

Complaints Policy and Procedure

HARROW, RICHMOND AND UXBRIDGE COLLEGES POLICY AND PROCEDURES



Policy No:	S08
Subject:	Complaints Policy and Procedure
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Person responsible:	Deputy Principal – Apprenticeships, Quality & Student Services Assistant Director – Academic Standards
Approved by:	Curriculum & Quality Board People Board
For information to:	All staff & students

1. Intent

- 1.1 As part of our corporate objective of striving for Quality Improvement, the College seeks to operate fair and efficient procedures for dealing with complaints from students, parents and members of the public.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Complaints Policy applies to all college provisions, including apprenticeships, full cost commercial and higher education courses, and all those who are affected by the actions of HRUC (Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges).
- 2.2 A complaint may be defined as any expression of dissatisfaction regarding a facility or service provided by the College and must refer to the current academic year or is lodged within six months of completion of a course. Any complaints received outside these timescales will be considered to be out of date but may be examined at the discretion of the College.
- 2.3 Complaints regarding academic grading, including those relating to higher education courses, should be dealt with by the Academic Appeals Procedure.
- 2.4 All other complaints about the services of the College should in the first instance be directed to the appropriate School / Curriculum or Support Area. If the issue cannot be resolved, then please direct to the appropriate College:

Harrow – feedbackHC@hruc.ac.uk
Richmond – feedback-RUTC@hruc.ac.uk
Uxbridge – feedbackUC@hruc.ac.uk

3. Performance Standards

- 3.1 Managers and staff will endeavour to resolve all complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant and the College.
- 3.2 The first principle is to ensure that early intervention and response by all staff will address customer dissatisfaction before issues become formal complaint:
- i. For example, student complaints about their course should be discussed firstly with their lecturer or group tutor / Student Progression Advisor (SPA) where appropriate. If the issue is not resolved, it should then be discussed with the Section Manager/Assistant Head/Head of School. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the complaint should then be put in writing and enter the formal phase to be investigated by an Assistant Principal (AsP).
 - ii. If the line manager is the person at which the written complaint is directed, they will pass the written complaint directly on to The Assistant Director – Academic Standards (ADAS) who will then ensure the complaint is investigated by an independent third party within the College, including allocating it to the most appropriate Senior Leader where necessary.
 - iii. Issues of customer dissatisfaction must be logged onto the informal complaints register within the school or support area, even where resolution is possible, and reported at Performance Review. An attempt must be made where possible to resolve issues of customer dissatisfaction at a local level i.e. with the School/Curriculum or Support Area.
- 3.3 Complaints that staff deem cannot be resolved will be referred to the ADAS for a full response.
- 3.4 Where complaints cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, a formal complaint investigation will be conducted by an Assistant Principal.
- 3.5 All formal complaints will be recorded and reported on a regular basis to the Senior Leadership Team and at each meeting of the Governing Body
- 3.6 Complaints will be responded to within the stated periods in paragraph 4.4.
- 3.7 Responses to complaints will be constructive.
- 3.8 Copies of this policy and procedure will be available from the College's Receptions and accessible to students through the relevant Colleges websites.
- 3.9 Copies of complaint reporting forms will be on display at key service points throughout the College and accessible to students via the College website. Complaints can also be communicated by telephone and email See 2.4.
- 3.10 For complaints which are of a serious nature, but which have not been received in writing, every effort will be made to report and record the complaint and outcomes for the purposes of monitoring and resolution.

4. Complaint Procedures

- 4.1 If a student has a complaint, in the first instance they should raise the complaint informally within their Curriculum Area/School as set out in the complaint's procedure published in course information handbooks/Teams. This indicates clearly how a student may progress a complaint to a formal written complaint if the complaint remains unresolved.

