



St Helens College



University Centre
St Helens

Complaint Policy and Procedure



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COMPLAINT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Purpose:

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

Scope:

All SK College Group, University Centre St Helens and subcontracted provision; 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 Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality

Academic appeals are not a part of this policy or procedure. Please refer to the College's FE or HE academic appeal policies.

1.0 Introduction

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

The College 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, received courteously and in confidence and dealt with impartially. Complaints will be investigated without prejudice to the complainant, with confidential support where required to enable the complaint to be put into writing or any other medium the complainant requires, e.g. Braille/audio.

Advice and support on how to raise a complaint, either informally or formally, assistance in completing the form or 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

- The College will ensure that applicants and students are not be treated less favourably following their complaint
- The College will identify actions from complaints received to improve and develop its services
- The College will monitor Equality and Diversity information via the Formal Complaint Form, for example, gender and ethnicity, to help in ensuring that all people are treated fairly
- We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints

- Please note where a complaint is received via any Social Media platform, the complainant will be advised to follow the College's Complaint Procedure. We reserve the right to remove complaints posted on a public facing platform.
- The College's decision will be communicated to the complainant using the complainant's preferred method of contact
- The Quality Team will continuously monitor a complaint until the issue has been resolved
- A formal complaint will be closed on the Complaint Log only when the issue has been fully resolved and final correspondence has been sent to the complainant
- Malicious complaints received in any form from students may result in disciplinary action according to College policies;
- In order to help us to investigate and resolve any area of dissatisfaction, the complainant should notify the College of their concern **at Stage 1 [Informal]** immediately and **within one month** of the issue first occurring
- Complaints regarding the refusal of an offer of a place at the College should be made within two weeks from the date of the rejection letter.
- Complaints made **at Stage 2 [Formal]** must be made **within one month** of exhausting Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure and complaints made **at Stage 3 [Appeal]** must be made **within one month** of exhausting Stage 2 of the complaint procedure;
- Complainants should be aware that all College 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 Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality
- Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this procedure rests with the Quality Manager
- All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve informal complaints prior to complainants invoking the formal complaints procedure
- All staff have a responsibility to forward formal complaints to the Quality Manager, 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 Monitoring of Complaints

The College 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, the College reports annually to the Governing Body on the operation of the Complaint Procedure and the nature of complaints.

Informal Complaints

5.0 Complaints from Employers

If you are dissatisfied, or have any concerns with the service provided by the College, please raise your concerns with the Director of Marketing, Commercial & Customer Relations, Julia Callaghan jcallaghan@sthelens.ac.uk

Once you have raised an issue of concern, you will receive an initial response within five working days. If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally using the Formal Complaints Process (see section 8).

6.0 Complaints from General Public

If you are a member of the public or other stakeholder of the College, you should in the first instance:

- raise your concern directly in writing or via telephone, with the Customer Experience Manager, Marie Davies on mdavies@sthelens.ac.uk , or telephone 01744 623129.

Advice and initial assistance is also available at the Reception Services of our main campuses; please ask for Angela Dysart [St Helens Campus] or Lesley Bryan, [Knowsley Campus) or please call 01744 733766 to be re-directed.

- Once you have raised an issue of concern, you will receive an initial response within ten working days.
- If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from this informal procedure, then please follow the Formal Complaints procedure.(see section 8).

7.0 Complaints against the Principal

Complaints regarding the Principal or any other member of the Senior Leadership Team should be directed to the Director of Governance, Lorna Lloyd-Williams LLloyd-williams@sthelens.ac.uk

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

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, or Curriculum Manager.

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

Applicants to higher education programmes wishing to appeal their offer of a place should contact the HE Admissions Team in the first instance, by emailing Angela Dysart ADysart@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 Quality Manager by emailing ICarten@sthelens.ac.uk

7.2 Stage 1 Informal - 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 Curriculum Tutors, progressing to the relevant 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.

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

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally following the Formal Complaint process (see section 8 below).

8.0 Stage 2 - Formal

The College 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 Quality Manager Ian Carten, who will oversee the complaint process; email icarten@sthelens.ac.uk

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

A Formal Complaint Form should be completed with as much detail as possible, but most importantly include your 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.

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 your complaint.

All complaints received will be initially assessed by the Quality Manager and recorded centrally. All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.

If required, the complaint will be forwarded to a relevant manager for investigation.

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. A written response will be provided to the complainant, detailing the outcome of the investigation and, if applicable, any corrective action that the College intends to take.

The investigation will normally be completed **within ten working days** following the formal acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint. Where this timescale is not feasible, the College will make the complainant aware of progress as an interim measure.

The complainant can normally expect to receive the written outcome of the process in writing within ten working days of the receipt of the complaint, a copy of which will be sent to the Quality Manager for recording centrally.

9.0 Stage 3 – Appeal Stage

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your Stage 2 **[Formal]** complaint, you have the right to appeal the decision. **Your appeal must be made in writing within ten working days** of receipt of the Stage 2 response and should detail the reason for your appeal.

Appeals against the decision outcome at Stage 2 should be submitted in writing and addressed to the Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality.

Complaint appeals will be heard in accordance with the Complaint Appeal Procedure (see section 10)

COMPLAINT APPEAL PROCEDURE

10.0 COMPLAINT APPEAL PROCESS

The Vice Principal will investigate all appeals against the outcome of a complaint that has been dealt with through the SK College Group Complaint and Appeal Procedure.

The Vice Principal 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 is entitled to receive 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, a copy of which will be sent to the Quality Manager for recording centrally.

The outcome of the appeal investigation is final. Please refer to Stage 4 below, if necessary.

11.0 Stage 4 - Students and Employers

11.1 Students on Study Programmes aged 16-18 and Adults on Funded Courses

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). Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all 3 stages of SK College Group's Complaint Procedure. If your concern reaches this stage, we will provide you with 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

12.2 University Centre St Helens Students

For quality of learning complaints, 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 3 stages of the College'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 complaint policy and procedures for your relevant validating university partner will be available on their respective websites, or upon request directly from them.

For service-related complaints, 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 3 stages of the College'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>