

Feedback Policy

(Compliments and Complaints)

2022-2025

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We accept that sometimes we don't quite get things right and when this happens, we would like to hear about it so we can try to address the issue and make sure it does not happen again. There are a number of informal channels, such as speaking to a member of staff at the time, which we expect would usually lead to resolution of the problem. However, if a customer feels it is necessary to pursue a complaint formally, they can be assured that we will treat it seriously and impartially.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 To achieve maximum and timely customer satisfaction giving the College the opportunity to improve.
- 2.2 To capture, record and disseminate compliments received by the College.
- 2.3 To bring matters of concern about the College to the attention of the College Leaders and enable the efficient investigation of those concerns.
- 2.4 To ensure consistent handling of all customer complaints through the provision of an open and transparent process.
- 2.5 To ensure the resolution of customer complaints in a fair and equitable way within agreed timescales.
- 2.6 To recognise that some complaints will be resolved informally, whilst formal complaints will require a full and thorough investigation which may involve others.
- 2.7 To ensure all formal complaints are investigated in a fair and consistent manner.
- 2.8 To support continuous customer service improvements as part of the College's Quality Improvement Strategy.
- 2.9 To monitor complaints and identify themes, trends and satisfaction with the resolution.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 The term customer will be used to cover everybody except staff.
- 3.2 All compliments, comments, feedback and complaints relating to the Colleges Further Education (FE) provision are managed by this policy. If a complaint is regarding the College's Higher Education (HE) provision, the process will follow the Higher Education Feedback Policy which is available on the College website located at <https://www.bsdc.ac.uk/documents/student-policies/>. HE academic appeals are handled by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if unresolved, following the HE Appeals Policy.
- 3.3 The policy applies to all aspects of the College experience, including all forms of teaching, learning and assessment.
- 3.4 The policy is open to all learners within the College, employers, sub-contracted provision, other stakeholders and members of the public.
- 3.5 Issues should be raised and complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event, action or issue causing dissatisfaction. Complaints from former learners will be considered if they relate directly to the services received as a learner at the College and provided that the complaint is initiated within three months of the completion of study.
- 3.6 It is generally expected that learners will assume responsibility for communicating any concerns or problems directly with the College. However, we do recognise that on occasion, or in certain circumstances, complainants may wish matters to be raised on their behalf by a parents, guardians or other appointed next of kin. In such cases, and where a learner is capable of doing so, we reserve the right to seek the learners permission to deal with their parent, guardian or appointed next of kin prior to any such engagement.
- 3.7 The policy should not be used to request a review of assessment decisions by an Awarding Organisation, Assessment Board or Panel. Learners who feel they have suitable grounds to appeal against assessment decisions should use the appeals procedures of the relevant awarding body.
- 3.8 In addition to gathering feedback through the use of this policy feedback will be collated from the Student Council within the Curriculum Areas, Student Voice Feedback, Focus Groups and Student Surveys.
- 3.9 Individuals often feel more comfortable about suggesting improvements to a service than formally complaining, so should any stakeholder wish to make a suggestion to support the continuous

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improvement of the College this can be done as follows:

- Follow the 'Tell us your Feedback' button via the Contact Us page on the website.
- Speak to the Customer Experience Team who can complete the form on the stakeholders behalf if they are unable to access the website.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 Compliments

A 'compliment' is defined as a polite expression of praise or admiration. This could be communicated orally or in a written form, such as a formal letter, email or thank you card.

All compliments are logged. The compliment will be sent and shared to the relevant area. Positive feedback may be used in College literature, internal staff newsletters and future publications, adhering to GDPR regulations.

4.2 Comments

A 'comment' is defined as a verbal or written remark expressing an opinion or reaction.

The comments will be sent and shared to the relevant area, adhering to GDPR regulations.

4.3 Feedback

Feedback would generally be information about reactions to a product, service or a person's performance of a task, which is used as a basis for improvement, development (constructive feedback) or praise (positive feedback), which would not necessarily require a formal response.

All feedback is recorded, collated and shared to the relevant area, adhering to GDPR regulations.

