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## Bury College Policy and Procedures

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# Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure

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## **1. Introduction & Purpose**

1.1 At Bury College, we are committed to providing high quality services for all our college community. Taking account of stakeholders' views enables the college to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement. This document details the Compliments, Complaints Policy, and Procedure that will be followed by the college.

1.2 Complaints will be monitored and administered centrally by the Quality Team under the direction of the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality. The complaints procedure is designed to help us gain a clearer view of how students and other users of the college perceive us. It sets out to ask for compliments as well as complaints so that we can identify good practice in the college as well as identifying those areas where we have fallen short of our high standards.

1.3 The college defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about:

- Standards of service
- Action or lack of action by the college or its employees
- Provisions of the college affecting students, visitors or other stakeholders

1.4 A complainant may be a student (Further or Higher Education), prospective student, parent, employer or visitor to the college.

1.5 Students may submit a 'group complaint'. Where a complaint is made by a number of students, the College may ask the group to nominate one student to act as group representative.

1.6 If the complainant is a college employee, they should refer to the college Grievance Procedure as a means for ensuring that their issue is dealt with promptly and satisfactorily. For further information, contact the Human Resources department.

1.7 Academic appeals are not part of this policy or procedure. Please refer to the college's Appeals Policy.

1.8 The objectives of the Compliments and Complaints Policy is to provide:

- A swift, open process, which is fair to all parties.
- A procedure designed to resolve problems quickly.
- A thorough investigation into complaints received.
- Improvements to services for students and the quality of provision by acting on feedback and the recommendations made following investigations.
- Accurate recording, monitoring and reporting of complaints.

1.9 The College will identify actions and trends from complaints received to improve and develop its services.

1.10 Students individually, or in the case of a group of students, the nominated Student Representative, should follow the procedures as described in Stages 1 - 4 below.

1.11 The college will investigate complaints thoroughly and objectively and the Quality and Standards Officer will regularly monitor the progress of the investigation.

1.12 The college aims to respond to complaints within 15 working days; however, some complaints, especially if the issue is more complex, may take longer to investigate. The Quality and Standards Officer will contact the complainant to advise them if the investigation is likely to take more than 15 working days and will keep them informed of progress.

1.13 The college will ask for equality and diversity information (for example, gender and ethnicity) to help to ensure that all people are treated fairly.

1.14 Complaints should ideally be brought to the attention of the college in writing.

1.15 All complaints received by college staff must be sent to the Quality and Standards Officer immediately upon receipt. From this point, an investigating lead will be assigned within 3 working days. They will be provided with details so that they have all of the information required to undertake the investigation. Once the investigating lead has completed their investigation, all records must be sent to the Quality and Standards Officer.

1.16 The college reserves the right not to pursue any malicious, vexatious or abusive complaints (i.e. complaints that are not true, or use offensive or abusive language in communication to staff).

1.17 The college is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.

1.18 All complaints must be raised within 6 months of the original issue so that evidence is available for investigation.

1.19 Compliments received by the college will normally be passed on to the individual or individuals who are the subject of the compliment. The Quality Team will maintain a central record. The college will use compliments to motivate staff and, where appropriate support the promotion of the college's activities.

1.20 For Further Education, the policy reflects the Education and Skills Funding Agency guidance relating to the management of complaints and the arrangements for appeals including the right of appeal to the funding agency when the college's procedure has been exhausted.

1.21 For Higher Education the policy reflects the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's good practice framework for handling complaints.

1.22 The term Higher Education course or service within the context of this policy refers to the following types of qualifications:

- HND's awarded by Pearson
- Foundation Degrees (FdA, FdSc) validated by a University
- Degrees (BA, BSc) validated by a University
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education 14+ (PGCE) validated by a University
- Certificate in Education 14+ validated by a University

## **2. Responsibilities**

2.1 The Head of Quality & Standards is responsible for the policy, for ensuring that the college responds to compliments and complaints in accordance with the procedure set out within the policy and for ensuring that analysis of complaints and compliments is reported to the Board of Governors and Leadership Team.

2.2 A relevant departmental director or manager will be assigned as the investigation lead by the Quality Team to investigate complaints. The investigation will be conducted thoroughly and the findings will be reported to the Head of Quality and Standards along with a written response to the complainant. The written response will be communicated to the complainant by the Quality Office.

2.3 The Quality and Standards Office is responsible for day-to-day implementation of this procedure including the administration of compliments and complaints and maintaining records of those received. The Quality and Standards Office is also responsible for communicating the written response to the complainant.

## **3. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

3.1 The college monitors complaints carefully. A termly report on complaints against the college is produced and shared with the Leadership Team. In addition, the college reports annually to its Governing Body on complaints against the college and actions arising.

## **Procedure - How to Complain**

If you have concerns about any of your experiences with Bury College, please follow the procedure below in communicating your concerns so that the college can support you in achieving a satisfactory resolution to your complaint and respond appropriately.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Procedure**

The college anticipates that the majority of concerns raised can be resolved at an early stage through informal discussion. This is referred to in this policy as ‘stage 1 – informal procedure’.

