CCG Chichester College Group

HIGHER EDUCATION COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Overview and Purpose

1. The CCG Complaints Policy is intended to bring matters of concern to the attention of the College and facilitate the timely investigation and addressing of these concerns. The process provides welcome feedback to help the Group improve.

2. Formal complaint: The College defines a formal complaint as “any expression of dissatisfaction received in writing and requiring a formal, written response”.

3. The CCG Admissions Policy sets out the process for complaints/appeals relating to the admissions process or an admissions decision and the Academic Appeals Policy explains the process for appealing against an assessment grade. For courses that are franchised or validated by university partners the Complaints Policy that is appropriate to the course will be used in dealing with any complaints. These are available in the student programme handbooks and on the CCG website at the following link:

Section: Academic Regulations & Policies | HE Information Pages | CCGOnline (chichester.ac.uk)

2. Scope

1. This policy is for use by students, apprentices, parents/carers of under 19s, employers, former employees, clients, and the general public.
2. Complainants may appoint a representative to deal with matters (including any responses) on their behalf – for example, a parent or guardian. This will need to be confirmed by the complainant in writing or, where necessary, using an alternative method of communication.
3. No complainant bringing a complaint under this policy will be treated less favourably by any member of staff. If there is evidence to the contrary, the member of staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.
4. A person making a complaint is encouraged to identify themselves. The college will have difficulty investigating anonymous complaints and will not be in a position to advise the complainant of the outcome of the action taken by the college. The college does reserve the right to determine whether to investigate an anonymous complaint in light of the following considerations:
    - The seriousness of the issues raised in the disclosure.
    - The credibility of the concern.
    - How likely it is that the concern can be confirmed from attributable sources.
5. Separate policies Separate procedures exist for the following:
    - Student Behaviour– covered by the Student Code of Behaviour and Positive Behaviour Management.
    - Staff Complaints – covered by the Grievance Policy and Procedure.
    - Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Complaints – covered by the Academic Appeals Procedure or where relevant the appeals process for the awarding body.
    - Contractors' Complaints – will be dealt with as appropriate under the terms of the contract.
    - Allegations of Discrimination – covered by the Student Code of Behaviour and Positive Behaviour Management.

- Allegations of Malpractice – covered by the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

At both the informal and formal stages of the process the offer of mediation will be made if appropriate for both parties. The mediation at informal stage will ensure that there is sufficient acknowledgement of the issues raised and remediation in place if suitable. At the formal stage mediation will be offered following the outcome to ensure that there is sufficient support for the student moving forwards.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Director of Higher Education will oversee the complaints policy and process. The Director of HE will then appoint an appropriate investigating manager who will conduct a full investigation. The investigating manager will be a Head of Learning / Departmental Manager.

1. The HE Academic Standards Lead will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 5 Working days. The complainant will be given an indication of when they will receive a response, a copy of the complaints policy, and an avenue for further contact.
2. If a College Department receives a formal complaint in writing either via email or hard copy, they must ensure this is sent to the Director of HE for the formal complaint to be logged and formally acknowledged. If the Director of HE requires the complainant to provide further information, they will contact the complainant.
3. Within 15 working days of receiving a complaint, the investigating manager will provide the Director of HE with the overview of the investigation and recommended outcomes –and the Director of HE will review the submitted information and respond to the complainant with an outcome.

4. General Principles and Policy Statements

Chichester College Group will make available opportunities for students to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage or prejudice.

5. Early resolution

5.1 Where possible, an early resolution to address concerns swiftly and locally should be sought prior to making a formal complaint. The complainant should raise their concerns with the member of staff who has direct responsibility for the matter in question to try to achieve a satisfactory resolution. Where proportionate, a response will be given in writing to the complainant. The area with responsibility for the subject of the informal complaint is encouraged to take all steps to resolve the concerns that have been raised, in an effort to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the complainant.

5.2 If the complainant does not feel that their concerns have been addressed by the member of staff with direct responsibility, or that they cannot discuss this with them, then they should make a formal complaint. This should be sent to the HE Dropbox: HE@chichester.ac.uk, it should include contact details and outline why the complaint could not be resolved at the informal stage.