- 4.2 **Written complaints should be emailed directly to the appropriate College.**
- 4.3 The College will however accept letters or emails of complaint submitted to any recognised member of staff or curriculum/service area of the College. Alternative formats (e.g. audio recordings or notes from a meeting or telephone call with a member of staff) may also be acceptable where the complainant has special needs such as learning difficulties or a disability. Group complaints – cannot be lodged by one person acting on behalf of the group. Each complainant’s signature needs to be submitted.
- 4.4 All complaints will normally be acknowledged within **5 working days** and normally be completed within **10 working days** during term time, following the acknowledgement. Where complaints are received within fifteen working days of a holiday period, or during a holiday period, it is expected that the response to the complaint will take longer than ten working days due to the absence of appropriate staff to investigate. The ADAS will ensure the findings of the investigation are conveyed to the Complainant within 5 working days following the completion of the investigation.
- 4.5 During the investigation, if there are opportunities to resolve the complaint via mediation to the satisfaction of the Complainant, a report will still be completed.
- 4.6 The investigating officer will write to the Complainant with the findings of the investigation. Apologies will be made where appropriate and actions being addressed as a result of the complaint will be stated.
- 4.7 In the event of the Complainant having not gained satisfaction, the Complainant may submit an appeal in writing to Principalship within ten working days for final consideration by the College, provided the grounds for appeal, as laid out in 6.1 below, are met.
- 4.8 The Principalship will acknowledge the complaint Appeal within five working days and will advise the Complainant of their response or further actions.
- 4.9 Should the Complainant contact the Principalship, making clear their disagreement and dissatisfaction with the final decision, they will be advised of their right to inform the appropriate funding or statutory body if considered appropriate.
- 4.10 In the case of Further Education (FE), the College’s own complaints procedure, including any appeals process should have been exhausted before the Department for Education (DfE) will consider any complaint directly. The appropriate guidance needs to be followed. Please see Appendix 1.
- 4.11 In the case of Higher Education (HE) programmes students they can take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator once the Colleges own complaints and appeals process has been exhausted. Please see Appendix 1.
- 4.12 In the case of complaints relating to Special Educational Needs, once the College’s complaints and appeals procedures have been exhausted, complaints should be taken to the relevant local authority.
- 4.13 This policy does not affect an individual’s statutory rights.
- 4.14 Normally, in the case of a student making a complaint that relates to issues that are the subject of a disciplinary hearing against them, it will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Disciplinary Hearing as to whether to consider the complaint and report to the ADAS on the outcome of the disciplinary. Normally the complaint will be investigated following completion of the Disciplinary Hearing following the formal complaints procedure.
- 4.15 In cases where HRUC receives a complaint from or relating to an employee of a contracted company or agency, the complaint will be directed to the company/agency for resolution through their own procedures. The College will notify the complainant of this procedure within the

Complaints Policy. It is expected that the company/agency then deals with the complaint directly. Principalship or delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team will make contact (or meet) with the company/agency representative to discuss how the matter will be dealt with by the company and consider any implications for the College.

5 Data Protection

- 5.1 When the College receives a complaint from a person a file is created containing the details of the complaint. This normally contains the identity of the complainant, and any other individuals involved in the complaint.
- 5.2 The College will only use the personal information collected to process the complaint and to check on the level of service we provide. The College does compile an annual report showing information like the number of complaints we receive, but not in a form which identifies anyone.
- 5.3 The College will usually have to disclose the complainant's identity to whoever the complaint is about.
- 5.4 The College will keep personal information contained in complaint files. This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for five years from closure. It will be retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted according to the 'need to know' principle.
- 5.5 Similarly, where enquiries are submitted to the College, we will only use the information supplied to us to deal with the enquiry and any subsequent issues and to check on the level of service we provide.

