

## Quality policies and procedures

### Concerns and complaints policy

Aim: The aim is to ensure that concerns and complaints are addressed quickly and effectively and that we improve our service or practice as required.

Policy authorisation:	Management: Senior Leadership Team
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Policy author	Deputy Principal

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## 1. Introduction

This policy ensures that concerns are dealt with very swiftly (within 2 working days) and that complaints are dealt with quickly and thoroughly (within 10 working days). It also ensures that concerns and complaints are addressed effectively within a given set of procedures. These procedures are made available on the college's website so that people know how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

## 2. Scope of the policy

This policy is applicable to all members of the college community and to members of the public. Any person, including members of the general public, may raise a concern or make a complaint about any provision of the college's facilities or services.

## 3. Policy statement

- 3.1 Blackpool Sixth's core values and equality and diversity policy set out the standards and services our customers (students, parents and carers, staff, members of the public) can expect the college to provide. These are available on the college's website.
- 3.2 Anyone not satisfied with the level of service should feel able to approach relevant staff to address their concern promptly and directly. They should be confident that they can report the matter openly and be sure that the college will deal with the dissatisfaction courteously, sympathetically, fairly and objectively. Equally, the college expects the same level of courtesy and respect in return; concerns or complaints must be reported calmly and politely. A concern or complaint can be made in person, by telephone or in writing.
- 3.3 A mature and self-critical organisation will actively seek suggestions in order to improve its services. Making such customer feedback successful and straightforward is also important. For this reason, the college undertakes student, staff and parent/carer satisfaction surveys, regularly liaises with neighbours and key partners and has established an appropriate range of forums to enable students and staff to express their views within a framework where action is anticipated.
- 3.4 Information about complaints and concerns will be used to prevent recurrence and raise the standard of college services. The college's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and its Governing Body will regularly monitor complaints and concerns and act wherever necessary to address the issues raised.
- 3.5 This concerns and complaints policy and procedure provides the framework within which anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with college services can raise their concerns and the framework within which the staff should deal with complaints and concerns from students, parents, customers, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors and others. It does not replace college procedures for appeals about results, student admissions/exclusions, matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation or statutory assessments of special educational needs and disabilities, staff grievances and disciplinary action, whistleblowing, college reorganisation proposals or complaints about services provided by other providers who may use college premises or facilities; those procedures should be used where appropriate.
- 3.6 Concerns or complaints should be raised in the first instance with the person or area concerned as soon as possible and not later than within five working days of the incident. This is likely to be a student's teacher or other member of staff. Exceptions will be considered where there was an unavoidable delay in raising a concern or making a complaint. The member of staff dealing with a concern or complaint will make every reasonable effort to resolve the complaint promptly at local level and will ask the complainant at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue. At this level, college staff will seek to resolve a concern within two working days or a complaint within ten working days. If there is an unavoidable delay in resolving a concern or a complaint, the complainant will be provided with a new deadline and will be given an explanation of the delay.

## 4. Procedures for concerns

- 4.1 Many issues and concerns are quickly and satisfactorily resolved by speaking with the person or area concerned directly. This is likely to be a student's teacher or other member of staff. A "concern" may be defined as **"an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought"**.
- 4.2 Concerns will be recorded on the college's central record. All concerns will be emailed to the PA to the Deputy Principal within one working day of receiving the complaint. The information required includes:
- Date concern raised
  - Area of (department) and reason for concern
  - Persons involved (including staff who responded)
  - Date and timescale (in working days) of resolution
- 4.3 The member of staff must copy the email to the Head of Department.
- 4.4 Concerns do not require a full investigation because these issues can be resolved quickly either by clarification with the person or immediate action.
- 4.5 Should a concern escalate to a formal complaint the information provided as a concern may be accepted as stage 1 of the complaint where it is sufficient in detail.
- 4.6 The college will endeavour, wherever possible, to resolve concerns within two working days.

## 5. Procedures for complaints

A "complaint" may be generally defined as **"an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"**.

### 5.1 Stage one – informal

- 5.1.1 Verbal complaints made to reception and staff in public areas will be referred to the appropriate Head of Department of the area, which is the subject of the complaint. All complaints will be emailed to the PA to the Deputy Principal within one working day of receiving the complaint. If a complaint is about a member of staff it will be referred to their Head of Department or other member of the Leadership Team.
- 5.1.2 If resolved, the manager will send an email update to the PA to the Deputy Principal within two working days of completion, including the following information:
- Date complaint raised
  - Area of (department) and reason for concern
  - Persons involved (including Head of Department who responded and name/relationship of complainant)
  - Actions taken (brief bullet points) and a copy of the original complaint
  - Date and timescale (in working days) of resolution
  - If the complaint was a] dismissed as unfounded, b] resolved c] upheld (or partially upheld)
- 5.1.3 If a Head of Department is unable to resolve the issue within five working days, the complaint moves to Stage Two.
- 5.1.4 A record of the complaint and action taken will be sent to the PA to the Deputy Principal.

- 5.1.5 If there are reasons why anyone does not wish to resolve the matter informally they should follow the formal complaints procedure. The complainant will at this point be directed to the Deputy Principal.

