



Meeting: Curriculum and Quality Committee

Date: 7th May 2024

Agenda Heading: Policies: Complaints/Compliments

1. Purpose of report

This policy outlines the updates, amendments and changes made to the previous 'Complaints and Compliments' Policy.

2. Executive Summary

All policies are valid until they are reviewed. The review date for the current 'Complaints and Compliments' Policy is due this academic year 2023 /2024.

3. Impact on SEND and Risk Assessment

The College has paid due regard to equality considerations during the preparation and implementation of this Policy. Without reviewing this policy, the college may not be ensuring that the views, concerns, complaints of our customers, stakeholder's and learners are heard to inform continuous improvement.

4. Proposed Resolution/Recommendation.

It is recommended that this paper is received and approved.

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Att. Policies: Compliments, Concerns, Complaints

Amendment to Policy

Name of Policy	Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy
Policy Owner	Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality
What has been changed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title renamed from 'Complaints and Compliments Policy' to Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy. • Procedures clarified and amended to include Appeals. • Heads of School replaced with Head of Faculty • Responsibilities replaced from Executive Support Team with Quality Administrator/Quality Team • Number of days for complaints to be resolved changed from 21 days to 15 days. • Added information on 'How to make a complaint'. • Added details as requested by the GLA with regards to adult learners being able to escalate their complaint to GLA if unsatisfied with outcome and included the link to GLA complaints policy. • Updated College telephone number • Removed Guidelines, Form for Investigation managers and witness statement form. • Added a flowchart to show complaint process
Reason for update	To reflect changes in responsibilities, include concerns and clarify the procedure.
Key changes being proposed.	Changes above to be reflected in amended policy
Has an impact assessment been completed?	Yes

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

Valid from (academic year)	2024/2025
Next review (academic year)	2025/2026 Policies remain valid until revoked or reviewed.
Policy Owner	Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality
Committee approval	<i>SLT</i>
Policy & EIA Approval date	17/04/2024
Board of governors' committee	<i>C&Q</i>
Approval date	17/04/24
Board approval necessary.	<i>Yes</i>
Date of Board approval	07/05/24
Summary of Changes	See amendment page.

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Stanmore College's aim is for excellent levels of satisfaction in all aspects of its curriculum and services provision. The College values customer feedback and actively seeks feedback and comments to inform continuous improvement for all its customers.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to capture compliments, comments, and complaints in a consistent format to ensure that complaints are resolved quickly and satisfactorily and to enable the college to monitor customer satisfaction and make continuous improvements.
- 1.3 Throughout this document where reference is made to 'customers' or 'learners' this should be interpreted as including 'stakeholders' as well, where appropriate, for example staff, parents/carers, or employers.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy serves as a structured framework for addressing and resolving issues within the College and provides a clear set of guidelines and procedures for learners, parents/carers, employers, and other stakeholders to voice both their concerns and satisfaction with various aspects of the College.
- 2.2 This policy covers compliments, comments, and complaints for all Stanmore college customers. This includes learners on all college-based further and higher education programmes and includes all study programmes, apprenticeships, adult learners, community courses, HE, and full cost recovery.
- 2.3 For clarity, learners at Stanmore registered with our partner HE Institutions under a collaborative agreement may take their complaint to the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OiA) once they have exhausted all of Stanmore College's internal processes. Academic Appeals, for example queries about grades awarded on learner work, are covered by the Academic Regulations of the HEI, which are available on the HEI website.

3. Key Principles

- 3.1 All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of and follow all relevant policies and procedures. Managers are responsible for investigating and resolving complaints according to the timescales set out in the complaint's procedure.
- 3.2 Complaints received by any member of staff will be treated seriously and with sensitivity and will be dealt with promptly, fairly, and positively.
- 3.3 If any member of staff receives a verbal complaint and cannot directly give assistance, they will ensure that the complainant is put in touch with someone who will be able to help.
- 3.4 If a learner requires assistance in making a complaint, they may request this either from their personal tutor, their Curriculum Manager, or the Quality Team via Reception.
- 3.5 Learners wishes will be respected with regards to confidentiality and only those staff directly involved will be aware of the nature of the complaint. Learners will not be treated adversely for having complained.

