

Complaints Policy of Halesowen College

Halesowen College views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our Policy

- To provide a fair procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone at Halesowen College knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that positive relationships are maintained.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Halesowen College.

Types of Complaint

Any student, visitor or member of the public is entitled to make a complaint or express concerns.

Students should refer to the Student Guide and talk to their personal coach in the first instance whenever this is appropriate.

Staff should follow appropriate College HR policies available on the staff hub.

A written complaint (via letter or email) must be lodged with the Senior Leadership Team.

The College has a Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure in place for appropriate concerns to be raised.

Any complaints concerning safeguarding issues including PREVENT (anti-terrorism and anti-radicalisation strategy) will be handled in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and any other relevant College policies.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection and other statutory requirements.

Review

Complaints and suggestions will be reviewed termly by the College Leadership Team with a view to improving the service. This policy will be reviewed annually.

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints

Written complaints may be sent to Executive Office, Halesowen College at Whittingham Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3NA or by email to executiveoffice@halesowen.ac.uk.

Resolving Complaints

In many cases, a concern is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue raised. If a verbal/informal complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and informally and should do so if possible and appropriate. Any complaints relating to safeguarding issues must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay. Should a complaint involve tuition fees or any other payment due to the College the Finance team will be informed and credit control actions suspended whilst the complaint is investigated.

All formal complaints will be logged by the Executive Office. If staff receive any emails that refer to a complaint or if such an email is received into a shared email, these must be forwarded immediately to executiveoffice@halesowen.ac.uk.

The Deputy Principal will allocate an appropriate manager to investigate each formal complaint and the Chief Finance Officer and vice Principal will work with the administrative team to ensure that complaints are responded to within the policy timelines.

If a complaint is potentially of a more serious nature, this may be escalated to the Deputy or Chief Finance Officer and Vice Principal for action.

All complainants will be treated with courtesy and respect.

Records of all complaints shall be maintained by the Executive Office including copies of all correspondence. All documentation will be lodged on One Drive which is accessible to all of the Senior Leadership Team and associated administration support.

Complaints should be acknowledged within three working days in writing (via letter or email). The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. The record of complaints will be retained for at least a period of 3 years.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a week (via letter, email or telephone call). If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

If the complainant is unhappy with the College's response, they may contact the College again and the concerns will be reviewed by the Deputy Principal or Chief Finance Officer and Vice Principal (unless they have already been involved). If the Deputy Principal or Chief Finance Officer and Vice Principal have already been involved or if the complaint involves either post holder then the complaint will be handled by the Principal and Chief Executive Officer.

This will be the final route of escalation within the College. Therefore, if the complainant remains unhappy after following the exhaustion of the internal complaints procedure and the complaint refers to services received relating to a course and achieving a qualification, the complainant may contact the Awarding Organisation directly. The College can direct you to the appropriate Awarding Organisation contact, subject to the course referred to.

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved they may contact the Department for Education. The role of the DfE is to ensure that the College has handled the complaint properly; they cannot overturn the decision.

Complaints can be made using the Customer Help Portal on the www.gov.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure> or by post:

Postal address is:

Complaints team
Department for Education
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

The DfE will reply to let the complainant know what will happen next. If the response is unsatisfactory there is a right to complain to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman or through your local MP.

Students on a Higher Education course may contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) once the internal complaints process has been exhausted.

Complaints can be made to OIAHE by visiting their website www.oiahe.org.uk and complete the e-form.

For courses funded by the WMCA, the internal process must be exhausted as the WMCA can only investigate at this point. Their complaints policy can be found at www.wmca.org.uk/

The WMCA can be contacted by email customerservices@wmca.org.uk ; telephone on 0345 303 6760 or post to:

Customer Relations
16 Summer Lane
Birmingham
B9 3SD

Review

Reviewed/Approved	By
Updated	Jacquie Carman and Jo Williams
Reviewed	CLT
Review Date	Andrew Woodford
Website	Yes / No
Policy Code	06z