

360 GSP Training

POLICIES, RULES AND PROCEDURES

Complaint Policy and Procedures

Policy Last Reviewed on: 10/12/2017

360 GSP College is committed to deliver high quality educational and other services and encourages its students to comment on where is a room for further improvement.

It is expected that in raising complaint matters, students themselves will have observed their obligations as members of the College. This includes meeting their academic obligations and having the kind of behaviour that is approved by the College regulations.

Our complaints procedure:

- Encourages informal solution of issues
- Is fair and objective
- Treats complaints seriously, sympathetically and confidentially
- Provides for early resolution
- Allows the College or a particular section of it to benefit from the learning experience.

We do our best in trying to resolve any problems as quickly as possible, at minimum cost and with minimum bureaucracy and documentation, but most of all we are fair and efficient.

If you are considering making a complaint or requiring assistance or further guidance, you can seek help and information from a number of sources.

These may include the Student Liaison Officer, Student Support or the Head of Operations.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The College encourages students' feedback about the services it provides; students wishing to make a comment or suggestion about College services, either academic or non-academic, can do so informally at any point of service delivery by contacting the appropriate person. Complaints on matters of College Policy should be directed to the College Director.

At the same time, it is expected that in raising possible issues of complaint, students themselves will have observed their obligations as members of the College, through meeting their academic commitments and a level of general behaviour that accords with College regulations or reasonable consideration for others. As a part of our commitment students can:

- Use either the informal complaint procedure for minor matters that one can often be resolved on the spot
- Use the formal complaints procedure where the informal approach does not work or the complaint is of more serious nature
- While recognising that it is everyone's entitlement to have representation or support in making a complaint the College will normally only accept a complaint that is made in the complainant's own name, unless they are under 16 years of age
- Where possible complaints about staff, students and College facilities or services should in the first instance be made at the point of contact where every effort will be made to "put things right" immediately
- Complaints must be made in writing
- Complaints will be acknowledged in writing and every effort will be made to resolve the issue within appropriate time
- Where a complaint may take longer to resolve, for instance where external agencies may have to be consulted, the complainant will regularly be kept informed of progress

Complaints from others with a legitimate interest in the services provided by the College will be dealt with by this policy and procedure insofar as is practical. There are separate procedures for members of staff covering Grievances concerning their appointments or employment.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the procedure operates as closely as possible to its declared timetable, at low cost and with minimum documentation, but always within the spirit of fairness to all sides.

DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

The College defines a complaint as:

“The expression of a specific concern about the provision of a course/ module, or a programme of study, or a related academic service.”

The College also has a separate Appeals Policy which is concerned with a specific request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with decisions of student progression, assessment and awards.

COMMUNICATING OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY

Information about our complaints Policy is widely available through:

- The college website
- The Student Handbook
- The Staff Handbook

Students and staff are also informed about the Complaints Policy at:

- Staff induction and at the start of their employment
- Student induction to their course

Senior staff are reminded of their responsibility to deal effectively with complaints through the staff review process.

THE SCOPE OF OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY

Our Complaints Procedure can be used by:

- individuals applying to the college
- current students
- students who completed their course or left the college within the previous three months

Our Complaint Procedure covers situations where a student has a serious complaint concerning:

- the conduct of a member of staff towards him or her
- the delivery of a programme upon which he or she is enrolled, which cannot be resolved by informal processes
- a service provided by our College which cannot be resolved by informal processes

Our Complaint Procedure does not cover:

- appeals against the decision of Assessment Boards – see Appeals Policy

- appeals against the decisions of the Extenuation Panel – see Extenuating Circumstances Policy
- appeals against decisions taken under disciplinary proceeding
- complaints about the behaviour of other students
- appeals against the decision of Investigating Panels
- complaints that relate to a matter of academic judgment

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

We recognise that complaints need to be resolved well and we have put in place processes that support and expect people to act reasonably and fairly towards each other, and treat the processes themselves with respect and not abuse them. We will:

- Have fair, effective and timely procedures for dealing with complaints and to ensure confidentiality (unless disclosure is necessary to enable the complaint to be progressed)
- Ensure our complaints procedure is overseen and reviewed by senior staff
- Encourage regular feedback and ensure that all students have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage
- Ensure our complaints procedure is publicly accessible at all times and that it can be easily understood by all our students and staff
- Implement our complaints procedure with regards to any applicable law(s)
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken following a complaint (whether informal or formal)
- Make provision available to support and guide any persons complaining – including provision for persons being accompanied at any stage, including formal hearings
- Have in place effective arrangements to monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of our complaints procedures and to reflect on the outcomes to make future improvements and learn from lessons
- Provide suitable briefings and support for all staff and students involved in handling or supporting a complaint

Complaints process and timeframe

Before submitting a complaint, students are advised to consider whether the matter is a concern/feedback or a complaint and whether there are other more suitable ways for them to express their concerns. For example, this may be through discussion with the trainer, the Student Liaison Officer, Student Support or the Head of Operations and through the course feedback surveys.