- 3.6 All complaints will be resolved informally wherever possible, and at the lowest level of staffing or management, including mediation and conciliation where possible and appropriate, while respecting the right of the complainant/s to progress a complaint into the formal stage if unresolved at the informal stage.
- 3.7 All formal complaints will be referred to the College's Quality Team who are responsible for the central overview of formal complaints and for monitoring compliance with standards under the leadership of the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality.
- 3.8 The Quality Team coordinate the Compliments, Concerns and Complaints process. The team also provide support and guidance on all matters relating to this Policy.
- 3.9 All learners will be made aware of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy and procedure through the induction process. Personal tutors are responsible for ensuring that learners have guidance on how to use the process. For shorter courses where there is no named personal tutor, the course teacher will provide guidance.
- 3.10 The Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy will be on the website, https://stanmore.ac.uk/uploads/275994f8-34ed-45ae-ab17-5298f24c5b7e/Complaints_Compliments_Policy_2122_2324.pdf, and on StudySpace.

4. How to make a complaint

- 4.1 Complaints should be made in one of the following ways:
- In writing by completing a Complaint Form available at reception. Hardcopy – Complaint Form https://stanmore.ac.uk/uploads/b792ab3e-bdc1-45ee-bff8-2666c07d61d1/Complaints_form_2122_2324.pdf
 - Remotely via the website via www.stanmore.ac.uk under 'Contact Us' page (completed forms are submitted electronically and will be received by the Quality Administrator.)
 - Verbally to a member of staff or course representative. If unable to resolve informally, both quickly and effectively, this will be passed to the Quality Administrator via email on complaints@stanmore.ac.uk to log as a formal complaint.
 - By telephone to the Quality Administrator
- 4.2 Anonymous complaints will be recorded but not investigated within this process but will be subject to inquiry or investigation if in scope of wellbeing, safety, safeguarding, victimisation, bullying, radicalisation, or probity.
- 4.3 Complainants should be aware that our staff have the right to work in a pleasant and safe environment and any violent or abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.
- 4.4 If learners or stakeholders would like to make a comment or suggestion about any of the services the college offers or would like to compliment the college/ department/staff on the standard of a service provided, they can email or pick up a Compliments, Comments & Compliments Form at reception or via the website.

5. Procedures

Informal Stage

- 5.1 Where possible, especially in the first instance, learners should be encouraged to discuss any concerns or complaints with the member(s) of staff concerned, their Personal Tutor, Curriculum Manager or Head of Faculty.
- 5.2 It is important that any issues are sorted out straight away and the learner is advised on how to proceed. If the complaint is about learning or pastoral support, the learner should be encouraged to speak to their Personal Tutor or any member of the Student Services Team in the first instance, or their Curriculum Manager who will then be able to raise the concern through the appropriate channels.
- 5.3 If the issue is a general one, which affects several learners, the learner should be encouraged to share this with their Personal Tutor or Curriculum Manager or bring it to the attention of their Learner Representative who will be able to bring it to Learner Parliament. If the issue is not about the course, but a service that the college offers, learners may contact the Curriculum Manager or Head of Faculty.
- 5.4 All complaints must be treated with confidentiality. However, this should not be the case if there is a serious threat to the personal safety of the learner, other learners, or staff, or where there is a legal requirement to disclose the information. For further guidance contact the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality who is the overall manager responsible for learner welfare/safeguarding.
- 5.5 External stakeholders should initially contact the relevant department or the Quality Administrator.

Formal Stage

- 5.6 If it is not possible to resolve the issues informally, and/or the learner is not happy with the outcome, they can then complete a complaints form (available from College reception/website) or they can write a letter/email. They can also complain verbally and ask for it to be treated as a formal complaint if they wish. Complaints received in any one of these ways will be treated as formal complaints. These formal complaints must all be copied to the Quality Administrator.
- 5.7 Once received by the Quality Team, all complaints will be entered onto the electronic tracking system.
- 5.8 The Quality Administrator will acknowledge the learner's formal complaint within 5 working days of receiving it.
- 5.9 The Quality Team will decide on the best person to deal with the complaint. They will appoint an appropriate member of staff to investigate the complaint. The Quality Team will not usually be the person investigating the complaint but may do so in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.10 The Investigating Manager will collect documentary evidence and may choose to interview the parties involved in the complaint. In such cases, the parties may be accompanied by a friend or representative, but not by a legal or other professional advisor at this stage.
- 5.11 When the complaint has been resolved, the Investigating Manager will compose a letter of response, which will be checked by the Quality Team. The complainant must be informed of the

outcome or progress made on their complaint within 15 working days of receipt of their complaint. (Working days means Monday to Friday during term time. Complaints received outside of term time may be subjected to a longer response time due to staff being on annual leave).

