

# Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy & Procedure 2023-2026

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 City of Portsmouth College welcomes feedback and actively encourages all those who use our services to express their views. It is our responsibility to:
- Listen to these views
  - Record comments and compliments and pass these on
  - Investigate any complaints as per our published timescales in this policy and take appropriate action where justified
  - Periodically share all records and outcomes of comments, compliments and complaints with the Governing Body

## **2. Aims of the Policy**

- 2.1 To record and pass on comments and compliments as appropriate. To respond to complaints in a professional and responsive manner. We are committed to:
- Dealing with complaints and comments fairly, promptly and effectively
  - Using complaints, comments and compliments to review and improve our services

## **3. Objectives**

- 3.1 In order to meet the aims of this policy, the College will ensure that the following objectives are met:
- Record the number of comments, compliments and complaints each academic year and periodically shared with the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Governing Body
  - Celebrate compliments with relevant staff/teams, SMT and the Governing Body
  - Establish standards and procedures for dealing with complaints
  - Feedback to stakeholders any outcomes of their complaint in accordance with our published timescales detailed in the procedures within this document
  - Establish clear appeal procedures for complaints
  - Review the policy and procedures to ensure that it remains fit for purpose

## **4. Definitions**

- 4.1 Comment - Feedback to the college on areas where improvements could be made that are deemed not to be a complaint
- 4.2 Compliment - Feedback to the college on a positive experience in relation to the services/support that has been provided to a student/parent or client
- 4.3 Complaint - Any expression of a grievance arising from experience of a service that has failed to meet expectations

## **5. Types of complaint**

- 5.1 Individual - Students/Apprentices/Parents/Employers/Clients  
These types of complaints made by individuals are dealt with according to the procedures set out in section 6 - Complaint Procedures
- 5.2 Group Complaints from Students/Apprentices  
If a complaint is brought forward by a group of students/apprentices, then a spokesperson must be identified from this group. This spokesperson will be the point of contact for all correspondence. Each student/apprentice within the group must provide permission to the member of staff investigating the complaint, that the spokesperson is

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able to discuss the nature of the complaint on their behalf. Each member of the group must be able to demonstrate that they have been directly impacted by the matter that is at the centre of the complaint.

### 5.3 Anonymous Complaints

If a complaint has been made anonymously, then it is not possible to undertake an investigation. No action will normally be taken in the event of an anonymous complaint being made. However, the college reserves the right to conduct an investigation when it is deemed appropriate.

### 5.4 Vexatious or Malicious Complaints made by Students

If through an investigation of a complaint received by a student/apprentice or group of students/apprentices it transpires to be vexatious (*a complaint that is unsustainable*) or malicious (*a complaint that attempts to bring the name of an individual/college into disrepute on unfounded grounds*), then the College may implement its disciplinary procedures.

### 5.5 Higher Education Complaints

Separate arrangements for students on HE programmes are outlined in Appendix A.

## 6. City of Portsmouth College - Complaint Procedure

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved informally in the first instance.

However, if a complaint concerns discriminatory behaviour, harassment or matters of a sensitive nature which you feel cannot be raised with the member of the College's staff concerned, the matter should be treated as formal and the steps in stage 2 should be followed.

Please be aware that the timescales identified in this procedure are based on term-time only. Where complaints are received, or investigations fall outside of term-time, this is not included when calculating the response times.

### 6.1 Stage 1 - Informal Complaint Procedure

Your concerns will be taken seriously, and most issues can be resolved quickly at this point.

#### Step 1

Talk to the person concerned, or the Curriculum Manager for the area. If you feel that you need support to do this, you can ask for help from the Student Union President.

#### Step 2

Once you have raised your concerns, the staff member you speak to should come back to you with a response within 5 working days.

#### Step 3

Hopefully your concerns have been resolved. However, if you have not had a response within 5 working days, or you are still not satisfied, you should escalate your complaint to stage 2.

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## 6.2 Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

### Step 1

Please complete a Complaints Form which can be located on our website, or using this [link](#) and include:

- Full details of the complaint
- An explanation of the steps you have undertaken to try to resolve your complaint
- An explanation of why the responses you have received are not satisfactory
- Where applicable, the outcome you would like from raising the complaint
- Any supporting evidence (e.g. emails, notes of meetings, etc.).

### Step 2

You will receive a letter to acknowledge that you have made a formal complaint within 3 working days.

### Step 3

A relevant senior or delegated manager will be assigned to investigate the complaint. They may contact you, within 5 working days, to arrange a meeting/phone conversation if they need any additional information from you, to support their investigation.

### Step 4

You will receive a response from the investigating manager within 15 working days from the date on the acknowledgement letter.

In some cases, where issues raised are complex, the investigations may take longer than 15 working days. If this is the case, you will be sent a holding letter which will inform you of when to expect the reply.