The College will deal with concerns and complaints in a manner proportionate to the complexity of the matter and would encourage informal proceedings to be used wherever possible in the first instance – unless there is a serious complaint.

Our complaints procedure allows for an informal complaint to move to a Stage 2 Formal Complaint where appropriate, and a student can be supported by the Student Liaison Officer to move to a formal complaint procedure.

Stage One - Informal Complaints Procedure

Students are advised to consider the different ways in which they can provide feedback or express concern about issues that can more effectively and efficiently be dealt with through the College informal avenues and on-going student/customer feedback processes. The college regularly seeks the views of its customers/students through:

- Regular meetings with the Student Liaison Officer
- End of course unit feedback form - a formal feedback form on each unit which is completed at the end of the course
- One-to-one feedback and discussion between the teaching staff and students

Deciding on whether a complaint can be dealt with informally or formally may also depend on the nature of the complaint and how the complainant would like the issue to be resolved. At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will make sure they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/ or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of the interview

At each stage in the procedure the College will also bear in mind the ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that the event complained about will not recur

- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review the College policies/practices considering the complaint

The outcome of a complaint – both informal and formal, is given to the student in writing. The outcome is also monitored and reviewed as part of the review and quality management processes.

The outcome of student surveys and customer feedback are also made available to students and all staff through College website and through the College notice boards.

Before a student raises a formal complaint, they are encouraged to seek the advice of the Student Liaison Officer. All students are encouraged to attempt to resolve their complaint informally and conciliate on the issue with the member of staff most directly concerned before submitting a formal complaint.

If a student does not want to contact their tutor or other member of staff concerned with their complaint, the student can contact the college the Student Liaison Officer who is the person responsible for the co-ordination of student complaint procedure.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the Student Liaison Officer will consider referring the complaint to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior – but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

If a student believes that the complaint cannot be resolved through conciliation with the member of staff/ the Student Liaison Officer - or if they wish to proceed directly to a formal complaint, then the student/complainant can complete the Complaint Form and return it to the Student Liaison Officer and proceed to the formal complaints process. The Student Liaison Officer will help the student to complete the complaint form if required.

Stage Two - Formal Complaint Procedure

Throughout our complaints procedure we will ensure:

- Confidentiality at the informal stage.
- Accessibility of information.
- Clarity of procedure.
- A staged approach with specified times and an informal and formal stage.
- Advice and support in using the procedure.
- Stated response times.
- Resolution at local level wherever possible.
- Entitlement to have a well-founded and documented formal complaint heard.
- Every effort made by the College to prevent victimisation of a student who has made a complaint.

The stages of the student complaints procedure are designed to provide a response to the complaint at the earliest feasible opportunity. Students are made aware of the importance of keeping a note of the discussions they have at each stage and the dates on which they take place.

When making an informal or formal complaint, students are advised to keep copies of relevant documents. Additionally, they may wish to have the support of a friend, who could accompany them to meetings when their complaint is discussed. This is particularly important when the student is making a formal complaint as the complaint form requires specific information and evidence if possible to back up their complaint. The Student Liaison Officer can also provide support in completing the forms and in accompanying students to a formal hearing of their complaint if required.

The College requires that the student making the complaint must be present at any formal hearing or panel review. The student can be supported but cannot be represented in their absence. We would not normally expect a student to be accompanied by legal representation unless this had been discussed and agreed with the College beforehand. Legal representation is likely to be the exception rather than the rule.

Staff are provided with support and guidance regarding handling complaints through guidance, the staff handbook and through briefing notes that may from time to time be provided to staff during staff meetings and training. Staff are briefed in how the informal stages of complaints relate to formal stages – and the processes and opportunities available to students to provide feedback.

Staff are informed of the importance of keeping notes of meetings and outcomes of discussions with complainants. They are also informed of the limits to their authority - any outcome of a complaint that results in a decision or changes must be agreed with senior management or the College Director.

Where a member of staff is the subject of the complaint they will be able to seek support from a colleague and will also be invited to have a colleague present at any formal hearing of a complaint against them. The HR Manager may also be involved to provide support where appropriate.