- 5.12 If the complaint has been concluded directly with the learner within this time frame, the Investigating Manager must ensure that all correspondence is copied to the Quality Administrator so that they can close the complaint.
- 5.13 Where a complaint cannot be concluded within the timeframe, or there is a delay in the investigation, the learner will be informed and be given the likely date they should receive a full written outcome.
- 5.14 In the case of a complaint against a member of staff, and depending on the seriousness of the complaint, i.e. the complaint falls under other College policies such as the 'Grievance Policy', 'Disciplinary Staff Policy', etc., the complaint may be referred directly to the Human Resources Department for consideration. In this case, the complainant will be contacted in writing by Human Resources.
- 5.15 Complaints must be held for a minimum of 3 years.

6. Appeals

- 6.1 If the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome of their complaint, they can then appeal, in writing within 10 working days.
- 6.2 The appeal should be sent to complaints@stanmore.ac.uk where it will be passed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The appeal will be acknowledged within five working days.
- 6.3 An appeal will only be considered on the following grounds:
 - The investigation did not address all the complaint points raised.
 - New evidence has been made available that was not available at the time the complaint was submitted.
 - The investigation was not conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in the procedure for dealing with a complaint.
- 6.4 The member of the senior leadership team dealing with the appeal will determine whether the complaint has been properly dealt with according to the policy and procedures and whether the judgement is fair and reasonable. A decision will be made within 15 working days.
- 6.5 The decision made by the member of the senior leadership is final and closes the College's complaints process.

7. External Review

Where the internal complaints procedure has not resolved the matter and a complaint remains unresolved, advice can be sought from the following:

7.1 Further Education Funding Body

Email: complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

7.2 Greater London Authority (GLA)

Adult learners on course funded by the Adult Education budget can escalate their complaint to the GLA at Skillscomplaints@london.gov.uk if they are unsatisfied after the final outcome.

The GLA will only investigate once a complaint has exhausted the provider's own complaints process. The link to the GLA complaints policy can be found below:
[Guidance for learner complaints | London City Hall](#)

7.3 Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA – Higher Education)

Learners registered on Higher Education programmes, having exhausted the college's internal procedures may, subject to the provisions of legislation, have the right to request the Office of the independent Adjudicator to review the relevant case. www.Oiahe.org.uk

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1 The Quality Team maintains a log of compliments concerns and complaints. To secure ongoing improvement, the overall process will be monitored for consistency, quality of response and compliance with policy, reporting periodically to the Senior Leadership Team and College Governors.

8.2 Central oversight of the formal complaints process will ensure that all complaints are dealt with consistently.

8.3 The monitoring of learner complainants by gender and ethnicity will be included in the annual Equality and Diversity Report to ensure that no group appears to be less happy with the service they receive from the College. The complaints will also be analysed by Faculty and by funding stream.

8.4 Complaints that relate to our work with partner organisations will be shared with the relevant cross College Manager who oversees that area of work.

8.5 All complaints of an equal opportunity's nature, however informal, should be lodged with the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality via Quality Team, detailing the nature of the complaint and the outcome. Such a record should be kept even if the individuals concerned request anonymity or do not "wish to make the matter formal".

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

9.1 The College has paid due regard to equality considerations during the preparation and implementation of this Policy.

- 9.2 These considerations included the potential for any differential negative effect on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour, or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation, marriage, or civil partnership.
- 9.3 A wide variety of ways to contact the College with a concern or compliment have been provided, to ensure that our customers and stakeholders have a choice in the way they are able to raise their views.

Appendix 1: Complaints Guidance

Information about making a complaint.

We would like you to tell us if you are unhappy about something to do with Stanmore College, so that we can try to put things right. Please do not wait too long to tell us what is wrong. It can be difficult to deal with things that happened more than six weeks ago.

