



**Hertford Regional College  
Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure**

## **Hertford Regional College Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure**

All students, apprentices and other stakeholders, for example parents or employers, have the right to express any issues, concerns or complaints that they may have. The college also welcomes any suggestions as to how it may be able to improve its service.

**The college welcomes comments and criticisms from students, apprentices, employers or stakeholders.** Whatever they say will be taken seriously and dealt with objectively and efficiently, for the following reasons:

- Complaints tell us when students, apprentices, employers or stakeholders are not happy with a service and this gives the college the opportunity to put things right
- Comments / suggestions provide ideas on how the college can improve its services
- Compliments let the college know when students, apprentices or stakeholders are happy with a college service and tell us when something is working well. This good practice can then be shared with other college services.

Note: Academic complaints, for example queries about grades awarded on learner work are covered by the Assessment Procedure

Partnerships & Subcontractors – in the event that a complaint is related to a partner/subcontractor and involves a member of staff employed directly by themselves, the investigation will be carried out by the partner/subcontractor rather than HRC. HRC must be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint. Complaints that relate to our work with partner organisations will be shared with the relevant cross college manager who oversees that area of work. HRC remain, at all times, as the accountable organisation for the management of complaints.

### **Making a comment, suggestion or compliment:**

- If students, apprentices, employers or stakeholders would like to make a comment or suggestion about any of the services the college offers or would like to compliment the college/department/staff/partner organisation on the standard of a service provided, they can email [quality@hrc.ac.uk](mailto:quality@hrc.ac.uk) or pick up a Comments, Suggestions & Compliments Form (see Appendix A) from the college reception.

Throughout this document where reference is made to 'students' this should be interpreted as including apprentices and 'stakeholders' where appropriate, for example parents or employers.

### **If students or stakeholders have a complaint:**

#### **The Informal Stage**

- 1 Where possible, especially in the first instance, students should be encouraged to discuss any concerns or complaints with the member(s) of staff concerned, their Lecturer/Assessor, Personal Tutor, or the relevant Curriculum Area Manager (CAM). It is important that any issues are sorted out straight away and the student is advised on how to proceed. If the complaint is about learning support, the student should be encouraged to speak to a member of the Learning Support Team in the first instance or their Lecturer/Assessor/Personal Tutor who will then be able to raise the concern through the appropriate channels.
- 2 If the issue is a general one, which affects a number of students, the student should be encouraged to share this with their Lecturer/Assessor/Personal Tutor or bring it to the attention of their Student Representative who will be able to bring it to the Student Council and/or the HE Student Forum. If the issue is not about the course, but a service that the college offers, students may contact the Manager or Head of that department or ask to speak to the Duty Principal via reception.
- 3 All complaints must be treated with confidentiality. However, this should not be the case if there is a serious threat to the personal safety of the student, other students or staff, or where there is

a legal requirement to disclose the information. For further guidance contact the Head of Student Services who is responsible for student welfare/safeguarding.

- 4 External stakeholders should initially contact the relevant department or the Quality Team Leader at this stage.
- 5 The steps above explain how a complaint or concern should be dealt with informally. It is always best to try to resolve any issues informally. All issues dealt with informally should be logged in the Curriculum Area/Directorate. This is an auditable file and must be kept up-to-date. Copies should also be sent to the Quality Team.

### **The Formal Stage**

- 1 If it is impossible to resolve the issues informally, and/or the student is not happy with the outcome, they can then complete a Complaints Form (available from College Reception/Website) or they can write a letter/email. Complaints received in any one of these ways will be treated as formal complaints. The complaint must then be passed to the Quality Team Leader.
- 2 The Quality Team Leader will acknowledge the formal complaint within seven days of receiving it.
- 3 The Quality Team Leader will decide on the best person to deal with the complaint. They will usually appoint an appropriate member of staff to investigate the complaint. The Quality Team Leader and/or the Director of Quality will not usually be the people investigating the complaint but may do so in exceptional circumstances.
- 4 The complainant must be informed of the outcome or progress made on their complaint within 15 working days of receipt of their complaint. Bank holidays and college closures do not count as part of the 15 working days. If the complaint has been concluded directly with the complainant within this timeframe, the Investigating Manager must ensure that all correspondence is copied to the Quality Team Leader so that they can close the complaint. Where a complaint cannot be concluded within the timeframe, or there is a delay in the investigation, the complainant will be informed and be given the likely date they should receive a full written outcome.
- 5 If the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome of their complaint, they can then appeal to the Principal in writing and within 7 working days. Either the Principal or a delegated representative will hear the appeal and send a letter or email within 14 working days.
- 6 The College must receive any complaints related to a particular academic year by 31<sup>st</sup> December of the following year, for example, any complaint pertinent to the academic year 2018/19 must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