4.4 Complaint

A 'complaint' is defined as an oral or written expression statement that an aspect of a service or facility is unsatisfactory or unacceptable which requires a response (either informal or formal).

All Feedback and Complaints are recorded. Complaints follow the formal process, and the complainant has the right to Appeal.

5.0 General Principles

- 5.1 The College is committed to providing the highest quality of service which aims to meet and preferably exceed the expectations of all customers.
- 5.2 Customers of the College have the right to complain if they are dissatisfied and should expect to be dealt with fairly, consistently, amicably and in a timely manner.
- 5.3 Decisions taken as the result of an investigation will be balanced and reasonable.
- 5.4 No customer bringing a complaint under this procedure, whether successfully or otherwise, will be disadvantaged. Where evidence to the contrary is found the matter will be fully investigated and, if necessary, disciplinary proceedings may be taken, where appropriate.
- 5.5 The College will not tolerate aggressive behaviour, bad language, racist, sexist and discriminatory comments towards our staff. Where such circumstances occur, the College may prematurely conclude progressing the complaint. Where this is the case the complainant will have the opportunity to appeal against this decision (following the appeals process identified within this policy), however, previous aggressive or abusive responses may be taken into consideration and could affect the final outcome.
- 5.6 The College may consider invoking the disciplinary procedures under the Learner Disciplinary Policy (which can be found online by visiting <https://www.bsdc.ac.uk/documents/student-policies/>), where appropriate to do so, in those cases where complaints are found to be vexatious or malicious. A vexatious or malicious

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complaint is defined as a complaint which is patently unsustainable, having been put forward to abuse the process defined within this policy or, for example, to attempt to defame the name or character of another person.

5.7 All College staff have the right not to be subjected to aggressive, offensive or abusive actions, language or behaviour, regardless of the circumstances. The College will take the minimum action required to address such unacceptable behaviour, for example:

- i. require that contact is made with a specified member of staff only;
- ii. terminate an abusive telephone call;
- iii. decline to accept any further telephone calls, however, the College will maintain at least one alternative form of contact.

5.8 Where the same complaint is raised by a number of individuals at a similar time, this will be treated as a single complaint.

5.9 Where possible if a suggestion or issue is raised early, this can be logged as a pre-complaint and we will endeavour to resolve any concerns before going down the necessary channels of a formal complaint. All pre-complaints will be recorded and monitored. Where, after initial investigation, a pre-complaint is deemed serious, this will be escalated to a formal complaint by the Learner Services and Customer Experience Team Leader.

6.0 Key Responsibilities

The **Head of Services for Learners and Customer Experience** will have oversight of this policy and will report annually to the College Management Team

The **Director of Quality and Performance** will have oversight of the procedure and will monitor and review its effectiveness.

The **Learner and Customer Services Support Manager** is responsible for:

- a) Ensuring that this policy is available to all College users;
- b) Recording compliments, comments, feedback and complaints and monitoring response times;
- c) Designate and support the Investigator/Appeals Officer as required;
- d) Recording and reporting termly to the College Management Team on the outcomes of formal complaints;
- e) Ensuring all supporting documentation and reports are securely stored for a maximum of five (5) years plus the current year in line with our College Record Retention Policy;
- f) Ensuring all complainants are made aware of their right to the erasure of personal data. (Note - Personal data is kept for three years unless the complainant requests that their data is destroyed)

The **Investigator/Appeals Officer** is responsible for:

- a) carrying out a full and balanced investigation into the complaint or appeal;
- b) keeping the **Learner and Customer Services Support Manager** updated regarding all aspects of the investigations progress;
- c) ensuring that the complaint or appeal is responded to within the agreed timescales and in accordance with procedure detailed within this policy;
- d) ensuring a written response is provided to the Learner and Customer Services Support Manager;
- e) ensuring all appropriate and relevant supporting documents relating to the investigation, actions taken and or resolution are passed securely to the Learner and Customer Services Support Manager to be stored in line with our College Record Retention Policy.

The **Complainant** will be expected to:

- a) Bring the complaint to the attention of the College, as quickly and as practicably possible;

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- b) Explain the problem as clearly and fully as possible, including outlining any action that may have been taken to date;
- c) Allow the college reasonable time to investigate the complaint;
- d) Recognise that some circumstances are beyond the control of the College.