The outcome of a complaint - both informal and formal – is given to the student in writing. The letter will confirm the completion of proceedings, with the decision/outcome reached and the reason for reaching the decision.

A formal complaint will be reviewed by an appropriate senior member of staff which will be the Head of Development and Operations or the Head of Quality Assurance depending on the nature of the complaint. The Director may be the most appropriate senior person in some circumstances. If having made a formal complaint the student is happy with the outcome the process will be complete and a formal record of the complaint will be filed and any resulting action will be monitored and reviewed.

If at any time a student makes a formal complaint to the police or takes other legal action at the same time they use this procedure, then no further investigation by the College using this procedure will be undertaken. The complainant and the College must adhere to any matters relating to the Law and any breaches of the Law will be dealt with by the appropriate authority.

The formal complaints procedure should not be confused with 'whistle-blowing'. The College has a 'whistle-blowing policy and procedure where it is appropriate to use this.

Stage Three - Complaint Panel

If it is not possible to resolve a complaint satisfactorily at the highest level within the College (by the relevant Department Head), then a Complaints Panel will be set up to deal with the complaint.

The Complaints Panel will normally consist of Head of Development and Operations, the Head of Administration, the Head of Quality Assurance and the College Director.

TIMEFRAMES

Informal Stage of Complaint

Wherever possible we would encourage an informal complaint to be dealt with immediately and encourage the complainant to discuss the matter with the person directly involved or the Student Liaison Officer. It is possible that if the complaint requires a simple response it can be dealt with within 24 hours.

If the complaint is not raised immediately then an informal complaint should be raised within ten days of the initial cause for concern.

The College commits to respond and to provide a written record of the outcome to the complaint within five working days.

If the initial discussion about the complaint does not lead to a satisfactory outcome then:

- The student can take the issue to one or more of the following appropriate contacts: the Student Liaison Officer, the Head of Administration, or the Head of Quality Assurance.
- Where the outcome of the complaint is satisfactory, the student will receive a written statement of a satisfactory outcome within five working days.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved within ten working days and, if the having talked the complaint through in a confidential manner, there is still not a satisfactory outcome then students are advised to use the formal complaint procedure.

Formal Stage of Complaint

A formal complaint should be made no later than one calendar month after the initial concern/problem/incident. A formal complaint is made using the formal complaint form. Student can email Student Support to request a soft copy of the form. Hard copies are available from the Student Liaison Officer.

The completed form should be send (by email if possible), marked 'Confidential Complaint', to Student Support. If a complaint is directed at a named member or members of staff, he/she/they will be advised of the complaint and invited to respond. At this point it will no longer be possible for the complainant to remain anonymous. The student will receive a response within 15 working days.

Complaint Panel

If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved by Student Support, then a Complaints Panel will be convened within ten working days of the formal response being given to the student. The Panel members will be represented by senior staff including the Head of Development and Operations, the Head of Administration and the Head of Quality Assurance - with an independent chair which would normally be the College Director. The student will be invited to the panel to discuss the matter further. If a resolution is reached at the Panel, the student will receive a written response, detailing the outcome within five working days.

A panel will be convened within 30 working days. A report from the panel meeting, including the panel's conclusions and recommendations, will be circulated within 10 working days of the hearing. This is the final stage of the College Complaint Procedure.

360GSP College – Complaints Flow Chart



Monitoring and Evaluating

360GSP College is committed to continuously improving its service to students and to raising standards throughout the college. Taking account of feedback and complaints is a very important and effective way of making changes that can result in a positive contribution to the College quality assurance and enhancement framework. Monitoring and evaluation will also help the College ensure that the complaints procedure is working effectively. The College will record, monitor and evaluate the feedback and complaints received and the action taken.

The Student Liaison Officer will collect and collate information for all complaints (informal and formal) at all stages. All complaints and their outcomes will be recorded in the Complaints Log. The Complaint Log will be monitored and reviewed by the Head of Quality Assurance. This will be done monthly

For individual informal or formal complaint where the Student Liaison Officer has a record of the complaint and is aware of the name of the student concerned, data will be kept regarding the number of complaints made by:

- the course of the student
- the gender and ethnicity of those making a complaint
- whether those students making a complaint had a disability
- the age profile of the complainant(s)

The Student Liaison Officer will produce a summary report twice a year (June and December). The summary report will be seen and reviewed by the senior management team including the College Director, the Head of Development and Operations and the Head of Quality Assurance.

The college will publicise to all staff and student's information from summary reports of the complaints and feedback. This will help raise awareness of the procedures themselves and will enhance the confidence of students and staff of the transparency and effectiveness of the college complaints procedures.