6. Formal Complaint

Once the complaint has been received it will be acknowledged within 5 Working days. The complainant will be given an indication of when they will receive a response, a copy of the complaints policy, and an avenue for further contact

6.1 If a College Department receives a formal complaint in writing either via email or hard copy, they must ensure this is sent to the Director of HE for the formal complaint to be logged and formally acknowledged. If the Director of HE requires the complainant to provide further information, they will contact the complainant.

6.2 The Director of HE will then appoint an appropriate investigating manager who will conduct a full investigation. The investigating manager will be a Head of Learning / Departmental Manager.

6.3 The Director of HE will provide the college's Senior Leadership Team with a termly report showing all complaints, where a complaint has not been fully resolved, or where the complaint is not resolved within the above timescales as well as a summary of any recommendations.

6.4 It is incumbent on the Investigating Manager to ensure that any recommendation made is supported by clear reasoning and this should be communicated in the final outcome which will be shared with the complainant. The Director of HE will share guidance with managers who are new to the process.

6.5 The investigating manager will make a recommendation based on the following potential outcomes:

- dismiss the complaint as unfounded giving reasons
- partially uphold the complaint, propose an amicable settlement, and outline appropriate steps to address the issue
- uphold the complaint and make recommendations on further actions

6.6 The final decision on the outcome lies with the Director of HE after reviewing the information provided and the recommendation made by the investigating manager.

6.7 If, due to exceptional circumstances, an investigation exceeds the 15 working day window, the investigating manager will notify the Director of HE and provide an adjusted timescale. This will then be communicated to the complainant by the Director of HE.

7. Complaint Appeals

7.1 The complainant has the right to request an appeal of their complaint outcome. This must be requested by contacting HE@chichester.ac.uk within 10 working days of the dated response communication. This appeal will be a review of the procedures followed at the formal stage and consider whether the outcomes were reasonable. It will not be a reinvestigation of the original complaint. If a student does not express their wish to appeal within ten working days a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued.

7.2 All appeals will be assigned to a member of the College's Senior Leadership Team.

7.3 All appeals will be responded to within 15 working days in term time. This could take longer if the appeal is received in college holiday periods.

7.4 Once the appeals process has been completed CCG will issue a Completion of Procedures letter to the complainant within 28 working days of the date of the appeal response.

8. **Responsibility of the College**

8.1 The College will:

- acknowledge all formal complaints and aim to respond within a stated period of time
- deal reasonably and sensitively with all complaints
- take action where appropriate
- welcome issues being brought to its attention to enable it to improve
- take relevant action, where applicable, to change procedures or implement staff training to prevent recurrence of the complaint.

9. **Responsibility of the Complainant**

9.1 The complainant will be expected to:

- bring their complaint to the college's attention within a reasonable time of the reason for the complaint occurring
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date
- allow the college reasonable time to deal with the matter
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the college's control.

10. Appeals to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

10.1 If a Higher Education student has exhausted all steps contained within the college's Complaints Policy, and provided the complaint falls within the OIA's remit, they will be able to take their complaint to the OIA.

10.2 When making a complaint to the OIA, a Completion of Procedures letter will be required. Once the complaints process has been completed CCG will issue a Completion of Procedures letter to the complainant within 28 working days of the date of the appeal response.

10.3 Any application to the OIA will need to be made within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

10.4 Further details on how to make a complaint to the OIA can be found at the Office of the Independent Adjudicator website at www.oiahe.org.uk

11. **Monitoring of Policy**

11.1 The complaints process is monitored by the college's senior HE Deliberative Body (the HE Board) which will review policy and operations following complaints and will require changes to practice where appropriate. The HE Board will monitor and evaluate the complaints procedure and reflect outcomes from complaints in order to enhance learning opportunities.

Related Policies and Procedures

HE Assessment Policy

Positive Behaviour Management Policy

HE Appeals Policy

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