



Complaints eia

Policy and Procedure

DEPARTMENT	QUALITY ASSURANCE
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Contents

Summary of Changes.....	3
1 Purpose	3
2 Scope.....	3
3 Responsibility.....	3
4 Policy	4
5 Procedure for Students Procedure & External Complainants (i.e. Parents /Employers/ Members of the Public)	4
5.1 Informal.....	4
5.2 Stage 1 Formal Complaint	5
5.3 Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 2) – Appeal of Complaints Outcome.....	6
5.4 Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 3) – Final Appeal of Complaints Outcome	7
5.5 Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 4) – External.....	8
6 Complaints Flow Chart.....	9
7 Procedure for Identifying and Managing Vexatious or Serial Complaints	9

Summary of Changes

Changes have been made to the stages, acknowledgement paragraphs, closing paragraphs and roles in terms of responsibility at given stages within the process.

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
 - **Child Protection and Adults at Risk 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 Resource)**

3 Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this procedure lies with the Assistant Principal – Quality.

- 3.1 Operational responsibility for this procedure lies with the Quality Assurance Manager.
- 3.2 All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve complaints **informally**.
- 3.3 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. Complaints involving EDI-B will be dealt with by the appropriate staff member.**
- 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 favorably 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.
- 4.11 Walsall College have a Stronge expectation for all staff to attend complaints handling training. Staff who do not adhere to college policy and practice may be subjected to disciplinary measures. If in doubt, please ask a member of the Quality Team.
- 4.12 The 15 working day investigation period does not include half-term breaks and College closures.

5 Procedure for Students Procedure & External Complainants (i.e. Parents/Employers/Members of the Public)

5.1 Informal

- 5.1.1 Student concerns can initially be raised with any member of staff. 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 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.
- 5.1.4 If you are acting on behalf of someone else, we will need their permission **before** we can disclose any

information to you.

- 5.1.5 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.
- 5.1.6 Conduct of another student may be referred for investigation under the **Student Support Policy and Procedure**.
- 5.1.7 The outcome will be communicated to you by the member of staff assigned to investigate your complaint.
- 5.1.8 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.
- 5.1.9 If you are unhappy with the outcome, you can request that we escalate your complaint to **Stage 1** of this process **within ten working days**.
- 5.1.10 The informal closure paragraph should be included with the final response which can be obtained via the Quality SharePoint Page.

5.2 Stage 1 Formal Complaint

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

Email: 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 (Stage 1) complaints are logged within two 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 2** of this process (section 7 of this document) you can contact the College **within ten working days**. If we do not receive an appeal during this period, your complaint will be closed, and this will conclude the complaints process.
- 5.2.8 The system will automatically send weekly reminder notifications to leads as part of the complaints management process.
- 5.2.9 The formal closure paragraph (Stage 1) should be included with the final response which can be obtained via the Quality SharePoint Page. The complaint will not be closed on the Quality system until the correct response paragraph is used within the final response, and the evidence is forwarded to the feedback email address for this process to be completed by a member of the Quality Team.

5.3 Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 2) – Appeal of Complaints Outcome

Please note: Some complaints will be processed directly to Stage 2 depending on the nature of the complaint, i.e., complaints concerning Health and Safety or Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity which will be dealt with by an appropriate Investigation Lead(s)

- 5.3.1 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.
- 5.3.2 You can contact the College to appeal by post, telephone or email, using the following contact details:

Email: 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

- 5.3.3 Complaint Appeal is then assigned to the most appropriate Investigation Lead(s) to validate the investigation and provide a response to the appeal request.
- 5.3.4 The outcome will be communicated to you by this member of staff or by a member of the quality team.
- 5.3.5 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.
- 5.3.6 Where possible we will advise you of an appropriate timescale for a resolution.
- 5.3.7 The system will automatically send weekly reminder notifications to leads as part of the complaints management process.
- 5.3.8 The outcome of this appeal concludes the internal complaints and appeals process. Your outcome letter will advise you of this and signpost to you the appropriate external body, outlined in [Section 6](#) of this document.

