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1. Policy Introduction

Purpose

The Hull College Group Vision statement is:

“A College of high performing, innovative and entrepreneurial people delivering world class outcomes”

The Hull College Group mission statement is:

“To inspire and enable outstanding, life-changing education and training leading to social and economic fulfilment”

The Hull College Group is committed to providing education and training of the highest quality. This policy explains the Group’s approach to praise and complaints and details the procedure for the arrangements to investigate any issue relating to the quality of service provided. The Group Head of Student Services is responsible for ensuring that complaints are dealt with by the Group in accordance with this policy which reflects the guidance provided by funding and regulatory bodies relating to learner complaints.

This policy explains the arrangements that exist for learners, customers, partners and members of the public to make a complaint should they have concerns relating to any aspect of the Group.


2. Responsibility and Implementation

Why use the Praise and Complaints Policy?

- If you are unhappy with any service provided by the Hull College Group
- If you would like to suggest how that service might be improved
- If you would like to comment on any service you have received which is particularly good

What methods do we use to record Praise and Complaints?

- Suggestions, general comments on facilities and how we might improve our service are recorded and will be acted upon.
- Questionnaires: As a learner/service user you may be asked to complete a questionnaire on courses, systems and other services offered by the Group. These represent an important part of our internal quality monitoring processes – we take your comments very seriously and will always try to act on them
- Praise & Complaints Cards: These are available from all campus receptions and libraries and are collected monthly. These are used to gather feedback on services and any other aspects of the Group and to monitor the quality of our provision.

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(ci) Improvements. Suggestions on how services might improve can be handed in at campus receptions and libraries – all will be acknowledged and receive a response where personal contact details are provided.

(cii) Individuals, schools and service areas are always pleased to be told that they are providing a good service. We would be delighted to hear from you if you think we are providing a good service.

d) Members of staff may also use the on-line Praise and Complaints process to raise any issues but should use the separate Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing Policy if this relates to an individual's employment or a financial management issue respectively.

3. Policy Details

This policy and its procedure is available to learners enrolled on all courses. This includes learners enrolled on programmes that are validated by a partner institution, applicants holding an offer for a course, enrolled learners studying away from the College (such as an exchange placement). Recent graduates/award holders may bring an issue of praise or raise a complaint under this policy up to 3 months from the award date. This policy is also available to learners or groups of learners who have co-signed a complaint or raising an element of praise as a group.


This policy is available to customers, partners and members of the public. Anyone lodging a complaint in good faith will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint, or making an appeal.

The Group will not accept a complaint lodged on behalf of a third party or any representative attempting to act on his or her behalf, except in the case of 14-16 year old learners whose parents or guardians may need to raise a complaint on their behalf, or a learner with specific individual needs for whom an advocate is an appropriate means of accessing support to make a complaint. In such circumstances, the College will check for consent for a complaint to be made wherever possible.

This policy refers only to praise or complaints regarding service delivery. There is a separate process for handling disciplinary issues and also Academic Appeals, i.e. appeals against grades and classification issues, confirmed by a board of members. Details of the Academic Appeals process are available from a course tutor or for Higher Education courses, from the Higher Education Registrar.

Any complaint should be submitted within three months of the date upon which the event occurred.

Behavioural misconduct by learners and staff and harassment do not fall within the scope of this process. A separate Learner and staff Behaviour and Disciplinary policy exists but occasionally the Praise & Complaints Policy runs concurrently with other existing policies.

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For further details of the Learner Behaviour and Disciplinary policy and other policies, please contact the Group Head of Student Services

3.1 Confidentiality

All complaints are dealt with in accordance with current Data Protection legislation and good practice guidance. Information, documents or other information relating to a complaint, investigation or resolution of a complaint will be treated in confidence and shall be disclosed to only those persons involved in the complaint. An exception to this is where disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint, with permission from the complainant.

3.2. Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Group. The Group's decision in determining whether or not such complaints should be investigated will be final.

3.3. Vexatious or malicious complaints


Any learner making a complaint that they know, or have reasonable grounds for believing, is untrue or for which they are unable to submit any supporting evidence, may be liable to action under the Group's Learner Behaviour and Disciplinary policy.

Any complaint determined to be vexatious or malicious may be rejected by the Group's investigating officer subject to the complainant being advised in writing of that decision at the earliest opportunity and being given reasons why the complaint is considered vexatious or malicious.

3.4. Information and advice relating to the complaints policy

Information and advice relating to the Group's complaints policy is available from the Group's Learner Services Team at Queen's Gardens, Cannon Street, KC Stadium, Goole and Harrogate College. The Learners' Union can provide support to any enrolled learner (aged 16+) to raise a concern or raise an issue of praise. Learners have the right to be accompanied by one supporter e.g. family member, friend, colleague or advocate who, with the agreement of the investigating officer, may speak on their behalf if they wish.

Contact details can be found in Section 4 of this document.

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3.5. Incidental expenses

Where a complaint is upheld, the complainant shall be entitled to payment of legitimate expenses necessarily incurred in relation to their complaint, such as travel costs. This would not extend to expenses incurred in producing or copying evidence relating to the complaint or the obtaining of any evidence, advice or instruction relating to the complaint. The Director of Learner Support Services will determine the level of any expenses to be paid following the upholding of a complaint.

3.6. Resolution – School, Service or HE

Faculty Informal Consultation


Complaints may relate to issues that are readily resolved and may stem from relatively simple misunderstandings, lack of communication or administrative errors. Talking a problem through often helps to resolve it. All parties should attempt to resolve matters informally in the first instance through discussion with the individual, school, tutor or member of staff, or service area to which the concern relates.

Only when it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally should learners, customers, partners or members of the public invoke the formal procedure set out within this policy. However, if the issue is outside the authority of the individual, school, faculty, tutor, member of staff or service area who is dealing with the issue informally (such as a significant financial issue above an individual's financial authority or an area of expertise above their level of responsibility, such as the Group-wide fees policy) or in the case of very serious matters, such as health and wellbeing issues, the complainant may take the matter directly to the formal stage of the policy and the member of staff should refer the complainant accordingly. A file note should be kept of complaints resolved informally and filed confidentially in the school, faculty or service area.

3.7. Stage 1 - Formal Resolution

Following informal consultation a complaint may be made formal at stage 1 and this will be investigated within one month by the relevant Director of Curriculum for FE, Head of Service. Documentation/evidence and any actions/meetings relating to the complaint will be stored as a record and will be forwarded to the Group Student Services Administrator, based at the Hull College site who will keep a central record on behalf of the Group. Guidance and documentation relating to complaints is available to all staff on the Portal, or alternatively via the Learner Services Administrator

Where it has not been possible to resolve the matter at stage 1 of the procedure, the complainant should write to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Co-ordinator as soon as possible, but within one month of the date upon which the response at stage 1 was received. The complainant should state the nature of their complaint, what they have done in an attempt to resolve the matter and provide any evidence that they may have to support their complaint.

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3.8. Stage 2

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Co-ordinator will conduct an investigation into the complaint; they will be the Complaint Investigation Officer. That investigation may include an interview with the complainant, acceptance of a written statement from the complainant, interviews and/or acceptance of written statements from other persons relevant to the complaint who are able to provide information relevant to the case. Paperwork relevant to the complaint will be reviewed, e.g. tutorial reports, cause for concern notes, learner disciplinary reports etc.


The complainant may be accompanied at interview by one person of his or her choosing provided that they do not speak for the complainant other than with the agreement of the Complaint Investigation Officer. The Complaint Investigation Officer will have authority to receive copies of any documentation and/or receive evidence from any person that they deem to be relevant to the investigation. In the case where a learner requires an advocate to assist with communication, this should be negotiated with the Complaint Investigating Officer.

Complaints will remain as originally presented and will not be open to amendment by the complainant once an investigation has commenced.

The investigation of any complaint will be full and rigorous. Staff and learners who are subject to a complaint will have the right to know who is making the complaint. Only in exceptional circumstances, for example where the safety and well-being of an individual is considered at risk, or that knowing such information could compromise the investigation, will this information be withheld.

Normally within four working weeks of receiving the complaint the Complaint Investigation Officer shall provide the complainant with a written response, copied to the Director of Curriculum/ Head of Service or member of the College Management team, comprising:

- A summary of the evidence gathered including details of any witnesses interviewed
- A statement of conclusion including whether or not the complaint is upheld either in full or in part
- Any recommendations stemming from the investigation of the complaint

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The Complaint Investigation Officer may also offer a face-to-face meeting to review the outcome of a complaint to provide more detailed feedback to a complainant. Where the Complaint Investigation Officer is unable to report within these timescales, they will inform the complainant in writing explaining the reasons for this and providing a date by which they will report the outcome of the investigation.

The Group may make a decision on the outcome of a complaint investigation in the absence of the complainant and their representative if the complainant is unwilling/does not wish to attend.

All parties will recognise that complaints may or may not be upheld.

3.9. Stage 3 – Director of Learner Support Services

If complainants are still dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, individuals should contact the Director of Learner Support Services within one month of receiving the outcome at stage 2. Both stages at stage 1 and stage 2 must be completed before a complaint is forwarded for review at stage 3.

The Director of Learner Support Services will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and a further written response will be provided once the complaint has been reviewed. The Director of Curriculum or any senior member of staff will be involved as required to assist in the review of a complaint.

The complainant may request a face-to-face meeting to hear the outcome of the review of their complaint.


Should an individual remain dissatisfied there additional options depending on mode of study:

3.10. 14-16 Learners

The Group has a number of agreements with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and the Hull City Council for the delivery of 14-16 curriculum partnerships. Each of these partners follows separate procedures when dealing with the management of complaints. Please refer to the relevant collaborative and commissioned protocols, available from the 14-16 team.

3.11. Further Education Complaints

If individuals remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint once the Group's procedures have been exhausted, they may then contact the relevant funding or regulatory body (e.g. Skills Funding Agency/Young People's Learning Agency) for Further Education complaints. Information is available from the Support Services managers.

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3.12. Higher Education Complaints

If individuals remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint once the Group's procedures have been exhausted, they may be able to request further action or review from the validating University and the OIA.

For courses validated by partner Universities complaints will be progressed by applying the Hull College Group complaints policy and procedures in the first instance, as reflected in the agreements between the validating University and the Group.

3.13. Sub-Contracted Partners

When a complaint is received through HCUK Training's sub-contractors, and there is evidence that the sub-contractors complaints procedure has been exhausted, and the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, then there will be an opportunity for a review of this complaint to be investigated by the Head of Partnerships within HCUK Training. The Head of Partnerships will review the complaint within four working weeks of receipt and provide the complainant with a full review of their investigation.

To access this please contact:

Head of Partnerships

Jennifer Longden

Hull College

Queens Gardens

Hull HU1 3DG

Jennifer.Longden@hull-college.ac.uk


Tel: 01482 598734 (Int 2034)

Academic Appeals

Learners, who wish to appeal against an academic decision affecting their progress through an award, including a decision of a Board of Examiners, should contact the HE Registry. The Registry can provide information on appeals and complaints and provide support to access relevant regulatory processes. Advice and support are also available from the Student Union.

All learners may access the validating partner University or awarding body directly, or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they have been unable to achieve a satisfactory outcome once all regular, internal processes have been exhausted.

www.oiahe.org

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4. Monitoring of complaints

Reports detailing complaints and the outcome of those complaints are presented termly to the Group's Excellence Committee, HE Academic Board and the Equality, Diversity and Safeguarding Board, including the monitoring of complaints against protected characteristics.

This policy is subject to review in accordance with the Group's arrangements for the review of the Group policy.

This document is available in alternative formats upon request to a Learner Services Manager Related Documentation

A copy of this policy is available to learners in the learners handbook and to staff via Portal.

Staff referenced in this document can be contacted as follows:

Stage 1 – Directors of Curriculum or Assistant Principal of HE

To make a complaint at Stage 1, learners should contact their tutor for help or Head of School directly. Staff should contact the Head of School or Service or Dean of Faculty directly (contact details on Portal)

Stage 2 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Co-ordinator

David Greenway

Hull College

Queen's Gardens

Hull HU1 3DG

[David.Greenway@hull-](mailto:David.Greenway@hull-college.ac.uk)

[college.ac.uk](mailto:David.Greenway@hull-college.ac.uk) Tel: 01482 598738

(int. 2038)

Stage 3 – Director of Learner Support Services (for complaint review at Stage 3)

Zailie Barratt

Hull College

Queen's Gardens

Hull HU1 3DG

Zailie.Barratt@hull-college.ac.uk

Tel: 01482 598719 (int. 2019)


HE APPEALS – Director of HE

Darren Capp

Hull College

Queen's Gardens

Hull HU1 3DG

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Students Union

(for support or advice in raising a concern or forwarding an issue of praise)

Hull College Student Union

Queen's Gardens

Hull HU1 3DG

[StudentUnion@hu](mailto:StudentUnion@hull-college.ac.uk)

hull-college.ac.uk

Telephone: 01482 381923 (int. 2223)

Learner Services teams (for information on making a complaint, support available or passing on praise) available at Queen's Gardens, Cannon Street and Goole.

Letters can be passed on in person to any Hull College Group reception desk to be forwarded to the above staff.

5. Linked policies

Other policies linked to the Praise and Complaints policies are:

FP1.7 HE Academic Fees Regulations 2019-20

FP1.8 HE Academic Fees Schedule 2019-20

6. Procedure Checklist

Policy Checklist

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| Senior manager responsible | Director of Learner Support Services |
| College Committee | Governance and HR Committee |
| Date of next policy review | August 2020 |
| Date Equality Analysis agreed | September 2016 |