

SK College Group



St Helens College



University Centre
St Helens



SK College Group Complaint Procedure



SK COLLEGE GROUP

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Purpose:

To inform complainants of the procedure for dealing with informal and formal complaints and the right to appeal.

Scope:

All SK College Group, University Centre St Helens and subcontracted; applicants, students, apprentices, parents of students under 18 years old, fee paying employers, and members of the general public.

This procedure is the responsibility of The Director of Marketing Recruitment and Customer Relations.

1.0 Introduction

SK College Group is committed to providing high quality services for all our students, prospective students, employers and all stakeholders or members of the Group community.

Academic Appeals are not a part of this policy or procedure. Please refer to the Group's FE or HE Academic Appeal Policies.

Employees should use the Group's Grievance Policy and Procedure. Further details and advice on this can be obtained from Human Resources.

SK College Group operates a staged complaint procedure through which it aims to resolve all concerns quickly and effectively. This document details that Complaint Procedure.

All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with impartially and will be received courteously and in confidence. Complaints will be investigated without prejudice to the complainant, and confidential support to enable the complainant to put in writing or any other medium the complainant requires, e.g. Braille/audio, will be made available when required.

Advice and support on how to raise a complaint, either informally or formally or, for assistance in completing the form or, for assistance during the complaint process, can be obtained by contacting College reception services either in person, by telephone on 01744 733766, or via email on enquire@sthelens.ac.uk

2.0 Policy Statement

- SK College Group will ensure that applicants and students will not be treated less favourably following their complaint. If this is found to be the case, staff disciplinary procedures will be followed;
- SK College Group will identify actions from complaints received to improve and develop its services;

- SK College Group will ask for Equality and Diversity information via the Formal Complaint Form, for example, Gender and Ethnicity, to help in ensuring that all people are treated fairly;
- A Formal Complaint Form should be completed with as much detail as possible, but most importantly full name, date of birth and contact details. If the form is completed on behalf of a complainant, then the form must include full contact details of the complainant's representative. We regret that the SK College Group is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints;
- SK College Group's decision will be communicated to the complainant using the complainant's preferred method of contact;
- Customer Relations will continuously monitor a complaint until the issue has been resolved;
- The Formal Complaint will be closed on the Complaint Log only when the issue has been resolved;
- Malicious complaints received in any form will result in disciplinary action where permissible by SK College Group policies;
- In order to help us to investigate and resolve any area of dissatisfaction, the complainant should notify SK College Group of their concern at Stage 1 [informal] immediately and within 1 month of the issue first arising/occurring;
- Appeals on the refusal of an offer of a place to study with us, should be made within 2 weeks from the date of the rejection letter.
- Complaints made at Stage 2 [Formal] must be made within 1 month of exhausting Stage 1 of the Complaint Procedure and complaints made at Stage 3 [Appeal] must be made within 1 month of exhausting Stage 2 of the Complaint Procedure;
- Complainants should be aware that SK College Group staff have the right to work in a pleasant and safe environment and any violent or abusive behaviour towards them will not be tolerated.

3.0 Responsibility

- Overall responsibility for this policy and procedure lies with the Director of Marketing Recruitment and Customer Relations;
- Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this procedure lies with the Customer Relations Team Leader;
- All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve informal complaints prior to invoking the Formal Complaints Procedure;
- All staff have a responsibility to forward formal complaints to Customer Relations, including copies of any correspondence issued at Stage 1;
- The Lead Investigator has a duty to maintain a central file for the complaint which contains a copy of the original complaint, records of meetings, correspondence and other evidence used to resolve the complaint at Stage 2.

4.0 Complaints made via Social Media

Please note where a complaint is received via any Social Media, the Complainant will be advised to follow the SK College Group's Complaint Procedure. We reserve the right to remove complaints posted on a public facing platform.

5.0 Complaints from Employers

If you are dissatisfied, or have any concerns with the service provided by the Business Development Unit, please raise your concerns with the Managing Director of Commercial Services, Mr Ian Rippin. He can be contacted via email: irippin@sthelens.ac.uk

Once you have raised an issue of concern, the Group will initially respond within 5 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally using the Group's Formal Complaint Form.

6.0 Complaints from General Public

If you are a member of the public, parent, ex-student or general user of SK College Group and you are dissatisfied or have concerns about the service provided, you should in the first instance:

- raise the issue directly in writing, in person or via telephone, with the Customer Relations Team Leader, Ms Angela Dysart [St Helens Campus] or Lesley Bryan, Customer Services Manager [Knowsley Campus]; Please call 01744 733766 to be re-directed.
- if your complaint is about the Customer Relations Team Leaders, you can contact the Director of Marketing Recruitment and Customer Services, using jcallaghan@sthelens.ac.uk or by telephone on 01744 733766.

Once you have raised an issue of concern, SK College Group will respond initially within 5 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally using the Group's Formal Complaint Form.

7.0 Stage 1 - Informal

7.1 Applicants – Right to appeal admissions decisions and request a review of their application

Applicants wishing to appeal the decision of a rejection of an offer of a place should follow the informal complaints process, by first raising the appeal with the relevant programme leader.