Appendix A Comments, Suggestions & Compliments Form

Appendix B Complaints Guidance

Appendix C Complaints Form

Appendix D Guidelines for Investigating Managers

Appendix E Complaints RAG Rating

Appendix F Complaints Investigation Form

### **Who should complaints be sent to?**

Formal complaints must be sent to (or contact):

Quality Team Leader  
Hertford Regional College  
Broxbourne Campus  
Turnford  
Hertfordshire  
EN10 6AE  
Tel. 01992 411709

[quality@hrc.ac.uk](mailto:quality@hrc.ac.uk)

If complainants have exhausted all of the Hertford Regional College procedures including the informal and formal complaints procedure and appeal to the Principal, but remain unhappy with the outcome, then they may be able to appeal to the external agency that manages the quality of further education in this country or their Higher Education Institution that holds their registration.

If a complaint is proved to be vexatious, Hertford Regional College reserves the right to pursue this through the appropriate legal channels.

### **Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

Learners on all Higher National programmes, having exhausted the college's internal procedures and subject to the provisions of legislation, have the right to request the Office of the Independent Adjudicator to review the relevant case. <http://oiahe.org.uk/>.

### **Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)**

Students on Apprenticeship programmes or their Employers, having exhausted the college's internal procedures and subject to the provisions of legislation, can escalate their complaint to the ESFA through the apprenticeship helpdesk on 08000 150400 or email [nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk).

**The Complaints Guidance document can be obtained from Reception, on the Website, and on Staffnet.**

### **General Data Protection Regulations**

When dealing with complaints, the organisation processes personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected by the organisation as part of the operation of the Complaints, Comments and Compliments procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing Complaints, Comments and Compliments. Inappropriate access or disclosure of data relating to Complaints, Comments and Compliments constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the organisation's data protection policy immediately.

### **Monitoring**

HRC takes complaints, comments and compliments seriously and monitors the feedback received in this way carefully. All complaints are categorised as Red, Amber or Green to aid in the ongoing monitoring of resolution of complaints.

Ongoing complaints are discussed regularly in Directors of Curriculum/Apprenticeship meetings and the Quality Team Leader will provide reports relating to complaints to the Senior Leadership Team throughout the year. The Principal is also made aware of serious complaints if and when necessary.

All complaints of an equal opportunities nature, however informal, should be logged with the Director of Quality, detailing the nature of the complaint and the outcome. Such a record should be kept even if the individuals concerned request anonymity or do not "wish to make the matter formal".

The monitoring of student complainants' by gender and ethnicity will be included in the annual Equality and Diversity Report to ensure that no particular group appears to be less happy with the service they receive from the College. The complaints will also be analysed by site, directorate, curriculum area, and also by funding stream.

Date of document establishment and initial approval	Previous complaints documents collated into a formal Complaints Procedure June 2014
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Version number	7
Approving body	SLT
Designated owner	Director of Quality
Linked policies and procedures	Quality Assurance Procedure Assessment Procedure HE Academic Complaints and Misconduct Procedure
Date of last review	August 2019
Date of next review	August 2020



## Appendix A

# Comments, Suggestions & Compliments Form

The college always welcomes any comments, suggestions and compliments from you. Feedback from you is vital in helping us to continuously improve our service.

Once you have completed this form, please either:

- Hand it to any of the College Receptionists or
- Send it to the Quality Team Leader, Broxbourne Campus, Turnford, EN10 6AE

Your name:	
Contact Details:	
Which best describes you:	
Student <input type="checkbox"/>	Employer <input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/Guardian <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
If you are a student, please state your department and course:	
Today's Date:	
Please detail any comments, suggestions or compliments you would like to make...	

## Complaints guidance

### Information about making a complaint

We would like you to tell us if you are unhappy about something to do with Hertford Regional College, so that we can try to put things right. Please do not wait too long to tell us what is wrong. It can be difficult to deal with things that happened more than six weeks ago.

To help us to be fair to everyone, we have a Complaints Guidance. You can use this guidance if you are learning at the college. You may also use this guidance if you are a visitor, employer, neighbour or anyone else in the community. If you are over 18 years of age you should make a complaint yourself. If you are under 18 years of age you may ask a parent, carer or friend may help you. If you work at the College and want to complain you should read the Grievance Procedure for Staff.