5.3.9 The formal closure paragraph (Stage 2) should be included with the final response which can be obtained via the Quality SharePoint Page. The complaint will not be closed on the Quality system until the correct response paragraph is used within the final response, and the evidence is forwarded to the feedback email address for this process to be completed by a member of the Quality Team.

5.4 Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 3) – Final Appeal of Complaints Outcome

5.4.1 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, your formal complaint (**Stage 2**), you may lodge a final 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.

5.4.2 You can contact the College to appeal by post, telephone or email, using the following contact details:

Email: feedback@walsallcollege.ac.uk

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

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5.4.3 Complaint Appeals are investigated by a senior lead or another independent staff member from your original complaint. The outcome will be communicated to you by this member of staff or by a member of the quality team.

5.4.4 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 outcome.

5.4.5 The system will automatically send weekly reminder notifications to leads as part of the complaints management process.

5.4.6 Where possible we will advise you of an appropriate timescale for a resolution.

5.4.7 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 5.5](#) of this document.

5.4.8 The formal closure paragraph (Stage 3) should be included with the final response which can be obtained via the Quality SharePoint Page. The complaint will not be closed on the Quality system until the correct response paragraph is used within the final response, and the evidence is forwarded to the feedback email address for this process to be completed by a member of the Quality Team.

5.5 Complaints Appeal Process (Stage 4) – External

- 5.5.1 If **Stages 1 to 3 are fully exhausted**, and you are **not** studying a Higher Education (HE) course (level 4 and above), you can contact the external complaints teams, these can be submitted to the **Department for Education (DfE)** via the **Customer Help Portal**:

Please complete their online enquiry form below:

[https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact the Department for Education](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact%20the%20Department%20for%20Education)

Complaints Team

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone 0370 000 2288

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>

- 5.5.2 The DfE will acknowledge your complaint and will let you know what will happen next.
- 5.5.3 Please note, the DfE 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)

- 5.5.4 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>

- 5.5.5 You can also download a PDF version from the OIA website: http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/34411/oia_digital_complaint_form_and_guidance_note_s.pdf

Please return PDF versions by email to enquiries@oiahe.org.uk or by post to:

OIA
Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
RG1 3AB

- 5.5.6 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).