Support and assistance on directing your appeal to the relevant person can be provided by contacting the reception services of the College either in person, by telephone on 01744 733766, or via email on enquire@sthelens.ac.uk

If you are still unhappy with the outcome of this process, please follow the formal complaints procedure and complete the Formal Complaints Form and return it to the Director of Marketing Recruitment and Customer Relations by emailing jcallaghan@sthelens.ac.uk

7.2 All Students

Rather than let an issue of concern or an area of dissatisfaction become a complaint, we hope that you will try to resolve your issue promptly by:

- Initially directing your concerns to your Personal Tutor or Tutor, progressing to the relevant Curriculum Leader/Section Head or Curriculum Manager if not resolved at that level;
- Alternatively, you can raise any concerns through the Student Council via your Student Representative, where you can raise general concerns or issues from groups of students.

If the complaint remains unresolved, an appointment should be made to speak with the Head of Faculty or Department.

Once you have raised an issue of concern, SK College Group will respond initially within 5 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally using the Group's Formal Complaint Form.

8.0 Stage 2 - Formal

SK College Group appreciates that there may be occasions when the above process may not produce a satisfactory outcome and a more formal approach may be necessary. Where it has not been possible to resolve matters to your satisfaction under Stage 1 [informal], you should complete a Formal Complaint Form and submit this to the Customer Services Team Leader who will forward the complaint to the Director of Marketing Recruitment and Customer Relations, to oversee the complaint process.

The Formal Complaint Form is available from Reception, or available on the following websites www.sthelens.ac.uk or www.knowsleycollege.ac.uk or www.elliottclarke.co.uk

Please complete the form, outlining your concerns as clearly and in as much detail as you can. Please include your name and address, dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate. You should outline any previous unsuccessful attempts at resolution and what reasonable steps should be taken to resolve the complaint.

All complaints received will be initially screened by the Director of Marketing Recruitment and Customer Relations, who will normally acknowledge the complaint within 10 working days and record it centrally.

The complaint will then be forwarded to the relevant Vice Principal.

In all cases, formal complaints will be investigated by a member of staff not directly connected with the complaint.

An Investigating Manager will investigate thoroughly and report their findings and if applicable, suggested corrective actions to the Vice Principal. The Vice Principal will send a written response to the complainant on the outcome of the investigation, and if applicable, any corrective action that SK College Group intends to take.

The investigation will normally be completed within four working weeks of receipt of the complaint by the Vice Principal. Where this timescale is not feasible, the Vice Principal will make the complainant aware of progress as an interim measure.

The Vice Principal will normally send the outcome of the process in writing to the complainant within 4 working weeks of the receipt of the complaint, and a copy sent to the Director of Marketing Recruitment and Customer Relations, for recording centrally.

9.0 Monitoring of Complaints

SK College Group monitors all complaints carefully. A bi-annual report on formal complaints is produced and shared with the Senior Leadership Team, detailing issues raised, areas of concern, timeliness of resolution and any subsequent actions.

In addition, SK College Group reports annually to the Governing Body on the operation of the Complaint Procedure and the nature of complaints.

10.0 Stage 3 – Appeal Stage

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your Stage 2 [formal] complaint, you have the right to escalate your complaint to Stage 3. Your appeal must be made in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 response and should detail the reason for your dissatisfaction.

Appeals against the decision at Stage 2 should be submitted in writing and addressed to the Principal at the relevant campus:

Ms Anne Pryer, Principal, St Helens College
Ms Gill Banks, Principal, Knowsley Community College

Complaint appeals will be heard in accordance with the Complaint Appeal Procedure as attached at **Appendix 1**.

11.0 Stage 4 - Students, General and Employers

11.1 19+ Further Education Learners

If your concern is not resolved at Stage 3 [Appeal] and you are still unhappy you may appeal to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for all courses. Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all three stages of SK College Group's Complaint Procedure. If your concern reaches this stage, we will give you full information on how to proceed.

The address for the ESFA is:
The Office of the Chief Executive
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Complaints received by an external funding body or arbitration service (e.g. Education & Skills Funding Agency) will be referred to the Principal for investigation.

11.2 University Centre St Helens Students

If your concern is not resolved at Stage 3 [Appeal], and you are on a course validated by one of our University partners, and, if after exhausting all three stages of SK College Group's Complaint Procedure you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to submit your complaint to the relevant validating university partner. You can contact the validating university partner for advice and support at any stage of your complaint.

Details of the complaints policy and procedures for your relevant validating university partner will be available on their respective websites, or upon request directly from them.

You also have the right to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all three stages of SK College Group's Complaint Procedure.

The address for the OIA is:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 3AB

Tel: 0118 959 9814

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

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References:

Complaint Procedure

COMPLAINT APPEAL PROCESS

A designated senior manager will consider the appeal against the outcome of a complaint that has been dealt with through the SK College Group Complaint and Appeal Procedure.

The designated senior manager will decide whether to review the complaint by examining the associated paperwork and evidence collected, or whether to arrange a meeting with the complainant.

All appeals will be received courteously and in confidence. If appropriate, notification of an appeal meeting will be made in writing to the complainant giving adequate notice. The meeting will also be attended by a manager who has not previously been involved in the complaint.

The complainant has an entitlement to have a copy of the procedure on request and to have the procedure explained prior to the appeal.

The decision of the appeal investigation will be confirmed in writing to the complainant, normally within 10 working days, and a copy sent to the Director of Marketing, Recruitment & Customer Relations to be recorded.

The outcome of the appeal investigation is final. (Please refer to Stage 4 of the Formal Complaint Procedure if necessary).