We will try to answer your complaint in the times given in this guidance, but sometimes we may not be able to do this. Delays could happen if the complaint is hard to review or when members of staff are on holiday. If there is a delay, we will tell you why and let you know how long we think it will be until we can answer your complaint. We will always keep in touch with you about your complaint and the result. Please note if your complaint is about a person and we agree with it, we may not be able to tell you about what we expect to do to put things right, as that will be private between the College and that person.

### General Data Protection Regulations

When dealing with complaints, the organisation processes personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected by the organisation as part of the operation of the Complaints, Comments and Compliments procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing Complaints, Comments and Compliments. Inappropriate access or disclosure of data relating to Complaints, Comments and Compliments constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the organisation's data protection policy immediately.

### Step 1 - Informal

If you are learning at the college and are unhappy about something to do with your course you can ask to speak to someone about it. This list may help you to decide who you could speak to:

- someone in the college who knows what is wrong
- your Personal Tutor/Assessor
- your Curriculum Area Manager
- your Director of Curriculum
- a member of the Learning Support Team (if you have learning support).

If you're not learning at the College, or if you are but the complaint is about a service not about your course, you can ask to speak to:

- someone in college who knows what is wrong
- a manager for the area that your complaint is about
- the Duty Principal (please ask the Receptionist to call the Duty Principal for you).

### Step 2 - Formal

If you are still unhappy about after speaking to somebody, or if you cannot speak to anyone about what is wrong, you may want to make a formal complaint. To do this you should fill in a complaint form which is available from Reception or the website. When you have filled in the form you should hand it back to the

Receptionist or click submit if completing electronically on the website. If you want your complaint to be private you should ask for an envelope to put the form in. The Receptionist will pass your complaint to the Quality Team Leader.

If you are not at College you can email your complaint to the Quality Team Leader at [quality@hrc.ac.uk](mailto:quality@hrc.ac.uk) or write to the Quality Team Leader at our Broxbourne Campus. A group of people can also make a complaint if everyone feels unhappy about the same thing. Please contact the Quality Team Leader who will tell you how a group can complain.

When we get formal complaints, the Quality Team Leader checks that they are being dealt with properly. You will get a letter, email or phone call within 7 working days from the date we get your complaint. We will tell you that we will look into your complaint and when we will contact you again. Sometimes we may need to speak to you on the phone or ask you to come to a meeting about your complaint. If we ask you come to meeting you may bring a parent, carer or friend with you if you would like to. You will usually receive a letter or an email within 15 working days from the day we got your complaint to let you know if we agree with it. If we do agree with your complaint we will let you know how we will put things right.

*Please note, bank holidays and college closures do not count as part of the working days timescales.*

### **Step 3 - Appeal**

If we let you know that we do not agree with your complaint and you are still unhappy, you may appeal to the Principal. To do this you should tell the Quality Team Leader by letter or email that you want to appeal, within 7 working days from date of our letter or email. Your complaint will be passed to the Principal or to a delegated representative for review within three days from when the Quality Team Leader gets your written appeal. The Quality Team Leader will let you know that this has been done and will tell you when we will contact you again.

The Principal, or delegated representative, will look at all the information from the review at Step 2 to decide if it was right or not to agree with your complaint. Sometimes the Principal, or someone else from the Principal's office, may need to speak to you on the phone or ask you to come to a meeting about your complaint. If you are asked to come to meeting you may bring a parent, carer or friend with you if you would like to. You will usually receive a letter or an email within 14 working days of your appeal to tell you whether the Principal agrees with your complaint. If the Principal does agree with your complaint, we will let you know how we will put things right.

*Please note, bank holidays and college closures do not count as part of the working days timescales.*

### **Step 4 - Further advice**

If you are still unhappy, you are advised to contact the Agency that monitors the quality of Further Education in this country. The Quality Team Leader will be able to tell you which Agency to contact, how to find their Complaints Procedure and how to contact them. Please do use the Hertford Regional College Complaints Guidance before contacting the Agency, as they will not usually deal with complaints unless you have already told us what is wrong and given us the chance to put things right.