6. Appeals

- 6.1 Grounds for appeal: A complainant can lodge an appeal against the decision following a complaints investigation if there is evidence to show one or more of the following:
 - a. The College has not followed the formal procedure as described in this policy document.
 - b. Incorrect evidence has been used during the investigation of the complaint or new evidence has arisen.
 - c. The Investigating Officer did not fully consider the complainant's personal circumstances.
 - d. The circumstances of the complaint were not fairly considered.
- 6.2 Any request for appeal which does not fall within these guidelines stating reasons for the Appeal is likely to be rejected.
- 6.3 The appeal must be requested in writing to the respective Principal/Deputy Principal not more than 10 working days after notification of the outcome of the complaint investigation.
- 6.4 The appeal will be heard either by the respective Principal/Deputy Principal or another nominated Senior Leader with the delegated authority of the Principal and who has had no previous involvement with the Complainant's history.
- 6.5 In the case of the College procedures, the decision of the respective Principal/Deputy Principal or another nominated Senior Leader is final.
- 6.6 If the College's complaints procedures (including appeal) have been exhausted and the Complainant has sufficient grounds to pursue the matter further, for students on FE programmes, the case can be referred to the qualifications awarding body or the DfE for investigation - contact details available from the Principal's Office.
- 6.7 The DfE investigates complaints about: the quality or management of education and training; undue delay or non-compliance with published procedures, poor administration by the provider; Equality

and Diversity issues (except where there is a more appropriate mechanism for dealing with the matter through the court, tribunals or other organisations). The DfE reserves the right not to investigate vexatious or malicious complaints.

6.8 For students on higher education programmes, complaints can be referred for investigation to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education – the independent Body that runs the student complaints scheme for all organisations in England and Wales delivering Higher Education.

7. Compliance with Office for Students (OfS) Higher Education Conditions

7.1 HRUC's Complaints Policy is fully compliant with the Office for Students Higher Education Conditions, which mandates that higher education providers must have effective processes in place to handle complaints and appeals. Our policy ensures that all complaints are addressed promptly, fairly, and transparently, providing students with clear guidance on how to escalate their concerns. Complaints related to higher education programmes can be referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), ensuring an independent review process. This adherence guarantees that students receive impartial and thorough consideration of their complaints, in line with regulatory requirements.

8. Appendix 1

I. For complaints relating to Further Education provision:

The DfE

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-post-16-education-and-training-provision-funded-by-esfa/complaints-about-post-16-education-and-training-provision-funded-by-esfa>

II. For Complaints relating to Special Educational Needs:

The relevant Local Authority

III. For complaints relating to Higher Education provision:

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator complaints form needs to be completed: [How to complain to us - OIAHE](#) You can fill in the OIA's complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website.

The OIA also published *An Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students*, which can be downloaded from <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2264/intrototheoia-students-jan-2019.pdf>. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. **You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Complaint Form.**

Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/do-you-need-help-with-your-complaint/>

You may also wish to seek a Deputy from the Students' Union about taking your complaint to the OIA.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

Complaints Process

- C1: Formal complaint sent to the relevant College feedback email.
- C2: ADAS assigns the complaint to an AsP (investigating officer).
- C3: Acknowledgement email sent to complainant (within 10 working days).
- C4: AsP investigates, completes report, and drafts response; returns to ADAS within 10 working days.
- C5: If needed, complainant informed of delays, with reason and revised deadline.
- C6: Final response emailed by ADAS, including details of the appeals process.

Appeals Process

- A1: Appeal letter received via the College feedback email.
- A2: ADAS assigns the appeal to the relevant College Principal who decides if the grounds for appeal have been met.
- A3: Acknowledgement email sent to complainant (within 10 working days).
- A4: Principal investigates and drafts response; returns to ADAS for sending.
- A5: Final response emailed, including external complaint options if still dissatisfied.



HRUC COMPLAINTS

PERSONAL DETAILS:

NAME:
STUDENT ID NUMBER
(if applicable):.....

HOME ADDRESS:
.....
.....

CONTACT NUMBER: (Day).....
(Evening)

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

COURSE (if applicable):

TUTOR (if applicable):

DATE:

SIGNATURE:



HRUC COMPLAINTS

NATURE OF THE COMPLAINT:

Please provide details of your complaint

Have you already spoken to someone about your complaint? If so, who?

Do you believe that you have been disadvantaged on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity?

Y? N?

If so, please state reasons: