



# Richmond upon Thames College

Policy Name:	Complaints Policy and Procedure 2021-22
Policy Number/Version No:	1
Effective Date:	September 2021
Review Date:	August 2022
Policy Responsibility:	Executive Director, Business Development & Innovation
Approved By:	SLT
For Action By:	College Managers
For Information to:	All College staff, students and parents/guardians, employers and stakeholders

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1.** At Richmond upon Thames College, we want to provide you with an outstanding educational experience and an excellent service. One of the ways in which we can improve what we do is by listening to you and responding to your views.
- 1.2.** The Colleges values feedback and complaints are monitored, evaluated and reported to the Senior Leadership Team and annually to the Corporation.
- 1.3.** We aim to deal with complaints in a fair, reasonable and timely manner. When signing your Learner Agreement / Employer Contract with your college you are agreeing to RuTC's policies and procedures which outline what you can expect from us and what we can expect of you. These policies, including the Complaints Policy, are available on the College websites.

## **2. Application and Scope**

- 2.1.** Complaints are deemed to involve an expression of dissatisfaction, grievance or fault finding about the College.
- 2.2.** The College will thoroughly investigate any complaint, whether informal or formal, relating to the day-to-day operation of the College and the standards of service we provide.
- 2.3.** Areas excluded from the policy are:
  - 1) Curriculum content or examination results where other forms of redress are more appropriate such as the examining body or the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and in these cases, you should be referred to the appropriate body.
  - 2) Employment issues which are covered by staff Policies & Procedures.
  - 3) Any matter that is the subject of legal action.

## **3. Resolving a complaint - Student**

- 3.1.** Students must endeavour to resolve a complaint informally before commencing with the Formal Complaints Procedure. This initial informal stage should normally involve a discussion directly with the relevant member(s) of staff or with the Course Tutor, Curriculum Manager or Head of School.
- 3.2.** The student complainant should attempt to resolve the matter informally as soon as possible and no later than fifteen working days after the event or problem has occurred.
- 3.3.** Where no informal resolution can be achieved within fifteen working days of the initial complaint being raised, the student complainant may choose to progress their complaint by using the Formal Complaints Procedure.
- 4. Procedure** - There are three procedures that can be followed, informal complaints, formal complaints and appeals.

### **4.1 Informal Complaints**

- 4.1.1.** There can be instances when you may wish to remain anonymous or request that the issue be dealt with informally. You will be directed to the person who is directly concerned or best suited to resolve that issue. The details can be emailed to the relevant person if preferred. For students, this is likely to be the Personal Tutor or Head of School. In circumstances where these individuals are the source of the complaint then the Director of Student Experience should be contacted.

- 4.1.2.** If you are unsure as to whom to contact, then in the first instance, you should contact the Reception desk or the Personal Assistant to the Senior Leadership Team who will direct you to the relevant Head of School or Support Area Head of Service or Manager to deal with the issue.
- 4.1.3.** In most instances informal complaints will not receive a formal written response but nevertheless must be dealt with promptly.
- 4.1.4.** Responsibility for the prompt follow up of informal complaints will lie with the relevant manager. The manager should endeavour to resolve the complaint but should refer it if it is evident that a resolution is not likely to be met. This should be done to prevent it becoming a more serious matter.

## **4.2. Formal Complaints**

- 4.2.1.** In cases where you are not satisfied with the outcomes of your informal complaint, please download and complete a Complaints Form, or send an online [Complaints Form](#). Copies of the Complaints Form are also available on [Moodle](#), or at Reception.
- 4.2.2.** You will receive acknowledgement of receipt of the form within three working days. Your complaint will be fully investigated. In the majority of cases you should receive written notification of the proposed action within 10 working days of receipt of your form. If the investigation is likely to take longer than this you will be informed. Where complaints are received within fifteen working days of a holiday period, or during a holiday period, it is expected that the complaint response will take longer than ten working days due to the absence of appropriate staff to investigate. This will be confirmed in writing.
- 4.2.3.** Any letter submitted should clearly set out the circumstances of the complaint, any individuals or witnesses involved, and any relevant dates or times.
- 4.2.4.** Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event, issue or incident, as delays can make it difficult to deal adequately with your concerns. The College will not normally investigate complaints submitted more than three months after the original event, or any complaints that are considered to be either vexatious or malicious.
- 4.2.5.** Details of the complaint will be logged on the Complaints Log for checking and reporting purposes. All correspondence will be filed securely.

## **4.3. Appeals**

- 4.3.1.** If the complainant remains dissatisfied or aggrieved or in disagreement with the decision made or reasons given, they may appeal against the decision. A complainant has ten working days in which to submit an appeal. The reason for the appeal should be clearly stated in writing and sent to the College via the Personal Assistant to the Senior Leadership Team at the address below.
- PA to the Senior Leadership Team, Richmond upon Thames College, Langhorn Drive, Twickenham, TW2 7SJ
- 4.3.2.** A written acknowledgement will be sent by the PA to the SLT within three working days.
- 4.3.3.** The Appeal Panel will consist of at least two members of the College Management Team who were not involved in dealing with the original complaint. They will consider all the documentation available relating to the issues raised. The Appeal Panel will respond within ten working days from the date of the receipt of the appeal. If the review of the complaint is going to take more than ten working days, the PA to the SLT will send a further holding letter. The decision at the end of this stage is final and will be communicated in writing.

**4.3.4.** If the College cannot settle the complaint to the satisfaction of the person involved, then a complaint may be referred to:

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency if the complaint relates to Further Education:  
[complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk)  
The Complaints team, The Office of the Chief executive, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT
- Ofsted if the complaint relates to any service in relation Further Education: [Ofsted](#)
- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator if the complaint relates to Higher Education: [Office of the Independent Adjudicator - OIA Homepage](#)
- Or direct to the appropriate Secretary of State. If the complaint is justified, the Secretary of State can insist that things are put right.

**4.3.5** The Executive Director, Business Development & Innovation will produce a report for the College Management Team at the end of each academic year giving a summary of any complaints. Any structural or strategic issues raised by this report will be discussed and, if necessary, incorporated in the appropriate/relevant College's Quality Improvement Action Plan.

## **5. Data Protection**

**5.1** When the College receives a complaint from a person a file is created containing the details of the complaint. This normally contains the identity of the complainant and any other individuals involved in the complaint.

**5.2** The College will only use the personal information collected to process the complaint and to check on the level of service we provide. The College does compile an annual report showing information like the number of complaints we receive, but not in a form which identifies anyone.

**5.3** The College will usually have to disclose the complainant's identity to whoever the complaint is about.

**5.4** The College will keep personal information contained in complaint files. This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for five years from closure. It will be retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted according to the 'need to know' principle.

**5.5** Similarly, where enquiries are submitted to the College we will only use the information supplied to us to deal with the enquiry and any subsequent issues and to check on the level of service we provide.

### **Related policies**

- Student Disciplinary Policy
- Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Fees Policy
- Learning Difficulty and Disability Policy
- Exams Policy