

## Annex C: Template for producing a self-assessment on guidance on consumer protection law

Provider's name: Walsall College

Provider's UKPRN: 10007315

### Your overall approach to ensuring compliance with consumer protection law

*Explain here your approach to complying with consumer protection law and the mechanisms you use to monitor and ensure compliance with consumer protection law. Below are some headings and examples which might be useful, but this is not, and is not intended to be, exhaustive or prescriptive.*

Walsall College provides clear and effective communication about our provision and meets the quality standards set out by the UK Quality Code. Walsall College has successfully retained the nationally recognised matrix standard, awarded to organisations that offer a high quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service, which supports students in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals. The College first achieved the quality mark in 2003, and has since received periodic assessments every few years, with the most recent attainment being Matrix Excellence Award.

We comply with the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) through the publication and regular review (six-monthly at the HE Management Board or triggered by policy change or case law) and maintenance of our Publication of Information Policy and Procedure. The aim of the Publication of Information Policy and Procedure is to ensure that published information enables prospective/current students and external stakeholders to make informed judgements and that the information is:

- accurate;
- fit-for-purpose;
- trustworthy;
- transparent and open;
- timely and up-to-date;
- accessible.

The Publication of Information Policy and Procedure safeguards the information we offer, in terms of the title and structure of courses, and the fees/costs associated. It ensures that this information is accurate, clear and unambiguous, and is available to our students prior to commencement of their course. The Head of Sales and Marketing is responsible for the College's CMA Action Plan and Publication of Information Policy and Procedure, these documents are continuously reviewed to tackle issues relating to consumer law, such as information management and provision and the setting of terms and conditions and/or contracts to ensure that we remain fully compliant. Outcomes from meetings which indicate that upskilling is required, inform staff development plans to ensure that the relevant teams are fully compliant.

We consult our Contracts and Compliance Manager and/or the Data Protection Team when developing new contracts, or when making amendments to our terms and conditions. The contracts team also has a retainer with Enoch Evans (a local solicitors firm), who they consult for in-depth legal advice when developing new contracts and when we change terms and conditions.

The HE Academic Regulations for the College refer staff and students to all aspects of quality assurance that underpin delivery, assessment, and verification and enable the College to maintain academic standards and outcomes across its HE provision. It also sets out regulations across a range of associated issues such as authenticity, grading and academic appeals. Our HE Academic Regulations and Student Charter are provided to students at 'offer stage', induction and are also accessible prior to student enrolment, via the College website.

Our policies and procedures relating to consumer law obligations, complaints handling and setting terms and conditions and/or contracts, are available to staff and current students via the College's internal SharePoint, and prospective students via the College's external website.

### **Your approach to providing information to applicants and students: research and application stage, offer stage and enrolment stage**

*Explain here how you ensure that applicants and students are provided with accurate information about their course, fees and other relevant costs and about your institution, and that such information is accurate, clear, timely and accessible.*

Walsall College is committed to ensuring its published prospectus contains accurate and accessible information on all courses, their associated fees and other relevant costs. Our Publication of Information Policy and Procedure systematically ensures a half-yearly review of our information so that we know when this requires updating or changing. Our course information portal is an e-workflow system that automatically triggers a prompt to key manager leads once information goes beyond the six-month period. This supports and prompts a timely review and prevents material from falling out of date or relevance as managers will then take steps to address it where required.

The Walsall College website's HE Fees page includes detailed fee information for Walsall College and LCCA students. In addition, this information provides transparency regarding the additional fees that could be incurred such as:

- the cost of personal membership to professional bodies;
- additional materials beyond the supplied standard provision;
- optional field trips and activities for personal development;
- travel costs to and from placements;
- the cost of any DBS check or occupational health assessment (where these are provided either by the College or a placement provider);
- library fees and fines 'own purchase' text books;
- and printing and copying costs.

HE students can apply to pay their tuition fees by instalment. The instalment arrangements will not be more favourable than:

- One third of the tuition fee to be paid at enrolment
- All other fees and charges (such as materials charges and learner pass charges) to be paid in full at enrolment
- Two equal payments of the remaining tuition fee to be paid at the start of each of the following two terms

These instalment arrangements match the arrangements for the payment of student loans. Prospective HE student offer letters notify them of their right to cancel within 14 days of accepting the offer.