If you have any questions or would like advice about a complaint, please contact:

#### **The Quality Team Leader**

Hertford Regional College

Broxbourne Campus

Turnford

Herts EN10 6AE

Tel: **01992 411709**

Email: [quality@hrc.ac.uk](mailto:quality@hrc.ac.uk)



**Hertford Regional College Complaint Form** *(online electronic smart form available on website)*

We are very sorry you are unhappy and want to complain. To tell us about your complaint you may fill in this form and hand it to the Receptionist. You can also email the form or post it: <b>Quality Team Leader</b> , Hertford Regional College, Broxbourne Campus, Turnford, Herts, EN10 6AE.	The HRC Complaints Guidance, printed on page two of this form, explains how we will deal with your complaint and what you need to do.
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**About you**

Your Name:	Student ID number (if applicable):
Address:	Your Course (if applicable):
Telephone No:	College Campus:
Email Address:	Today's Date:

**About your complaint**

If there is one thing that happened that made you want to complain, please put the date that it happened here.....

If you are a student, is your complaint connected with your course? Yes  No

Is this complaint from two or more people Yes  No

If you have ticked yes, please write the names and learner IDs (if applicable) of everyone who is complaining about the same thing on a separate sheet of paper, or on the accompanying email when you submit the form.

If you have already spoken to anyone at College about your complaint please put their name/s and any other details about them here .....

Details of your complaint: Please give as much information as you can to help us to understand your complaint. If you run out of space you may continue on a new sheet of paper and send it to us with your form.....

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What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint: .....

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I confirm that this is an accurate record of my complaint and that I have read the HRC Complaints Guidance (please sign and date below)

Your signature: .....

Date .....

## Appendix D

### Guidelines for Investigating Managers

1. Agree and carry out necessary actions to make a thorough investigation into the complaint. You may delegate this to a member of your team if appropriate but the investigation will remain your responsibility.
2. If the investigation includes interviews, meetings or telephone conversations please ensure notes of these are taken. Please also keep copies of any related mail or email correspondence. Copies of all notes/documents should be sent to the Quality Team Leader.
3. Return your draft response and supporting documents to the Quality Team Leader for agreement BEFORE sending to the complainant. To ensure that we meet our complaints timescales, your draft response should be received by the Quality Team Leader at least 3 working days before the response is due to reach the complainant. If the investigation proves to be complex the Quality Team Leader must be notified so that a revised deadline can be agreed and a holding letter sent to the complainant. Any extended deadline will not normally be more than 5 working days. You may find the Complaint Record form useful to summarise the actions you have taken.
4. Your draft response will be reviewed by the Quality Department. The main purpose of this review is to ensure that:
  - (a) it responds to the issue/s raised in the complaint
  - (b) It does not include unnecessary/inappropriate information
  - (c) It is written 'without prejudice'
  - (d) It is written in a 'corporate' format, including references to the Complaints Guidance where required.Any suggested amendments to the letter will be agreed with you before the response is sent.
5. Once a response has been agreed you are responsible for sending this to the complainant in an appropriate format. This will usually be a letter written on headed paper and signed by the Investigating Manager. A photocopy of the signed letter should be made and sent to the Quality Team Leader for the complaints file, where an email response is appropriate the Quality Team Leader should be cc'd on the response. If required, the Quality Team Leader may be able to send the response on your behalf.
6. If the complaint involves concerns about a member of staff you may wish to seek additional advice from Quality/HR.

## Complaints RAG Rating

### Green

- Individual case – easily resolved or proves to be student has not met pre-determined rules/conditions
- Offsite student antisocial behaviour where individuals cannot be identified

### Amber

- Individual case – involves financial implication to student
- Relates to a group of students
- Systematic error, e.g. in Marketing materials
- Includes evidence of safeguarding, bullying or E&D concerns from member of staff or other student

### Red

- Individual case with potential for negative publicity and/or court case
- Involves large number of students
- Evidence of systematic/long term issue
- Will take a long time to resolve
- Requires action plan and follow up

## Complaints Investigation Form

<b>Complaint Ref:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Category:</b>
<b>Investigating Manager:</b>	<b>Deadline for Response to Quality Team Leader:</b>	<b>Deadline for Response to complainant:</b>

<b>Details of investigation:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Further details:</b>

<b>Details of related documents:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Attached Y/N:</b>

<b>Comments/additional information:</b>
<b>Summary of outcome of investigation:</b>

<b>Date of return to Quality Team Leader:</b>	<b>Date of agreed response:</b>	<b>Date agreed response sent to complainant:</b>

It is essential to refer to the Complaints Guidance/Procedure when investigating complaints. It is also essential to keep copies of related documents and two copies of the response signed by the Investigating Manager; one for the Manager's file and one for return to the Quality Team Leader for the complaints records.