

## COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK POLICY & PROCEDURE

### 1. Policy statement

Quality of service is an important measure of the effectiveness of public bodies. We at the South Thames Colleges Group understand that feedback is a valuable tool and should be treated sensitively and respectfully. We believe that learning from feedback is a powerful way of helping us to safeguard, improve and increase trust and open communication amongst the people who use our services.

We treat a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, from a user of or partner to the South Thames Colleges Group.

We have learned that compliments indicate the parts of our service that are most appreciated and often result in a welcome opportunity to recognise and praise our members of staff and spread good practice.

### The Stages of the Complaints Procedure

At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any supporting documents/correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure. See Appendix A: COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK PROCESS FLOWCHART.

Stages:

*Stage 1 – Informal Complaint (verbal complaint)*

*Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint*

*Stage 3 – Review of Formal Complaint*

The Group aims to investigate and resolve all complaints in a fair and reasonable manner. If you are not satisfied with the outcome or any action taken relating to your formal complaint you have the right to request a Review on one or more of the grounds set out below:

### Making a complaint - procedure

Stages	Action
<b>Stage 1</b> <b>Informal/Local Issue</b>	It is anticipated that most complaints can be resolved informally and close to their point of origin (face to face or on the telephone). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a student, by talking with a teacher, tutor or Head of Section.</li> <li>As a parent, guardian, visitor, employer or prospective student by asking to talk to an appropriate member of staff.</li> </ul> Any concern will be listened to and taken seriously. Every effort will be made to assist in addressing the issue(s) raised. No formal record will be kept at this stage, but we aim to resolve your complaint within 10 working days.
<b>Stage 2</b> <b>Formal Written Complaint</b>	Where your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction at the informal stage, you can make a formal complaint which must be made in writing/via email (please see the 'Contact Us' page within this policy). Your complaint letter or email should include clear detailed reasons for your complaint, an indication of the resolution or outcome you seek, and copies of any documents upon which you wish to rely. Complaints will be logged by the relevant Head of College Administration before being acknowledged.

	<p>In the first instance, the complaint will be forwarded to the relevant manager, normally a Deputy Head of School, Service/Curriculum Manager or Director to investigate and resolve.</p> <p>We intend to provide acknowledgement of a complaint within 5 working days and a full response to the complaint within 20 working days.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3 Review of Formal Complaint</b></p>	<p>The Group aims to investigate and resolve all complaints in a fair and reasonable manner. If you are not satisfied with the outcome or any action taken relating to your formal complaint you have the right to request a Review on one or more of the following grounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New material evidence has come to light which was not reasonably available at the time of the complaint investigation.</li> <li>• You believe the outcome of the complaint was manifestly unreasonable and/or any resulting action was disproportionate.</li> <li>• The complaints procedure was not followed.</li> </ul> <p>A written request to begin Stage 3 of the procedure must be made to the relevant Head of College Administration within 5 working days of you receiving your Stage 2 response.</p> <p>A member of the Group Leadership Team (independent to the investigation so far), will be nominated to formally review your complaint to date.</p> <p>A written response, detailing the findings of this investigation, will be sent to you, along with a decision on whether your complaint has been upheld.</p> <p>This decision is final and marks the end of our internal complaints process. There is no further right of appeal within the Group process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement within 5 working days</li> <li>• Full response within 20 working days</li> </ul>

**A record of any actions/correspondence/supporting evidence and outcomes of Stage 2 and Stage 3 will be copied to the relevant Head of College Administration, to update the Complaints/Feedback Tracker and file.**

### Extending time limits

We aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex, where delay may cause potential harm or, if a complaint is received during a holiday period, it may be necessary to extend or expediate the time limits. If this is the case, we will keep you informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay and inform you of the new deadline.