## 6.3 Appeals Process

### Internal Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the response, you may appeal in writing to the Principal & CEO stating clearly your reasons for being unsatisfied with the original outcome of the investigation into the original complaint. This might include matters of procedure/process, errors of fact or further information that has come to light. You are required to make any appeal within 10 working days of the date on the letter stating the original decision. Letters need to be addressed to:

The Principal & CEO  
City of Portsmouth College  
Highbury Campus  
Portsmouth  
PO6 2SA

We will acknowledge your appeal within 5 working days. The Principal & CEO will consider your appeal, undertake any further investigations as required and inform you by letter of their decision within a further 10 working days of the date of the acknowledgement.

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### **External Appeal**

Should you be dissatisfied with the decision of the Principal & CEO you have the right to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Details of how to go about this can be found on the ESFA website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

### **6.4 Complaints direct to the Executive Leadership Team**

Complaints that are sent directly to the Principal & CEO, or other members of the Executive Leadership Team by email or letter will be dealt with as above and follow the same formal process.

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## APPENDIX A

### HIGHER EDUCATION COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

(For use with all programmes regulated by the Office for Students)

#### 1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This procedure is available to all HE students at City of Portsmouth College, irrespective of the course of study being followed, and has been developed to provide the same high level of protection as the complaints procedure applicable across the College.
- 1.2 The purpose of the procedure is to outline how a complaint regarding HE provision may be raised and also to explain the fashion in which such complaints will be handled.
- 1.3 This procedure does not apply to complaints regarding academic appeals or disciplinary action for which separate processes are in place.

#### 2. Complaints

- 2.1 CoPC is committed to offering the best possible HE provision and encourages attention being brought to any instance where it is felt this objective is not being met. The College promises to take all concerns from HE students very seriously. Issues raised will be investigated thoroughly and fairly with the complainant being informed promptly of any outcome and actions to be taken.
- 2.2 The basic structure of the HE Complaints Procedure mirrors that outlined in section 6 of the main body of this document, including College holidays not being considered within normal timeframes. Those wishing to express their dissatisfaction about any aspect of their HE programme are requested to use the following guidelines:

##### **Stage 1 – Informal Complaint Procedure** (see 6.1 above)

This is an informal stage in the process where the matter can be addressed verbally.

In most cases, a complaint should be raised initially with either the HE student's personal tutor or the Curriculum Manager for the programme in question. Support can be sought from the course representative and students are also at liberty to approach the Assistant Principal for their area, if this seems more appropriate. The complainant should expect to receive a response to the issue of concern within 5 working days.

In all instances, the conversation will be private and confidential and information will only be shared as is necessary for safeguarding purposes or in order to address the issue. It should prove possible to resolve most complaints informally, without the need for a written procedure.

##### **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint** (see 6.2 above)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal procedure, the more formal second stage of the process can be commenced. The course of action to be taken in investigating a formal complaint varies, however, depending on the HE programme studied (please read the following sections carefully and seek advice if necessary):

### **Stage 2a – University of Portsmouth programmes**

For issues relating to programmes that are franchised from the University of Portsmouth, the complaints process will fall within one of two categories:

- i) For a complaint relating to a service issue (such as resources or facilities etc.), a written complaint should be submitted to the Deputy Principal/CEO, Curriculum and Quality at City of Portsmouth College. It will be recorded and acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and the complainant may be asked to provide further written clarification as required. The complaint will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and fairly and a written Completion of Procedures Letter confirming outcome, including any actions identified to resolve the issue, will be provided to the complainant within 15 working days of receipt.

*Or*

- ii) Any other type of complaint is obliged to follow the University of Portsmouth's Student Complaints Procedure: <https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-047.pdf>  
This policy may also be found on the College website alongside other HE documentation and complainants on UoP courses are advised to read this procedure carefully. The process utilises its own online complaints form; however, the University of Portsmouth Complaints Team can also be contacted by email [complaintsadvise@port.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvise@port.ac.uk)  
Complaints that need to be directed to UoP should not use the CoPC online form.

### **Stage 2b – Other CoPC HE programmes (e.g. Pearson, Higher National awards etc.)**

For complaints involving courses validated by Pearson and other awarding bodies (e.g. HTQs), the complainant should complete the same Complaints Form on the website [link](#) as for other CoPC programmes. It will be recorded and acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and the complainant may be asked to provide further written clarification as required.

The complaint will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and fairly and a written Completion of Procedures Letter confirming the outcome, including any actions identified to resolve the issue, will be provided to the complainant within 15 working days of the acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint.

### **Stage 3 – Appeals Process (see 6.3 above)**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the final outcome proposed by either the University of Portsmouth (Stage 2b) or City of Portsmouth College (Stage 2b), they may decide to pursue the formal complaint process further as detailed below:

HE students on CoPC courses can choose to use the internal appeals procedure outlined in section 6.3 above; however, this should not be used by those on UoP programmes.

All HE students at the College, irrespective of the nature of the course that they are following, have further external recourse in the event that they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of complaints procedures. In such circumstances, the complainant has the final right of appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), which provides this service on behalf of the entire Higher Education sector. Further information is available at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)