Therefore, if a concern arises, the first step is to bring it to the attention of the relevant staff member and discuss it with them. It should be noted that a written record or response to issues raised at this early stage would not normally be made if both parties feel satisfied with the outcome.

For current students, in the first instance, please discuss the matter with the person(s) concerned. For example, your Personal Tutor, Academic Support Mentor, Subject Teacher or Learning and Skills Coach. Other staff members may also be able to help you with your complaint at this stage.

If you are not a current student, please speak to reception staff, or Student Services who will be able to advise you.

For employers, in the first instance, please raise your concerns with your designated tutor, Learning and Skills Coach or Business Development Advisor.

All other stakeholders, in the first instance please contact a member of reception staff or Student Services.

You may be contacted by the Quality Team to ensure that you are satisfied that your concern has been dealt with to your satisfaction.

If the issue remains unresolved, a formal complaint should be instigated through the college complaints procedure – see Stage 2 Formal Complaints.

### **Stage 2 - Formal Complaints**

If your concerns are not resolved informally at stage 1, you may wish to make a formal complaint.

Formal complaints should normally be made in writing and a complaint form is available to help you do this. Complaints can be made by letter or a web form located on the Bury College website contact us section.

Letters should be addressed to the Quality & Standards Office, Bury College, Millennium Centre, Market Street, Bury, BL9 0BG. If you would like to email your complaint through the website, please use the following link <https://burycollege.ac.uk/get-in-touch/contact-us/>

If you need help in completing the online complaints form or writing a letter, a member of staff will be able to help.

Formal complaints are forwarded to the Quality Team and are overseen by the Head of Quality & Standards.

All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days of the complaint being received. The investigating lead assigned to deal with the complaint will be named in the letter. You will also be given a date when you may expect to receive a response which is usually within our agreed service standard of 15 days from receipt of the complaint.

The assigned investigating lead will take full responsibility for investigating the matter and will forward the complaint details to the Quality Office once the full investigation has taken place, within the given time frame. In order to facilitate a full investigation, the complaint may be shared with individuals named or implicated within the complaint.

The findings of the investigation will be considered and the Quality and Standards Office will provide a response to the complaint within 15 working days

Where it is not possible to provide a formal response within 15 working days, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay, and kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

The Quality and Standards Office will continuously monitor the complaint and the matter will be closed on the complaint system only when the issue has been resolved or at the end of stage 2. Access to the confidential file will be restricted.

### **Stage 3 - Appeals**

Most complaints are resolved promptly and amicably and result in service improvements, however, should the complainant wish to appeal against the outcomes of Stage 2, formal complaint, they should submit this appeal in writing, within 10 days of the stage 2 outcome to:

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality  
Bury College  
Millennium Centre  
Market Street  
Bury College BL9 0DB

The Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality will acknowledge receipt, review the documentation, the investigation and the resolution to come to a judgement on the validity of the appeal. The possible judgements are:

1. Appeal rejected – the original resolution will be pursued
2. The appeal is upheld – the Vice Principal will propose an alternative solution to the appellant.

Following the outcome of the appeals stage, a formal response will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal.

This is the final stage of the college's complaints procedure

## **Formal Complaints – External Resolution**

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the stage 3 process, they have the opportunity to appeal to the relevant external body.

If the complaint relates to a Further Education course funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the above complaints and appeals procedure has been exhausted, the complainant can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency within three months of the complaint decision using the contact details below:

complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Or via: The Complaints Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

If the student is studying on a HE course, which is validated by a University, the next step once stages 1 - 4 have been completed without resolution is to follow the procedures of the relevant University:

The complaints procedure for programmes awarded by the University of Bolton is available via the following link:

<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/studentinformation-policyzone/Home.aspx>

The complaints procedure for programmes awarded by the University of Cumbria is available via the following link:

<http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/AboutUs/Services/AQD/AcademicReg.aspx>

The complaints procedure for programmes awarded by the University of Huddersfield is available via the following link:

<https://www.hud.ac.uk/registry/current-students/pgr/student-complaints/studentcomplaintsprocedure/>

If the University complaints procedure is exhausted without resolution the University will issue the student, or in the case of a group of students, the Nominated Student Representative, a Completion of Procedures Letter which is required for any review of the complaint by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

If the student is studying on a Higher Education programme validated by Pearson (BTEC), the next step once stages 1 - 4 have been exhausted without resolution, is for Bury College to issue the student, or in the case of a group of students, the Nominated Student Representative, with a Completion of Procedures Letter by the Assistant Principal Quality and Standards which is a required for any review of the complaint by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

Please note, it is a requirement of the ESFA and OIA that any complaint has completed stage 1-4 of the college complaints procedure, and, if applicable, the procedure of the relevant partner University or Awarding Body.

Referrals to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator must be within 3 months.

