



Complaints Policy

November 2023

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
1.4	Changes to job titles. Foreword from Pete Smith	Lynne Gilchrist	Nov 23

Foreword

This Complaints Handling Procedure reflects Borders College's commitment to valuing and learning from all feedback, including complaints. It seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.

The procedure was developed by Borders College staff who are experienced complaints handlers, working closely with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHPs) were revised in 2019 by the SPSO in consultation with all sectors. This new edition includes a core text, which is consistent across all public services in Scotland, with some additional text and examples specific to the college sector. As far as is possible we have produced a standard approach to handling complaints across Scotland's public services, which complies with the SPSO's guidance on a MCHP. This procedure aims to help us 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early responses by capable, well-trained staff.

All new Borders College staff members must demonstrate their understanding of this procedure as part of their induction by completing an essential "Complaints Handling" training module. All staff members must also undertake refresher training every two years. This ensures staff are confident in identifying complaints, empowered to resolve simple complaints on the spot, and familiar with how to apply this procedure (including recording complaints).

Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve service provision and customer satisfaction. Our Complaints Handling Procedure will enable us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may help us prevent the same problem from happening again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the customers' views and experiences and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our customers a form of redress when things go wrong and can also help us continuously improve our services.

Handling complaints early creates better customer relations. Handling complaints close to the point of service delivery means we can deal with them locally and quickly, so they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure. Complaints that we do not handle swiftly can greatly add to our workload and are more costly to administer.

The Complaints Handling Procedure will help us to do our job better, improve relationships with our customers and enhance public perception of Borders College. It will help us keep the user at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.



Pete Smith – College Principal & CEO

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 Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality will appoint an SLT investigating officer or other appropriate person.

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 Curriculum & Quality is the policy author and responsible for oversight of application of the policy and procedure including institutional learning from complaints.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality is responsible for the initiation of any investigations of Level 2 complaints and the monitoring of investigations and reporting activity.

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

Senior Leadership Team Directors 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
- Positive Behaviour & Anti Bully
- Whistleblowing Policy

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