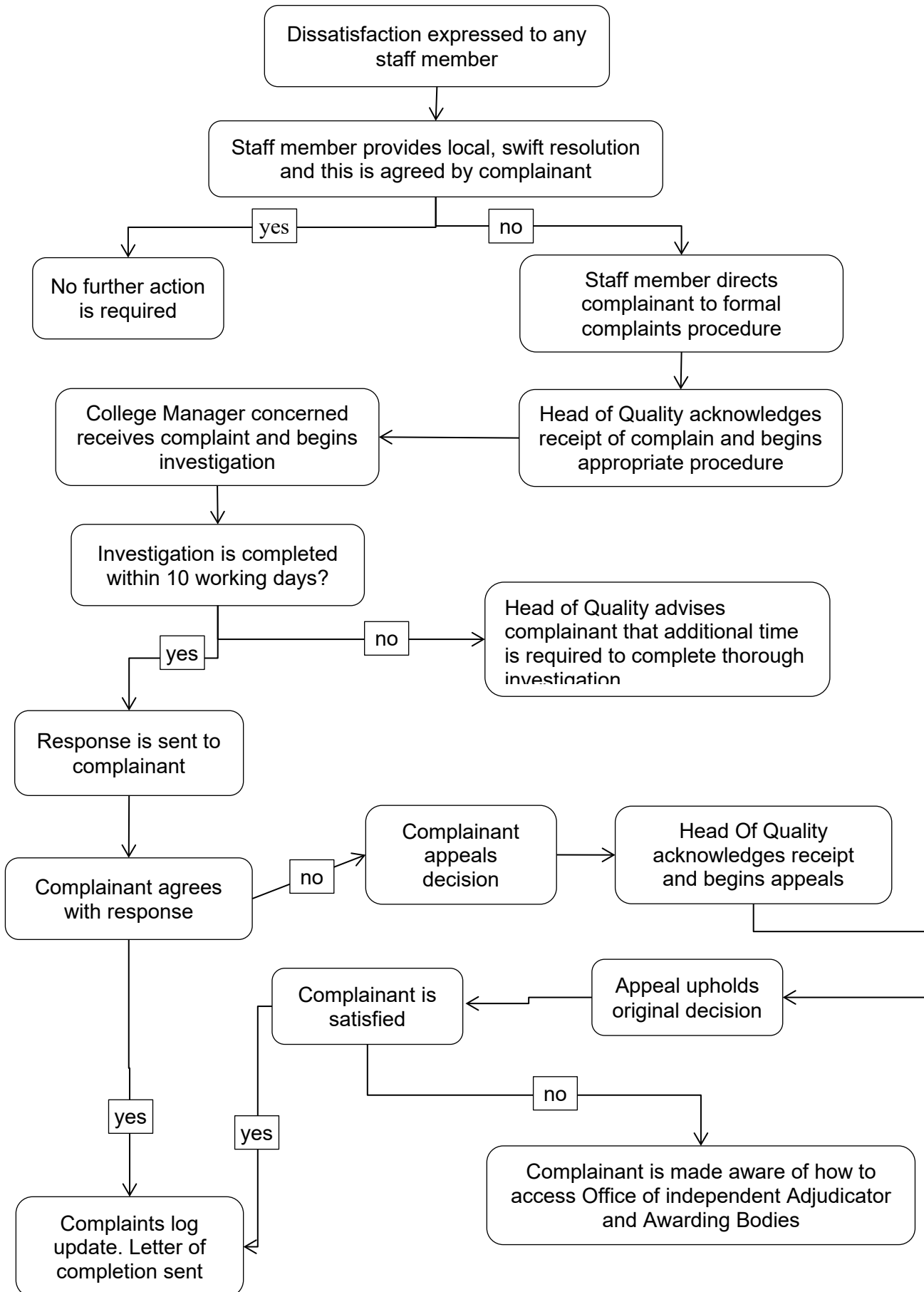
Complaints Accountability

Complaints can be made to any member of staff. All staff members will be made aware of the Complaints Procedure and how to handle them at the early resolution stage. If this informal stage cannot resolve the issue staff will need to be aware of the appropriate referral route. The College's policy is to use informal resolution where possible to avoid escalation.

Complaints Outcomes

All complainants will receive communication detailing the outcome of any investigations and what action, if any, the College is taking to rectify the situation.





Investigating Officer's Report Template

Investigating Officer's Report

Complaint Reference Number:

Complaint From:

Course:

Centre Principal:

Date Complaint Received:

Received by Investigation Officer:

Deadline to return to Quality:

Nature of Complaint

[Copy of correspondence received]

Acknowledgement Sent

[Date]

Outline of Investigation

[Detail the course of your investigation, i.e., people interviewed, information gathered, etc.]

Rationale for Outcome

[Provide a clear explanation for the conclusion reached]

Complaint Justification

Do you consider the complaint to be justified? YES/NO

If yes, please state why this is the case: [Explanation]

Staff Involvement

Where the complaint relates to a member of staff, has the member of staff been informed and seen your written response? YES/NO

Response to the Complainant

[This section will be copied into the main body of the standard outcome letter. It must be in written letter format.]

Lessons Learned

Is there anything that can be learned following the investigation? [Detail any insights or improvements identified]

Action Taken

[List any immediate actions or recommendations]

Follow-up Actions

[Outline any long-term actions or changes to be implemented]

Investigator's Signature:

Date:

Shape

Guidelines for Completing the Report

Be objective and factual in your reporting.

Ensure all relevant parties have been interviewed and their statements recorded.

Gather and reference all pertinent evidence (emails, documents, etc.).

Clearly explain your rationale for the outcome, referencing college policies where appropriate.

If the complaint is justified, be specific about remedial actions to be taken.

In the "Lessons Learned" section, focus on systemic improvements rather than individual blame.

Ensure your response to the complainant is clear, addresses all points raised, and explains any actions to be taken, and return to Head of Quality to send the response.

Complete all sections of the report thoroughly to ensure a comprehensive record of the investigation.