### External Agencies

Following the conclusion of a Review, you may be able to take the matter further with one of the following external agencies:

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), from FE complaints
- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE), if you are on a Higher Education course, with your college partner University
- If you are an adult on a Greater London Authority (GLA) funded course, a complaint can be made to the GLA (<https://www.london.gov.uk/>)

### Our policy covers feedback about:

- The standard of service we provide
- The behaviour of our staff, and
- Any action or lack of action by the South Thames Colleges Group

**Our policy covers feedback received from:**

- Learners
- Applicants
- Parents/Carers/Guardians
- Employers or other users of Group services and facilities
- Members of the public
- Staff (for those issues not already covered through HR procedures)

**Our policy does not:**

- Normally cover anonymous complaints – this will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- Normally cover ex-students unless the complaint is received by the College within eight weeks of the end date of the course
- Cover some Staff complaints, which are more appropriately dealt with through HR procedures
- Cover appeals and complaints about academic assessment which are covered by the Assessment Policy
- Deal with applicant admission appeals covered by the Admissions Policy
- Manage Safeguarding concerns which are, dealt with through the Group’s Safeguarding Procedures
- Cover exclusions and student disciplinary complaints covered by the Student Disciplinary Policy
- Normally cover complaints made outside the time limit of 3 months since the issue originally occurred.
- Complaints or claims that have been dealt with by proceedings outside of the Group, such as an external court or tribunal
- Complaints or claims that are, or have already been settled by agreement between the Complainant and the Group
- Complaints where evidence of recordings or conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded

**Compliments/general Group feedback**

Those that wish to make a compliment or provide some general feedback on the Group as a whole, but would rather remain anonymous, or do not necessarily wish to have an individual response, should complete the form: [Here](#).

**Our standards for handling complaints**

We treat all complaints seriously provided that they are not made abusively or offensively and comply with the guidance above. You will be treated with courtesy, fairness and with your safeguarding and wellbeing uppermost at all times. We would hope, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings the Group.

We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your: sex or marital status; this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed) sexual orientation colour or race; this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality, disability, religious or political beliefs, trade union affiliation, or other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties or age.

**Confidentiality**

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the relevant data Protection Act 1998.

In some cases related to Safeguarding, it may be necessary to refer a complaint to external child protection agencies in accordance with our Safeguarding procedures.

If a complaint is about a member of staff, details will be shared with the staff member’s line manager (where this may differ from the person investigating the complaint). In some circumstances, the College/Group Designated Safeguarding Lead may also be notified. In most cases, the complaint will be

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investigated with the member of staff being asked for their participation in the investigation. In some circumstances, the nature of the complaint may require the College/Group to approach the investigation more formally, referring to the College Disciplinary Process and other relevant policies to guide the investigation and any actions where appropriate.

In all other respects, the College will maintain confidentiality regarding complaints and request that students, apprentices and employers do the same.

**Unreasonable behaviour**

All complaints will be processed in accordance with this policy. However, if during this process, unreasonable complainant behaviour and/or unreasonable and persistent complainants are experienced, we reserve the right to end the process and reject the complaint.

We believe in some circumstances it would be unreasonable that a complaint is pursued if the complainant owes the Group College fees.

The College has the right not to accept complaints (e.g., where a complaint is judged by the College to be frivolous, vexatious or malicious).

**Recording and monitoring feedback**

We will log the feedback we receive so that we can monitor good practice and problems, this also helps us to take a closer look at what we are doing well and how we can further improve our own service delivery. Our Quality and Digital Innovation Department will analyse the complaint information and feedback to identify complaint patterns and issues. The Senior Post Holders Group and Group Leadership Team will receive reports on this analysis to enable it to monitor this information on a termly basis.

**Review**

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every 3 years and will be available via the Group website.

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## Contacting us

All complaints and requests for review under our complaints policy and procedures should be sent to one of the following:

### For complaints related to Carshalton College

**Email:** feedback@carshalton.ac.uk

**Post to:** Complaints  
Head of College Administration  
Carshalton College  
Nightingale Road  
Carshalton  
SM5 2EJ

### For complaints related to Kingston College

**Email:** feedback@kingston-college.ac.uk

**Post to:** Complaints  
Head of College Administration  
Kingston College  
Kingston Hall Road  
Kingston upon Thames  
Surrey  
KT1 2AQ

### For complaints related to Merton College

**Email:** feedback@merton.ac.uk

**Address:** Complaints  
Head of College Administration  
South Thames College  
Executive Suite  
Wandsworth High Street  
London  
SW18 2PP

### For complaints related to South Thames College (Wandsworth and Tooting)

**Email:** feedback@south-thames.ac.uk

**Post to:** Complaints  
Head of College Administration  
South Thames College  
Wandsworth High Street  
Wandsworth  
London  
SW18 2PP

For compliments and feedback of a more general nature, please complete the form on the link: [here](#)

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## Appendix A: COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK PROCESS FLOWCHART

