



# ***Complaints***

## **Policy and Procedure**

Bringing talent to life...

DEPARTMENT	QUALITY ASSURANCE
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## Summary of Changes

Section/Page	Description	Rationale
<a href="#"><u>Section 2 - Page 3</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Section 4.8 - Page 4</u></a>	Policy name change from Positive Behaviour Management and Discipline (PBMD) Policy to Student Support Policy and Procedure.	Policy has been updated.
<a href="#"><u>Section 5.1 – Page 5</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Section 6.1.1 – Page 6</u></a>	Job title change from Assessor to Vocational Coach.	Roles have been changed since the last update.
<a href="#"><u>Page 9</u></a>	OIA sub-heading.	
<a href="#"><u>Section 8.7 – Page 10</u></a>	If Stages 1 to 3 have been fully exhausted and their complaint relates to an Aim qualification, students can contact the awarding organisation.	Mandated by the awarding organisation.

To request a copy of this document in an alternative format such as large print, please contact 01922 657000.

## **1. Purpose**

At Walsall College, we are committed to providing high quality services for our College Community, by taking account of stakeholder views, and using the findings to continuously improve and develop our services.

## **2. Scope**

This document details the Complaints Policy and Procedure. A complainant may be a student/apprentice, prospective student, applicant, parent, employer, or any other interested party that indicates dissatisfaction with the current level of service.

This policy does not cover complaints and appeals for the following concerns, please refer to the specified policy in this instance:

- Safeguarding concerns
  - **Safeguarding Policy and Procedure (Student Well-being)**
- Student support
  - **Student Support Policy and Procedure (Student Well-being)**
- Appeals against assessment and internal/external quality assurance
  - **Assessment and Quality Assurance Policy**
- Plagiarism/maladministration
  - **Academic Misconduct Policy**
- Bursary decisions
  - **Bursary Policy (Finance)**
- Recruitment outcomes
  - **Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy (Human Resources)**

### 3. Responsibility

- 3.1 Overall responsibility for this procedure lies with the Assistant Principal – Quality and Student Experience.
- 3.2 Operational responsibility for this procedure lies with the Quality Assurance Manager.
- 3.3 All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve complaints **informally**.
- 3.4 All staff have a responsibility to forward complaints to the Quality Assurance Team, should customers remain dissatisfied.

### 4. Policy

- 4.1 Complaints must be raised **within 12 months of the original issue**, so that evidence is available for the investigation.
- 4.2 We will investigate your complaint thoroughly and objectively and it will be regularly monitored by the Quality Assurance Team.
- 4.3 **We aim to resolve your complaint, at each stage, within 15 working days – however, some complaints may take longer, especially if the issue is more difficult to resolve. We will provide you with an update during this timescale, when it is not possible to communicate the outcome at that stage.**
- 4.4 We will communicate an approximate timescale for a resolution (at each stage), where possible.
- 4.5 An investigation may not be possible (or could be limited) for anonymous complaints, depending on the amount of information provided by the complainant.
- 4.6 Records relating to complaints will be retained for five years.
- 4.7 The College will ensure that students will not be treated less favourably if they make a complaint, if this is found to be the case, staff disciplinary procedures will be followed.
- 4.8 Students should be aware that malicious complaints received in any form would be dealt with in line with the Student Support process.
- 4.9 Depending on the circumstances, where a complaint leads to disciplinary action against College staff, the College may need to keep certain aspects of the outcome confidential in accordance with data protection/GDPR regulations.
- 4.10 Complainants should be aware that our staff have the right to work in a pleasant and safe environment, and any violent or abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.



## 5. Procedure for Students

### 5.1 Stage 1 – Informal

- 5.1.1 Student concerns should initially be raised with a Lecturer, Vocational Coach or Personal Tutor (or alternative member of staff if this is not appropriate). The member of staff must take every opportunity to resolve the complaint **informally**.
- 5.1.2 Students can also contact the Student Union.
- 5.1.3 If you are acting on behalf of someone else, we will need their permission **before** we can disclose any information to you.
- 5.1.4 Verbal complaints to Reception, staff in public areas and requests to meet the Principal/Governors will be referred to the relevant College Manager/Duty Manager.
- 5.1.5 Conduct of another student may be referred for investigation under the Student Support process.
- 5.1.6 The outcome will be communicated to you by the member of staff assigned to investigate your complaint.
- 5.1.7 We aim to resolve your complaint within 15 working days – however, some complaints may take longer, especially if the issue is more difficult to resolve. We will provide you with an update during this timescale, when it is not possible to communicate the final outcome.
- 5.1.8 If you are unhappy with the outcome, you can request that we escalate your complaint to **Stage 2** of this process **within ten working days**.

### 5.2 Stage 2 – Formal

- 5.2.1 You can contact the College to make a formal complaint, by email, post or telephone, using the following contact details:

**Email:** [feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk)

**Textphone/Minicom (for the Deaf):** dial 18001 + 01922657000

**Quality Assurance Team**

Wisemore Campus  
Littleton Street West  
Walsall  
WS2 8ES  
01922 657000

**5.2.2 We will need as much detail as possible from you, including:**

- Your name (and the name of the person that you are representing, if applicable);
- Date of birth;
- Contact details.
- Course (if applicable);
- Full details of your complaint (i.e. dates/names of people involved);

5.2.3 If you are acting on behalf of someone else, we will need their permission **before** we can disclose any information to you.

5.2.4 Formal complaints are logged within five working days of receipt by the Quality Assurance Team. The Quality Assurance Team will then assign an Investigation Lead(s) to investigate the issues that you have raised.