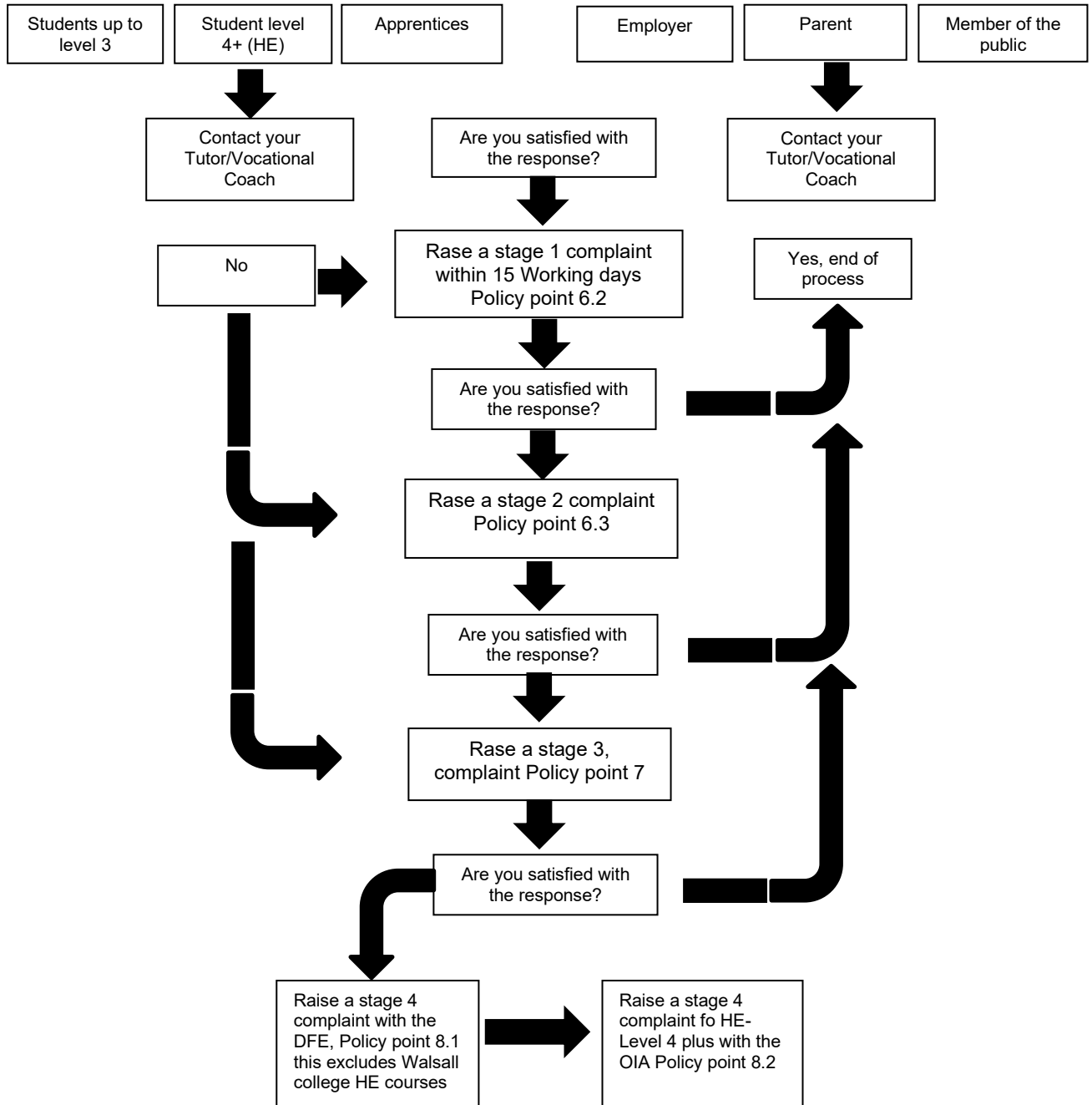
Aim Qualifications

- 5.5.7 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/>

6 Complaints Flow Chart

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



7 Procedure for Identifying and Managing Vexatious or Serial Complaints

7.1 The College is committed to ensuring that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and with respect, in line with our Complaints Policy. However, in rare cases, complainants may act in a persistent, vexatious or unreasonable manner. To protect staff’s well-being and the integrity of the complaints process, the following procedure will apply:

7.2 Initial Recognition

- If a staff member believes that a complaint (or the behaviour of a complainant) may be vexatious, they should notify their line manager and provide evidence (e.g. repetitive messages, hostile language, refusal to accept earlier outcomes).
- Staff must not attempt to label or dismiss a complaint themselves – the designation of "vexatious" is a formal College decision, not an individual judgement.

7.3 Review and Assessment

The Complaints Officer (or designated senior manager) will review the case, considering:

- The number and nature of previous complaints raised by the individual.
- The extent to which issues raised have already been addressed fairly through due process.
- The manner of communication (e.g. frequency, tone, hostility, refusal to accept findings).
- Whether the complaint raises new, substantive issues or simply repeats previous ones.
- Input may also be sought from the staff directly involved and from the relevant Head of Department or Director.

7.4 Decision and Communication

- A decision on whether a complaint will be designated as vexatious is made by the Assistant Principal (or another member of the Executive Team with delegated responsibility).

The complainant will be notified in writing, outlining:

- Why their behaviour or complaint has been deemed vexatious.
- Any limits or restrictions placed on future communication (e.g. single point of contact, restricted correspondence channels, no further consideration of repeated issues without new evidence).
- Their right to appeal against the designation.

7.5 Support for Staff

- Once a complaint is designated as vexatious, staff should refer any further communication from the complainant to the Quality Team or designated point of contact.
- Staff are not expected to manage repeated or hostile correspondence themselves and should avoid direct engagement beyond following guidance.
- This approach protects staff professionalism, ensures consistency of response, and prevents escalation caused by emotional or reactive responses.

7.6 Ongoing Monitoring

Vexatious complaint designations will be regularly reviewed by the Quality Team to ensure they remain proportionate and justified.