7.0 Feedback Procedure

All Feedback should be raised via the 'Tell us what you think' tab on the Contact Page on the website:-

[Contact us \(bsdc.ac.uk\)](https://www.bsdc.ac.uk)

Respondents will be automatically sent a simple Microsoft form to complete and a message saying once we have the completed form a member of the team will call them within 2 working days.

If a satisfactory resolution can be reached via a telephone call and no formal responses are necessarily required, then the information is recorded and the matter is closed.

If no resolution can be found via the phone call this then becomes a Complaint and an investigation is to take place.

Complaints will be handled by an assigned manager. The Assigned Manager has 15 days to send a response to the complainant.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, they should appeal with 10 working days to the Learner and Customer Services Support Manager. They will then appoint a suitable person to hear the appeal.

All details are kept on file for 5 years unless requested to be destroyed by the complainant.

7.1 Informal Resolution

- 7.1.1 The College recognises that concerns may be raised informally and can and should be dealt with immediately by the relevant staff member. The aim is for the staff member to work with the complainant on an informal basis to resolve concerns quickly and simply.
- 7.1.2 Verbal complaints to Reception, staff in public areas and requests to meet with the Principal should be referred to the Learner and Customer Services Support Manager or another appropriate duty manager.
- 7.1.3 Conduct of another student may be referred for investigation under the College Disciplinary Policy.
- 7.1.4 No formal responses are necessarily required for informal complaints. Where appropriate, staff should make recommendations for improvement within their own area when they have resolved an informal complaint. However, if concerns are not satisfactorily resolved in this way complainants may follow the College's formal procedures for handling complaints – as specified below.

7.2 Formal Resolution

- 7.2.1 The complainant will be advised of the agreed response time and the name of the Investigator/Appeals Officer assigned to investigate within five (5) working days of the College receiving the formal complaint.
- 7.2.2 All appeals against progression panel outcomes will be dealt with by the relevant curriculum manager or designated member of the team.
- 7.2.3 Where a complaint relates to Work-Based Learning (WBL) or Apprenticeships provision activity the complaint will be referred to the Director for Apprenticeships or a designated member of the team.
- 7.2.4 Where a complaint relates to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment the complaint will be referred to the Director of Quality and Performance.
- 7.2.5 A complaint relating to partner and or sub-contracted provision will be directed to the Assistant Principal Business Development, Marketing Corporate Relationships.
- 7.2.6 There may be occasions when the relevant manager is unable to respond promptly. For example, during the summer holiday period when the designated duty manager will respond in their absence.
- 7.2.7 The Learner and Customer Services Support Manager will confirm by email to the staff member the agreed response date and monitor the complaint, advising the complainant if necessary if we are unable to keep to the response time.
- 7.2.8 The Investigator/Appeals Officer responsible for the investigation will respond directly with the complainant informing them of the outcome of the investigation. For recording purposes, a copy of the letter/email will be kept on file.
- 7.2.9 Once resolved all correspondence and notes provided by the complainant will be stored safely and confidentially for five years, in line with our record retention policy and will not be shared with any other party. The complainant can request at any time, via feedback@bsdc.ac.uk that all documentation in relation to their complaint is destroyed.
- 7.2.10 Where a complaint is made directly to the Principal and Chief Executive, procedures as above will be followed.
- 7.2.11 The Customer Experience Team may contact the complainant via email or letter within five (5) to ten (10) working days after the final report, to ask the complainant if they are satisfied with the outcome of the complaint and to rate our service

7.3 Stage 3 – Appeals (Internal)

- 7.3.1 Should the person receiving feedback from their complaint feel that the original investigation has overlooked any part of their complaint or has not considered relevant evidence that supports their complaint, they have the right to appeal the outcome of the investigation into their original complaint. This process will precede the option to take the matter to the external funding body.
- 7.3.2 In order to appeal, contact should be made within ten (10) working days of receiving the outcome of the original complaint. The appeal should clarify, in writing, the dissatisfaction with the outcome. The Learner and Customer Services Support Manager will then appoint the Assistant Principal and Dean to hear the appeal.