To help us to be fair to everyone, we have a Complaints Guidance Policy and procedure. You can use this guidance if you are learning at the college. You may also use this guidance if you are a visitor, employer, neighbour, or anyone else in the community. If you are over 18 years of age you should make a complaint yourself. If you are under 18 years of age you can ask a parent, carer, or friend to help you. If you work at the College and want to complain you should read the Grievance Procedure for Staff.

We will try to answer your complaint in the times given in this guidance, but sometimes we may not be able to do this. Delays could happen if the complaint is hard to review or when members of staff are not available. If there is a delay, we will tell you why and let you know how long we think it will be until we can answer your complaint.

We will always keep in touch with you about your complaint and the result. Please note if your complaint is about a person and we agree with it, we may not be able to tell you about what we expect to do to put things right, as that will be private between the College and that person.

Step 1 - Informal

If you are learning at the college and are unhappy about something to do with your course, you can ask to speak to someone about it. This list may help you to decide who you could speak to:

- Someone in the college who knows what is wrong.
- Your Personal Tutor.
- Your Study Programme Leader.
- Your Head of Faculty.

- A member of the learning support team (if you have learning support).
- A member of the Student Services Team.

If you're not learning at the College or if you are but the complaint is about a service not about your course, you can ask to speak to:

- Someone in college who knows what is wrong.
- A manager or the Head of Faculty that your complaint is about.

Step 2 - Formal

If you are still unhappy after speaking to somebody, or if you cannot speak to anyone about what is wrong, you may want to make a formal complaint.

To do this you can ask the Receptionist for a complaint form. You should fill in the form to tell us about your complaint. When you have filled in the form you should hand it back to the Receptionist or put it in the complaints box in the reception area. If you want your complaint to be private, you should ask for an envelope to put the form in. The receptionist will pass your complaint to the Quality Team.

If you are not at college, you can email your complaint to complaints@stanmore.ac.uk or write to us at:

Quality Team
Stanmore College
Elm Park, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4BQ

If you do not want to fill in a form, email or write to us you can contact the Quality Team by phone on 020 8420 7700 who will be able to tell you about other ways to make a complaint.

A group of people can also make a complaint if everyone feels unhappy about the same thing. Please contact the Quality Team who will tell you how a group can complain.

When we get formal complaints, the Quality Team checks that they are being dealt with properly. You will get a letter, email, or phone call within 5 working days from the date we get

your complaint. We will tell you that we will investigate your complaint and when we will contact you again. Sometimes we may need to speak to you on the phone or ask you to come to a meeting about your complaint. If we ask you to come to a meeting and you are under 18, you may bring a parent, carer, or friend with you if you would like to. You will usually receive a letter or an email within 15 working days from the day we got your complaint to let you know if we will agree with it. If we do agree with your complaint, we will let you know how we will put things right.

Step three - Appeal.

If we let you know that we do not agree with your complaint, and you are still unhappy you may appeal to the Senior Leadership Team. To do this you should inform the Quality Team by letter or email that you want to appeal, within 5 working days from date of our letter or email. Your complaint will be passed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team for review within 5 working days from when the Quality Team gets your written appeal. The Quality Team will let you know when this has been done and will tell you when we will contact you again.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will look at all the information from the review at Step 2 to decide if it was right or not to agree with your complaint. Sometimes a Senior Manager or someone else from the Quality Team, may need to speak to you on the phone or ask you to come to a meeting about your complaint. If you are asked to come to meeting and you are under 18, you may bring a parent, carer or friend with you if you would like to. You will usually receive a letter or an email within 7 working days of your appeal tell you whether the Senior Leadership Team agrees with your complaint. If the Senior Leadership Team does agree with your complaint, we will let you know how we will put things right.

Step 4 – Further advice

If you are still unhappy, you are advised to contact the Agency that monitors the quality of Further Education in this country. The Quality Team will be able to tell you which Agency to contact, how to find the Complaints Procedure and how to contact them. Please do use the Stanmore College Complaints Guidance before

contacting the Agency, as they will not usually deal with complaints unless you have already told us what is wrong and given us the chance to put things right.

If you have any questions or would like advice about a complaint, please contact:

Quality Team
Stanmore College
Elm Park, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4BQ
Telephone: 020 8420 7700

Appendix 2 Overview of Complaint Process

