

## **Moulton College**

### **Complaints Policy for Higher Education Students**

#### **1.0 Scope and purpose of the policy**

- 1.1 Moulton College welcomes compliments, complaints and feedback from its customers as they provide the opportunity to make improvements where appropriate and to improve the service offered in the future. They are regarded as an important part of the quality improvement process.
- 1.2 This policy is specifically designed for higher education students at the College and complements the College's *Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy*. These specific arrangements are in line with Chapter 9 of the QAA Code of Practice, reflecting the principles of natural justice, being transparent and open as confidentiality permits and including in unresolved cases an element of external independent scrutiny.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all students enrolled on University of Northampton programmes and students enrolled on Pearson Edexcel programmes at Level 4 or above.
- 1.4 For the purposes of this policy a complaint is defined as the expression of a specific concern about the provision of a course/module, a programme of study or a related academic or administrative service.
- 1.5 This policy does not apply to academic matters including examination and assessment performance and outcomes. For University of Northampton registered students, these outcomes are dealt with under the Academic Appeals Policy that is available on the University's web-site, and via the University of Northampton's Student Portal. For Pearson Edexcel registered students these matters are dealt with via the College's Student Assessment – Appeals Policy and Procedures document available on Moodle.

#### **2.0 Policy Statement**

- 2.1 The College constantly seeks to improve its services and takes all compliments, complaints and feedback seriously. As part of our commitment to providing a high-quality service, we listen to, record, act on information received and provide appropriate feedback. Through this process, we seek to ensure that all concerns / comments are dealt with professionally and to resolve any complaints as soon as possible.
- 2.2 The College does not accept or act upon anonymous or malicious complaints
- 2.3 From time to time feedback may include dissatisfaction with aspects of service. The 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, fair and objective investigation
- ensure that confidentiality will be observed throughout the process
- provide information to managers so that services can be improved

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

2.5 No investigation of a complaint made on behalf of a student by a third party will be undertaken without the student's written consent under the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 with regard to sharing information with third parties.

2.6 Before you give the College permission to share information with others, you must consider whether our response will include any sensitive information about you. If so, you need to contact the College in advance to tell us which sensitive information we can and cannot share.

### **3.0 Monitoring and Review**

3.1 The policy and procedure will be reviewed after a period of two years or earlier if required. It will be approved and its operation monitored via the Senior Leadership Team and the Board of Governors.

3.2 A log will be kept by the Director of Quality Improvement of all written complaints received by the College. This log will include the name of the member of staff receiving the complaint, the officer(s) dealing with the complaint, and the outcome.

3.3 An annual return analysing the complaints by nature of complaint and outcome will be prepared by the Clerk to the Board of Governors in conjunction with the Director of Quality Improvement and presented to the Board of Governors.

### **4.0 Equality impact assessment**

4.1 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. The College 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 of the protected characteristic.

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There are a number of ways for students to give the College compliments, complaints and feedback including:

- Module Surveys
- National Student Survey
- Extended Rolling Action Plan meetings at course level
- HE Student Experience Committee

We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.

The College Higher Education Complaints Procedures is as follows.

#### **The Complaints Procedure**

##### **1 Stage One - Informal**

1.2 Students are encouraged to resolve issues locally before they become a complaint. Various avenues are open to students to do this:

- Students may raise their concerns directly with the person who, in their opinion, is responsible for the problem or with a lecturer/course manager for their course.
- Students may raise issues with their course or programme representatives who may take those issues to staff/student liaison meetings or to the student forum meetings.

##### **2 Stage Two – Formal**

2.1 If a concern has not been resolved at Stage 1 you can progress your complaint to Stage 2 of the process. Complaints should be directed to the Director of Quality Improvement

2.2 In your correspondence you should clearly identify the nature of your complaint at Stage 1 and what has been done to attempt to resolve the complaint at Stage 1. The College will send an acknowledgement within 5 working days. We aim to provide you with a formal response within 10 working days. If we are unable to do this you will be kept informed of our progress.

##### **3 Stage Three – Formal**

3.1 Where a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily at Stage 2 you may choose to progress your complaint to Stage 3 which is the final stage of the College complaints procedure. This should be made in writing within 10 working days of when you received the Stage 2 response. Again you should explain why the outcome of the Stage 2 process is not satisfactory and what

you would like the College to do next. Correspondence for Stage 3 should be addressed to the Deputy Principal, Moulton College, West Street, Moulton, Northamptonshire, NN3 7RR.

- 3.2 The College will send you an acknowledgement within 5 working days and we aim to provide you with a response to your Stage 3 within 20 working days.

#### **4 Stage Four - Appeal (The Principal)**

- 4.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response to their complaint they may appeal in writing to the Principal. The appeal must be received within 10 working days of being sent the outcome of the complaint.

- 4.2 The Principal (or on his / her behalf the Clerk to the Corporation), will review all the available evidence and investigation and the College's response. As a result of this the Principal will respond within 10 working days and decide to:

- Uphold the decision of the Executive member, or
- Dismiss the complaint or
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, recommend appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

The complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within five working days.

- 4.3 The decision of the Principal is final except where there is a statutory provision of appeal to an external body as below.

- 4.4 At the end of Stage 4 the College's internal complaints procedure is exhausted and complainants will be issued with a "Completion of Procedure" letter.

- 4.5 This letter will detail the right to apply for a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for higher Education.

#### **5. Accountability**

- 5.1 The Director of Quality Improvement is responsible for ensuring that this policy is fit for purpose, is implemented throughout the College and is reviewed regularly.

- 5.2 All staff should attempt to resolve any issues that arise on a day to day basis to the satisfaction of the complainant be they student, parent, employer or member of the general public.

- 5.3 The responsibility for dealing with Stage 3 complaints rests with the Deputy Principal or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team depending on the nature of the complaint.

- 5.4 The responsibility for dealing with Stage 4 complaints rests with the Principal.

- 5.5 The Director of Quality Improvement is responsible for the monitoring of compliance within this policy, including timescales.
- 5.6 The Clerk to the Board of Governors in conjunction with the Director of Quality Improvement is responsible for compiling the annual complaints report presented to the Board of Governors.