



**Regionally Focused – Globally Engaged**

# **Complaints Policy**

**March 2021**

## History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Introduction by Angela Cox. Updating of dates and reference to the Regional Board rather than the Board of Management. Inclusion of the categorisation of complaints for reporting purposes	D Killean	01/03/2017
1.2	Updates to reflect changes in staffing and structure. Separation of Policy and Procedure	J Robertson	01/03/2018
1.3	Update to reflect SPSO revision for April 2021 and a new policy, Support for Staff Involved in an Investigation Policy (including Complaint, Discipline, Grievance etc)	J Gracie	22/2/21



### Foreword by Principal

Our complaints policy and complaints handling procedure reflect Borders College's commitment to valuing complaints. They seek to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery. They also seek to conduct thorough, impartial, and fair investigations of customer complaints. Then, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.

Working closely with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) the procedure has been developed by college staff who are experienced at handling complaints. It provides a standard approach across the college sector, which complies with the SPSO's guidance on complaints handling.

The procedure aims to help us resolve problems successfully at the first time of asking. We want quicker, simpler, and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well-trained staff. The procedure will enable us to tackle a complainant's concerns properly and may prevent the same things going wrong for other people.

Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve complainants' satisfaction. They give our staff a first-hand account of the complainant's views and experience and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our customers redress when things go wrong and can also help us continuously improve our services.

Resolving complaints early saves money and creates better customer relations. Sorting them out quickly and as close to the point of service as possible means they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure. Complaints that we do not resolve swiftly can add to our workload.

The complaints handling procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships with our customers and enhance the college's reputation. It will also help us keep students and other customers at the heart of what we do.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'A Cox'.

Angela Cox

# Complaints Policy

## 1. Introduction

The Complaints Policy sets out the College's commitment to respond to complaints promptly, vigorously and fairly. The benefits of having an easy to follow, well supported and understood complaints handling procedure are recognised by the College. Where any of the College services fall short of acceptable standards the College will endeavour to rectify the failing and remove any resulting disadvantage experienced by the complainant. The College will use the outcomes from complaint investigations to improve the quality of its services where this is applicable.

## 2. Scope

The Complaints Policy and Complaints Handling Procedure apply in all circumstances where a student, applicant, employer, service provider or member of the public wish to complain about the service they have received from the College or the behaviour of any individual associated with the College.

Complaints may be about curricular or support functions and services.

A complaint may be received in person, in writing or in any electronic format. Complaints should state what has gone wrong and what the complainant would like to happen to put it right. On receipt of a complaint the College will determine the seriousness of the complaint and implement the appropriate process from the Complaints Handling Procedure.

### 3. Key Principles

The College endeavours to provide a high-quality service to all its learners and to be fair and robust in its learner recruitment processes. It provides a wide range of services to support learners in being successful in their chosen qualification and in supporting employers to develop their workforces. It recognises that in responding to complaints it can improve its service and improve the satisfaction and success of its learners.

The College aims to deal with complaints swiftly and effectively. Most complaints can be dealt with satisfactorily by frontline staff whether they be from curricular or support services. For more serious or complex complaints, the College has in place investigating and reporting procedures detailed in the Complaints Handling Procedure.

Less serious Frontline Complaints will be investigated and concluded within 5 working days. More serious Level 2 complaints will require more detailed investigation and reporting and will be concluded within 20 working days.

The College will support individuals or organisations wishing to complain about an aspect of its service so that it can understand the nature of the complaint and what might need to be done if a service is substandard or failing. This may include involving internal advocacy services such as the Borders College Student Association or external support e.g. advocacy services to assist the complainant.

The Regional Board and Senior Leadership Team are committed to a fair and robust Complaints Handling Procedure and are regularly updated on complaints' outcomes and trends.

Where a complaint involves the alleged misconduct of a member of staff or learner then the investigation may also lead to separate action under the staff or student disciplinary procedures.

The College will monitor and record all complaints, subsequent investigations, and actions. It will analyse trends and use these to inform development planning.

### 4. Responsibilities

The **Regional Board** approve this policy and are responsible for monitoring trends in complaints and addressing any complaints relating to governance issues.

The **Principal** is responsible for ensuring that the College's complaints policy meets statutory requirements and national guidance.

The **Senior Leadership Team** is responsible for monitoring ongoing complaints and agreeing any necessary action and redress to resolve a complaint.

The Assistant Principal Quality and Development is the policy author and responsible for oversight of application of the policy and procedure including institutional learning from complaints.

The AP Quality and Development is responsible for the initiation of any investigations of Level 2 complaints and the monitoring of investigations and reporting activity.

If the Assistant Principal Quality and Development is the subject of the complaint or is absent for an extended period then the Principal assumes these responsibilities.

**Business Support Managers and Assistant Principals** will monitor complaints within their own areas of responsibility and will act as investigating officers for Level 2 complaints.

All **frontline staff**, including **lecturers**, will receive and recognise complaints, will identify and refer on serious complaints and will respond to less serious complaints by following the Complaints Handling Procedure.

The **PA to the Principal** will record complaints in the College's complaints database.

### 5. Related Documents

#### Internal

- Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Complaints Handling Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Employee Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Freedom of Information Procedure
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Performance Improvement Policy and Procedure
- Professional Conduct Between Staff and Students
- Safeguarding Juveniles & Adults at Risk from Harm
- Support for Staff Involved in an Investigation Policy (including Complaint, Discipline, Grievance etc)
- Student Admission and Interview Procedure
- Student Appeal Procedure
- Student Discipline Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Status: Approved 25 June 2018  
Policy Dated: March 2021  
Author: Assistant Principal Quality and Development  
Review Date: March 2024  
Equality Impact Assessed: March 2017