



St Helens College



University Centre
St Helens

Complaints Procedure

Town Centre Campus, Water Street, St Helens WA10 1PP **Principal:** Dr Jette Burford M.B.A., Ph.D.

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Purpose:

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

Scope:

All St Helens College students, parents of students under 18 years old and fee paying employers.

This procedure is the responsibility of The Director of Customer Relations & Marketing.

Introduction

St Helens College is committed to providing high quality services for all our students, prospective students, employers and all stakeholders or members of the College community.

Academic Appeals are not a part of this policy or procedure. Please refer to the College's FE or HE Academic Appeals Policies.

Employees should use the College's Grievance Policy and Procedure. Further details and advice on this can be obtained from Human Resources.

The College operates a staged complaints procedure through which it aims to resolve all concerns quickly and effectively. This document details that Complaints Procedure.

All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with impartially. All complaints will be received courteously and in confidence. Complaints will be investigated without prejudice to the complainant, and confidential support to enable the complaint to be put in writing or any other medium the complainant requires, eg Braille/ audio, will be made available where required.

Complaints made via Social Media

Please note where a complaint is received via any Social Media, the College will respond advising the complainant to follow the College's Complaints Procedure. We reserve the right to remove complaints posted on a public facing platform.

Stage 1 - Informal

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 Programme Leader, progressing to the relevant Curriculum Leader or 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 learners.

If the complaint remains unresolved, an appointment should be made to speak with the Head of Department.

Once you have raised an issue of concern, the College will respond initially within 5 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally using the College's Formal Complaints Form.

Employers

If you are dissatisfied, or have any concerns with the service provided by the Business Development unit, please raise your concerns with the Director of Business Development: Mrs Beth Nolan Enolan@sthelens.ac.uk .

Once you have raised an issue of concern, the College will initially respond within 5 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally using the College's Formal Complaints Form.

General

If you are a member of the public, parent, ex-student or general user of the College and you are dissatisfied or have concerns about the service provided, you should in the first instance:

- Raise the issue directly with the Customer Relations Team Leader, Ms Angela Dysart
- If your complaint is about the Customer Relations Team Leader, you can contact the Director of Customer Services and Marketing on the email above, or by telephoning the College on 01744 733766

Once you have raised an issue of concern, the College will respond initially within 5 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution from the informal procedure, then the issue should be raised formally using the College's Formal Complaints Form.

Stage 2 - Formal

The College appreciates that there may be occasions where 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, you should complete a Formal Complaints Form and submit this to the Customer Services Team Leader, who will forward the complaint to the Director of Customer Relations and Marketing to oversee the complaints process.

The Formal complaints Form is available from the College Reception, or available on the College website www.sthelens.ac.uk

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 the complaint.

All complaints received will be screened initially by the Director of Customer Relations & Marketing who will normally acknowledge the complaint within 10 working days, and are recorded centrally.

The complaint will then be forwarded to the relevant Vice Principal who will investigate the complaint.

IN ALL CASES FORMAL COMPLAINTS ARE INVESTIGATED BY A MEMBER OF STAFF NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH THE COMPLAINT.

An Investigating Manager will investigate thoroughly and report their findings and if applicable, suggested corrective actions to the Vice Principal. The Vice Principal will send a written response to the complainant on the outcome of the investigation, and if

applicable, any corrective action that the College intends to take.

The investigation will normally be completed within four working weeks of receipt of the complaint being received by the Vice Principal.

Where this timescale is not feasible, the Vice Principal will make the complainant aware of progress as an interim measure.

The Vice Principal will normally send the outcome of the process in writing to the complainant within four working weeks of the receipt of the complaint, and a copy sent to the Director of Customer Relations & Marketing to be recorded.

Monitoring of Complaints

The College monitors all complaints carefully. A quarterly report on Formal complaints is produced and shared with the Senior Management Team, detailing issues raised, areas of study, timeliness of resolution and any subsequent actions.

In addition, the College reports annually to the Governing Body on the operation of the Complaints Procedure and the nature of complainants.

