



Policy Name	Complaints policy
Department	Quality
Created by (Job Title)	Vice Principal (Quality)
Date Reviewed	August 2017
Date of Next Review	August 2020
Pathway	Intranet: Quality
E & D Policy Disclaimer	<p>This policy has been reviewed in line with the Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation and Disability. We will continue to monitor this policy and to ensure that it has equal access and does not discriminate against anyone, especially any person/s listed under any protected characteristic.</p> <p>(For the E&D statement to be included the policy must be reviewed using the Equality Impact Assessment process as outlined on staff intranet https://staffnet.bedford.ac.uk/equdiv/Pages/Policies-and-Procedures.aspx)</p>

Complaints Policy (incorporating suggestions and compliments)

Introduction:

Bedford College aims to provide the highest possible standards of service at all times, however the College realises that occasionally things may go wrong. The College value all feedback and aim to learn from any negative comments to help the organisation to continually improve.

The Complaints Policy is implemented/operated through the College feedback system Have Your Say (HYS) across all Bedford college sites and is applicable for all areas of provision.

The Policy deals with:

- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Information provided by the College: standards of service
- Information technology: equipment
- General course-related problems
- Accommodation, car parking and facilities.

Our Commitment to you

Bedford College takes all complaints and suggestions seriously. As part of the College's commitment to high-quality service, the College listens to, records, acts on information received and provides appropriate feedback. This process is defined as Have Your Say and ensures that all concerns/comments are dealt with professionally and are resolved as soon as possible.

The Bedford College complaints policy has been developed to:

- Be easily accessible
- Be simple to understand and use
- Address all the points raised and provide an effective response
- Allow speedy handling with established time limits for action
- Keep people informed of progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Provide information to managers so that services can be improved.

All staff must be aware of this policy and act in accordance with this guidance.

What is a complaint?

In general terms, it is an expression of dissatisfaction about the College's action or lack of action or a specific concern about the provision of a study programme, support service, administrative system or policy operated by or on behalf of the College. It also includes any specific concern about the activities of College students whilst on College owned property or College staff engaged in College business.

What is not considered a complaint?

- Academic assessment e.g. grades and marks. These are covered by the Academic Appeals procedure
- Bullying, harassment or discrimination. These are covered by the College's Anti- Bullying Policy
- Any attempt to reopen or reconsider a complaint the College have concluded or given their final decision on.

The College are unable to respond to anonymous comments.

Who can make a complaint?

- All current students
- All former students
- Any person affected by College services
- Third party complaints will be considered, it is encouraged that a third party with a complaint approach the College directly. If the College are provided with clear authority that a representative is acting on your behalf, the College can accept such a complaint
- Anonymous complaints/suggestions will be considered, dependent on the seriousness of the complaint and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

When should I complain?

Complaints can be made at any time up to 6 months from the actual end date of your course as stated on our records.

Before raising a complaint, you should discuss your concerns with a member of staff as most problems can be resolved quickly and informally in this way.

If you are a student and are considering raising a complaint, you should also reflect on whether you have fulfilled your own responsibilities, both in terms of meeting academic commitments and through behaviour which shows consideration for others. If, for example, your problem has arisen partly through non-attendance, or failing to read information provided, it may be more difficult to sustain a complaint.

Procedure

Stage 1: Informal

If you are dissatisfied with the service or treatment you receive you should first raise the matter with a member of staff. Tell them exactly what you are unhappy about and ask for their help in putting it right. Most problems can be resolved quickly and informally in this way.

Issues raised verbally to a member of staff will be wherever possible dealt with immediately by the staff member. However there may be some instances where the complaint is then referred to the appropriate line manager or the Quality department.

Stage 2: Formal

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome following Stage 1, you may wish to lodge a formal complaint. You are required to do this via the online HYS system.

You must include details of your informal meeting/resolution from Stage 1.

Upon receipt of your complaint:

You will be sent an acknowledgement within three working days of receiving your complaint.

Complaints will be allocated to the appropriate Head of Department for the area the student is studying, who will investigate and provide feedback for the complainant normally within twenty-one working days. In cases where this may not be appropriate, an independent Director will be appointed to investigate.

You will be updated on progress by additional emails, letters or telephone calls as appropriate. All responses to complainants will go via the Quality department and logged accordingly.

You will be sent a full response; normally within twenty-one working days of the date of the acknowledgement letter however, on occasion, this may take longer due to staff holidays.

Any comments about the way in which the complaint was dealt with, or any appeal against the findings and/or actions, should be made in writing to the Quality Manager, setting out the grounds for appeal, within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome. The Quality Manager will appoint an independent Director to review the evidence and respond to the complainant within 5 working days of being appointed.

A complainant may also complain in writing to the appropriate awarding organisation, funding body or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for higher education students.

All students studying at all levels have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without risk of being disadvantaged, discriminated against or victimised as a result of making a complaint. All complaints, whether formal or informal, will be recognised and dealt with sympathetically and constructively. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

The time periods for the college to action communication as set out in this procedure are for guidance and may be subject to extension, particularly outside

academic terms. Where any such extensions are made, they will be notified to the complainant.

Have Your Say will report at regular intervals to the Bedford College Executive on all complaints, suggestions and compliments and produce an annual summary of customer feedback to governors via the Quality & Standards Committee.

Links to other information:

Have Your Say leaflet 2015

Anti-Bullying policy

Academic Appeals policy

Consumer Law

Office of the Independent Adjudicator: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/about-us/using-the-scheme.aspx>

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