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- 7.3.3 The Appeal Chair will review the response. Wherever possible, we will seek to respond to any appeal within ten (10) working days of written receipt. Once concluded, The Appeal Chair will make direct contact with the appellant outlining the outcome of their findings and/or any remedial or corrective action that might be being pursued.
- 7.3.4 Staff working at the College will always strive to ensure that we respond positively to promote customer satisfaction.
- 7.3.5 There may however be a small number of occasions where mutual resolve is not possible regardless of appeal. Examples of this may include;
- Involvement of external third parties not in control of BSDC;
 - Legalities such as data protection not allowing a full account of any corrective action to be given;
 - Unrealistic expectations of response.
- 7.3.6 Wherever possible, our resources are focused on supporting the progress of all of our learners. To this end, should we exhaust the above process and be unable to reach a mutually convenient resolve, or should the complainant's expectations of resolve be unrealistic, we will write to the party, outlining all corrective action to date and state that we are closing the complaint.
- 7.3.7 Should further persistent and unreasonable requests for action consume significant resources or risk damaging the College's reputation, and we have done all in our power to seek mutual resolve, we may secure the support of third parties in seeking closure.

7.4 Stage 4 – Appeals (External)

- 7.4.1 If your complaint relates to a course funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), and Stages 1 to 3 have been fully exhausted, you can contact the ESFA. A complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is not a further stage of appeal. The ESFA does not hear evidence or seek to substitute its own decision for that of the College. Details of which are below:

The Complaints Team
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
COVENTRY
CV1 2WT
complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

- 7.4.2 You can also complete their [online enquiry form](#).
- 7.4.3 You can access their Procedure for dealing with complaints about Providers of Education and Training by using this [link](#).
- 7.4.4 The ESFA will acknowledge your complaint and will let you know what will happen next.
- 7.4.5 Please note, the ESFA states that they cannot help with issues that are more than 12 months old, except for exceptional cases related to some Advanced Learner Loans

8.0 Confidentiality

- 8.1 If specific information within a complaint is to be kept confidential, the customer should make this clear to the person to whom a complaint is made. In exceptional circumstances it may be difficult for confidentiality to be upheld, for instance where a criminal offence or potential gross misconduct has been disclosed. In these circumstances the demand for confidentiality may make it difficult for the College to assist them with their complaint or to resolve it. Disciplinary procedures maybe invoked at this stage.
- 8.2 Learners 16 years and over are protected as adults by the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. Some learners may have requested that the College does not share information with their parents, guardians or other next of kin.
- 8.3 The Learner and Customer Services Support Manager will produce termly and annual reports for the College Management Team providing anonymous details of complaints received in the preceding

academic year. The report will provide a breakdown by provision type, gender, age, ethnicity, and disability.

9.0 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Where there is a suspicion of abuse of a child or vulnerable adult the College has a legal obligation to report this. Disclosures of this nature to any members of staff (including the College Counselling Service) may not remain confidential, as the person “at risk” will require safeguarding. Referral should be made to the College Safeguarding Team – John Beaty, Deputy Principal: Corporate Relationships is the Designated Safeguarding Lead. A safeguarding officer can be located by a member of the Customer Experience Team.

10.0 Quality Assurance

10.1 Internal continual quality improvement

10.1.1 Adherence to this policy will be monitored through the College reporting systems.

10.1.2 This policy will be highlighted to learners and staff as part of the induction process.

10.1.3 Access to the policy is via College Website.

10.2 External quality mark accreditation

10.2.1 The College holds the Matrix Quality Standard Accreditation for Learner Services and Customer Experience which was last reaccruited in May 2020. The Customer Experience Team as an integral part of the Learner Services Team is fully committed to continual quality improvements. This 3-year accreditation will be monitored annually internally and by the external quality mark organisation (The Growth Company). The financial support team will continue to embed and focus on the following four key elements as part of the internal monitoring and review processes:

- Leadership & Management
- Resources
- Service Delivery
- Continuous Quality Improvement

APP1 Complaints Flowchart

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