Policy Statement

1. St Helens College will ensure that students will not be treated less favourably following their complaint. If this is found to be the case, staff disciplinary procedures will be followed.
2. St Helens College will identify actions from complaints received to improve and develop its services.
3. St Helens College will ask for Equality and Diversity information via the Formal Complaints Form, for example, Gender and Ethnicity, to help to ensure sure that all people are treated fairly.
4. A Formal Complaints Form should be completed with as much detail as possible, but most importantly 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. We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.
5. The College's decision will be communicated to the complainant by the College using the complainant's preferred method of contact.
6. Customer Relations will continuously monitor a complaint until the issue has been resolved.
7. The Formal complaint will be closed on the Complaint Log only when the issue has

been resolved.

8. Malicious complaints received in any form will result in disciplinary action where permissible by college policies
9. 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 immediately and no later than 3 months of its occurrence.
10. Complaints made at Stage 2 must be made within 3 months of exhausting Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure and complaints made at Stage 3 must be made within 3 months of exhausting Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.
11. Complainants should be aware that our staff has the right to work in a pleasant and safe environment and any violent or abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.

Responsibility

1. Overall responsibility for this policy and procedure lies with the Director of Learning.
2. Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this procedure lies with the Customer Relations team Leader.
3. All staff has a responsibility to try to resolve informal complaints prior to invoking the Formal Complaints Procedure.
4. All staff has a responsibility to forward formal complaints to Customer Relations, including copies of any correspondence issued at Stage 1.
5. 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.

Stage 3 - Appeal

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your Stage 2 complaint, you have the right to escalate your complaint to Stage 3. You should put your appeal in writing, detail the reason for your dissatisfaction, what you have done to try to remedy the complaint.

Appeals against a decision should be submitted in writing to the PA to the Principal, stating the reasons for the appeal.

Complaint appeals will be heard in accordance with the Complaint Appeal Procedure as attached at Appendix 1.

Stage 4 - Students, General and Employers

19+ Further Education Learners

If your concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and you are still not happy you can appeal to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for all courses. Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all three stages of the College's Complaints Procedure. If your concern reaches this stage, we will give you full information on how to proceed. You should note that any complaint made to the SFA must be made in writing within 3 months of exhausting the above Complaints Procedure.

The address for the SFA is:

The SFA Accounts Director
St Georges House
Kingsway
Team Valley Trading Estate
Gateshead
NE11 0NA

Complaints received by an external funding body or arbitration service (e.g. Skills Funding Agency) will be referred to the Principal for investigation.

University Centre St Helens Students

If your concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and you are still not happy, you can appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all three stages of the College's Complaints Procedure. If your concern reaches this stage, we will give you full information on how to proceed. You should note that any complaint made to the OIA must be made in writing within 3 months of exhausting the above Complaints 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/>

If you are on a course validated by one of our University partners, and, if, after exhausting all three stages of the College Complaints Procedure, you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to submit your complaint to the relevant validating university partner.

Complaints Procedure - Freedom of Information Act 2000

St Helens College and University Centre St Helens takes its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and the Environmental Information Regulations very seriously.

If, for any reason, you are dissatisfied with the way in which your request for information has been handled, you may invoke the complaints procedure.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal complaint, you must make a formal complaint in writing, and provide the necessary and supporting evidence.

If, after exhausting the College's complaints procedure, you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you may refer the matter to the Information Commissioner.

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

APPENDIX 1

ST HELENS COLLEGE

PROCEDURE TITLE: COMPLAINT APPEAL PROCEDURE

Purpose:

To inform complainants of the procedure for dealing with appeals.

Scope:

All St Helens College students, parents of students under 18 years old and fee paying employers.

References:

Complaints Procedure

COMPLAINT APPEAL PROCESS

A designated senior manager shall consider the appeal against the outcome of a complaint that has been dealt with through the St Helens College Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

The designated senior manager 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 shall 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 has an entitlement to have 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 ten working days, and a copy sent to the Director of Customer Relations & Marketing to be recorded.

The outcome of the appeal investigation will be final. (Please refer to Stage 4 of the Formal Complaints Procedure if necessary)



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