5.2.5 The outcome will be communicated to you by the member of staff assigned to investigate your complaint.

5.2.6 We aim to resolve your complaint within 15 working days – however, some complaints may take longer, especially if the issue is more difficult to resolve. We will provide you with an update during this timescale, when it is not possible to communicate the final outcome.

5.2.7 If you are unhappy with the outcome, you can request that we escalate your complaint to **Stage 3** of this process (section 7 of this document) **within ten working days**.

**6. Procedure for External Complainants (i.e. Parents/Employers/Members of the Public)**

**6.1 Stage 1 – Informal**

6.1.1 Concerns should initially be raised with a Lecturer, Vocational Coach, Personal Tutor or relevant College Manager. The member of staff must take every opportunity to resolve the complaint **informally**.

6.1.2 Verbal complaints to Reception, staff in public areas and requests to meet with the Principal will be referred to the relevant College Manager/Duty Manager.

6.1.3 Conduct of another student may be referred for investigation under the **Student Support Policy and Procedure**.

6.1.4 You can contact Walsall College, using the following contact details:

**Email:** [feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk)

**Textphone/Minicom (for the Deaf):** dial 18001 + 01922657000

**Quality Assurance Team**

Wisemore Campus  
Littleton Street West  
Walsall  
WS2 8ES

## 6.2 Stage 2 – Formal

6.2.1 If you are unhappy with the outcome (**Stage 1**), you can contact the College **within ten working days of our response**. If we do not receive an appeal during this period, your complaint will be closed and this will conclude the complaints process.

6.2.2 To make a formal complaint, by post, telephone or email, using the following contact details:

**Email:** [feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk)

**Textphone/Minicom (for the Deaf):** dial 18001 + 01922657000

**Quality Assurance Team**

Wisemore Campus  
Littleton Street West  
Walsall  
WS2 8ES  
01922 657000

6.2.3 We will need as much detail as possible from you, including:

- Your name (and the name of the person that you are representing, if applicable);
- Student's date of birth (if applicable);
- Contact details.
- Course (if applicable);
- Full details of your complaint (i.e. dates/names of people involved);

6.2.4 If you are acting on behalf of someone else, we will need **their** permission **before** we can disclose any information to you.

6.2.5 The outcome will be communicated to you by the member of staff assigned to investigate your complaint.



- 6.2.6 We aim to resolve your complaint within 15 working days – however, some complaints may take longer, especially if the issue is more difficult to resolve. We will provide you with an update during this timescale, when it is not possible to communicate the final outcome.
- 6.2.7 Some complaints will process directly to Stage 2 (Formal), depending on the nature of the complaint, i.e. complaints concerning Health and Safety or Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity.

## 7. Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 3) - Internal

- 7.1 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your formal complaint (**Stage 2**), you may appeal against the decision **within ten working days of our response**. If we do not receive an appeal during this period, your complaint will be closed and this will conclude the complaints process.
- 7.2 You can contact the College to appeal by post, telephone or email, using the following contact details:

**Email:** [feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk)

**Textphone/Minicom (for the Deaf):** dial 18001 + 01922657000

### Quality Assurance Team

Wisemore Campus  
Littleton Street West  
Walsall  
WS2 8ES  
01922 657000

- 7.3 Complaint Appeals are investigated by a Senior Manager, independent from your original complaint. The outcome will be communicated to you by this member of staff.
- 7.4 We aim to resolve complaint appeals within 15 working days – however, some complaints may take longer, especially if the issue is more difficult to resolve. We will provide you with an update during this timescale, when it is not possible to communicate the final outcome.
- 7.5 Where possible we will advise you of an appropriate timescale for a resolution.
- 7.6 The outcome of this appeal concludes the internal complaints and appeals process. Your outcome letter will advise you of this and signpost you to the appropriate external body, outlined in [section 8](#) of this document.

## 8. Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 4) – External

### Education and Skills Funding Agency

- 8.1 If **Stages 1 to 3 have been fully exhausted**, and you are **not** studying a Higher Education (HE) course (level 4 and above), you can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), using the contact details below.

Please complete their [online enquiry form](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact%20the%20Department%20for%20Education)  
<https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact the Department for Education>

#### Complaints Team

Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

Email: [complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk)

- 8.2 You can access their Procedure for dealing with complaints about Providers of Education and Training by using this link:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>
- 8.3 The ESFA will acknowledge your complaint and will let you know what will happen next.
- 8.4 Please note, the ESFA states that they cannot help with issues that are more than **12 months old**, except for exceptional cases related to some Advanced Learner Loans.

### Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

- 8.5 If **Stages 1 to 3 have been fully exhausted** and your complaint relates to a **Higher Education (HE)** course, you can contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) using the OIA Online Portal: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/myoia.aspx>

You can also download a PDF version from the OIA website:  
[http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/34411/oia\\_digital\\_complaint\\_form\\_and\\_guidance notes.pdf](http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/34411/oia_digital_complaint_form_and_guidance_notes.pdf)

Please return PDF versions by email to [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk) or by post to:  
OIA  
Second Floor  
Abbey Gate  
57-75 Kings Road  
Reading  
RG1 3AB

- 8.6 Please note, the OIA states that the form must be received **within 12 months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter issued by your provider (Walsall College).

**Aim Qualifications**

- 8.7 If **Stages 1 to 3 have been fully exhausted** and your complaint relates to an **Aim** qualification, you can contact the awarding organisation at:  
<https://www.aim-group.org.uk/contact/>

## 10. Complaints Flow Chart

The flowchart below is a visual representation of the complaints process described in this document.