## 5.2 Stage two – formal

**The ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) clearly states that a complainant “must issue a formal complaint to your provider and exhaust their complaints procedure, including any appeals processes” before referring a complaint to them, so it is important to use every part of this policy if you remain dissatisfied.**

- 5.2.1 If the complainant does not feel the issue has been satisfactorily resolved, they may make a formal complaint, usually in writing, to the Deputy Principal. Other members of the Leadership Team may become involved in resolving the complaint if necessary and as designated by the Deputy Principal. If appropriate, a meeting will be offered between the complainant and other parties involved to arrive at an agreed resolution.
- 5.2.2 The complainant(s) will need to provide details of their complaint (unless already supplied to another member of the college staff), usually in writing, and within five working days of the event (or the end of stage 1). The details required are:
- The nature of the complaint and persons involved
  - The date on which the incident occurred
  - Contact address and telephone number
  - Whether anyone else was affected or witnessed the event
- 5.2.3 If an anonymous complaint is received, this will be investigated in the normal way, and the outcome kept on file.
- 5.2.4 Complainants will be advised that while confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is usually not possible to resolve complaints without disclosing the complainant’s identity to relevant parties in order for the issue to be resolved fairly. However, wherever possible and if requested, the college will not disclose the complainant’s identity in the course of the investigation. Students can be assured that nothing will appear in their academic records to indicate that they have made a complaint.
- 5.2.5 The college will respond within two working days to indicate that an investigation is being undertaken and aim to conclude an investigation and respond within ten working days of receiving a complaint.
- 5.2.6 The Deputy Principal or designate will investigate details of the complaint and decide to:
- Dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons.
  - Propose an amicable resolution.
  - Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, take appropriate steps to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

## 6. Appeals

- 6.1 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their complaint, they may appeal in writing to the Principal. The appeal must be made within five working days of receipt of the outcome of the complaint. The Principal will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days. The Principal will decide to:
- Dismiss the complaint as unfounded.
  - Refer the complaint back to an area and propose an amicable settlement.
  - Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, recommend appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

6.2 The decision of the Principal is final and the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within ten working days.

6.3 There is a separate appeals policy for teacher-assessed grades (TAG appeals policy).

## 7. Taking a complaint further

7.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the college's response following appeal the complainant should seek advice from the Deputy Principal on how to take their complaint further.

7.2 **Only after all college procedures for dealing with complaints have been exhausted should a complaint be referred to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).** This does not apply where a complaint is the subject of legal proceedings or relates to the quality of service provided by external bodies such as an examination board.

### 7.3 How to contact the ESFA

The following information is taken from the ESFA website with regards to making a complaint to them.

**Before contacting ESFA, you must issue a formal complaint to your provider and exhaust their complaints procedure, including any appeals processes.**

You should receive a letter or email explaining the outcome of your complaint, and which should also show that you have fully exhausted the organisation's complaints procedure.

If you have fully exhausted the provider's complaints procedure, have evidence of this and remain dissatisfied, you can contact ESFA.

You can also contact ESFA if you are being prevented from exhausting the organisation's complaints procedure, or if you are no longer able to contact them because they are no longer trading.

We only accept complaints in writing, by email or letter, except where we are required to make reasonable adjustments. You should email complaints to [complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk), or put them in a letter to:  
Customer Service Team,  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT

If you want to make a disclosure in the public interest, please [how ESFA handles whistleblowing disclosures](#). This covers arrangements to protect people, who make disclosures and keep their personal details confidential.

## 8. Complaints against the Deputy Principal, Principal or members of the Governing Body

8.1 Complaints against the Deputy Principal should be addressed to the Principal.

8.2 Complaints against the Principal should be addressed to the Chair of Directors c/o the Clerk to the Corporation.

8.3 Complaints against the Governing Body should also be addressed to the Clerk to the Corporation.

- 8.4 For any instances where it is felt that the complaints procedure does not set down a precise course of action, reference should be made back to the underlying principles of natural justice and equity: when in doubt the basic principles of appeal and fair hearing should apply.

## **9. Records and monitoring**

- 9.1 The PA to the Deputy Principal will maintain a central, confidential record of concerns and complaints, actions taken and outcomes. These records will inform the quality assurance processes. These will be recorded electronically. A written analysis of concerns and complaints will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team at the end of the academic year. Members of the Leadership Team will ensure concerns and complaints within their areas are addressed and that they form part of the quality assurance process.
- 9.2 An annual report will be presented to the Board of Directors. Analysis of complaints will be according to the following categories:
- 1 Teaching and learning
  - 2 Student support
  - 3 Examination assessment
  - 4 Admissions and guidance
  - 5 Student behaviour
  - 6 Accommodation and resources
  - 7 Staffing
  - 8 Support services and administration
  - 9 Equality and diversity
  - 10 Transport
  - 11 Events and performances
  - 12 Charity
  - 13 Other (to include exceptional or one off complaints)
- 9.3 Teaching areas will be identified in the report by curriculum area only. The college will preserve individual anonymity in monitoring documents.

## **10. Review**

The content and operation of this policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Deputy Principal.

## **11. Other related policies**

Equality and diversity policy

Whistleblowing policy

Positive behaviour policy and disciplinary procedures (students)

SEND policy

Staff disciplinary procedure

Grievance policy (staff)

Redundancy procedure (staff)

Centre policy and appeals policy (teacher-assessed grades)

Compliments policy

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This concerns and complaints policy and procedure will be published on the college's website (<https://blackpoolsixth.ac.uk/policies/>) and is highlighted to students as part of the induction process.

If you require this information in another format or if you need guidance on understanding the procedure, please contact our Marketing Officer on 01253 394911 or [enquiries@blackpoolsixth.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@blackpoolsixth.ac.uk) for further details.