Course fees for the Diploma in Education and Training and Level 6 top-up degrees are set by the awarding institution and will vary accordingly. The College will abide by the fee proposals from these institutions.

Information on inflationary increases for two-year part time courses is also included. In terms of students wanting to progress to a higher level course (for example, HNC level 4 to HND level 5 or from HND level 5 to Level 6), the College publishes its fees for each two academic consecutive years ahead, at the end of every April. This will enable students to review costs of not only the course they are considering, but of the subsequent progression level course, if they chose to remain and progress at the College.

The Head of Sales and Marketing is responsible for the College's CMA Action Plan and Publication of Information Policy and Procedure, and therefore is responsible for ensuring that the above information is up-to-date and complaint, via the College website.

### **Your contract terms and conditions**

*Explain here the contracts you use to govern relationships with students and how you ensure that these are fair and have transparent terms and conditions. For example:*

Our HE Academic Regulations and Student Charter are provided to students at 'offer stage', induction and are also accessible prior to student enrolment, via the College website and the College's Student SharePoint for current students.

We ensure that terms and conditions are clear and understandable to students by detailing a transparent privacy notice (in line with GDPR), student declaration and payment terms and conditions. All of the above are included in our Enrolment Form and Learning Agreement, which is completed by students before commencing each qualification/year. Our Student Services staff are also on-hand to answer any questions that HE students may have at the point of enrolment, and the Enrolment Form and Learning Agreement signposts students to Student Services if they need help accessing the form.

We ensure that our regulations are clear and understandable to students by providing online 'student statements' for key College policies and procedures, these are summarised versions of documents which include simplified headings and content for easy accessibility, such as:

- What is it? (purpose);
- If will only effect you if ... (audience, e.g. this policy effects all students);
- Brief summary of the policy content;
- What do I do if I want to know more about it? (signpost to staff);
- Attachment (full version of the policy for transparency).

The full versions of all key College policies are Equality Impact Assessed (EIA), and approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) according to the agreed schedule.

The HE Academic Regulations are shared with students at induction, and College Lecturers are on-hand to support students to understand the content. This document includes the following information for HE students and staff to access:

- Enrolment and registration guidance;
- Payment of fees and other charges;
- Teaching and Learning (i.e. student development and achievement);

- Student Voice (i.e. satisfaction surveys, complaints);
- Assessment (i.e. recognition of prior learning, assessment methods).

The Finance Manager works with the Director of Student Journey to review the transparency and fairness of the College's Terms and Conditions on an annual basis, as outlined in the Enrolment Form and Learning Agreement. The Head of Sales and Marketing will oversee this activity on an annual basis, with the additional consideration of its publication and accessibility to prospective and current students.

## **Your complaint handling processes and practices**

*Explain here how you ensure that ensure that complaint handling practices are clear, accessible and fair.*

Stakeholders are signposted to the Complaints Policy and Procedure, should they wish to express their dissatisfaction with any aspect the service provided by Walsall College (including LCCA). This policy was devised in full consultation with a number of stakeholders, including a wide range of students and staff. We are committed to providing high quality services for all our College Community, taking account of users' views, and using the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement. For this purpose, a stakeholder is defined as a student, prospective student, parent, employer, or any other interested party that indicates dissatisfaction with the current level of service.

Overall responsibility for the complaints policy lies with the Deputy Principal - Delivery and Success. Day-to-day responsibility for implementation of this procedure lies with the College's Quality Team, and all staff have a responsibility to try to resolve complaints prior to using the Complaints Procedure. Should a stakeholder remain dissatisfied they can appeal, and following this, they are directed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and guidance with the relevant links are made available. The Quality Team delivers complaints training to managers, and all staff are advised of any changes to the policy. A copy of the policy is available to prospective students via the College website, and current students can access the full version or 'student statement' at any time.

Walsall College is passionate about delivering the very best services to its students and to its community. We know that the way to do this is to involve students in as many different ways as possible to shape developments in the learning environment, to act on feedback we receive, and to communicate outcomes to students promptly. The better our learning environment becomes, the more successful and confident our students will become and the greater the impact we will have on the development of Walsall as a borough.

The College provides a range of student involvement activities, which enable everyone to take up their right to participate and to experience personal and professional growth as a result of active participation. The College's Student Voice Strategy outlines our vision for active participation in shaping the future and the aspirations of our students, which year-on-year generates high degrees of student satisfaction.