

## Complaints and Compliments Policy

Valid from (academic year)

2021/2022

Next review (academic year)

2023/2024

Polices remain valid until revoked or reviewed.

Policy Owner

Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality

Committee approval

*SLT*

Policy & EIA Approval date

05/02/2021

Board of governors' committee

*C&Q*

Approval date

09/02/2021

Board approval necessary

*Yes*

Date of Board approval

14/

Summary of Changes

## **Complaints and Compliments Policy & Procedure**

**All students and other stakeholders, for example parents or employers, have the right to express any issues, concerns or complaints that they may have. Stanmore College welcomes complaints because...**

- They turn dissatisfied customers into satisfied ones.
- They indicate areas for improvement.
- They can improve student retention & achievement.

The college also welcomes any suggestions as to how it may be able to improve its service.

### **Scope of this policy**

This policy is for all students studying with Stanmore College. This is regardless of the funding stream or type of course and so includes all study programmes, apprenticeships, adult learners, community courses and full cost recovery, with the exception of Higher Education learners.

Students who are studying at Stanmore and registered with our partner Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) under a collaborative partnership agreement may make take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator 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.

### **Confidentiality**

A student's wishes in this respect will be respected and only those staff directly involved will be aware of the nature of complaint. Students will not be treated adversely for having complained - rather their complaint will be dealt with positively.

### **Record Keeping**

Only those staff directly involved will be aware of the details of a complaint and the paperwork will be held securely at a central location. Statistics on complaints will be logged centrally without identifying individuals and this information will be made available to managers to enable them to review and improve our services to students.

### **Assistance to students**

All students will be made aware of the Complaints policy and procedure through the induction process. Personal tutors are responsible for ensuring that students have guidance on how to use the process. For shorter courses where there is no named personal tutor, the course teacher will provide guidance.

The Complaints Policy is on the website, on StudySpace and Complaints forms are held at reception.

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.

If a student requires assistance in making a complaint they may request this either from their personal tutor, their Curriculum Manager, or the Executive Support Team via Reception.

## **Complaints Procedures**

### **If students would like to make a comment, suggestion or compliment**

- If students 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 [co-ordinator@stanmore.ac.uk](mailto:co-ordinator@stanmore.ac.uk) or pick up a Comments, Suggestions & Compliments Form (see Appendix A) from the college reception.

Throughout this document where reference is made to 'students' this should be interpreted as including 'stakeholders' as well where appropriate, for example staff, parents or employers.

### **If students have a complaint or concern**

#### **The Informal Stage**

- 1 Where possible, especially in the first instance, students should be encouraged to discuss any concerns or complaints with the member(s) of staff concerned, their Personal Tutor, Curriculum Manager or Head of School (if required at this stage). It is important that any issues are sorted out straight away and the student is advised on how to proceed. If the complaint is about learning or pastoral support, the student 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.
- 2 If the issue is a general one, which affects a number of students, the student should be encouraged to share this with their Personal Tutor or Curriculum Manager or bring it to the attention of their Student Representative who will be able to bring it to the Student Parliament. If the issue is not about the course, but a service that the college offers, students may contact the Manager or Head of that department or ask to speak to the evening Duty Manager by going via reception.
- 3 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 student, other students 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 student welfare/safeguarding.
- 4 External stakeholders should initially contact the relevant department or the Executive Support Team.
- 5 Steps 1, 2 and 3 explain how a complaint or concern should be dealt with informally. It is always best to try to resolve any issues informally. All issues dealt with informally should be logged in the Department Complaints Log. This is an auditable file and must be kept up-to-date. Copies should also be sent to the Executive Support Team.

#### **The Formal Stage**

- 1 If it is impossible to resolve the issues informally, and/or the student 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 Executive Support Team.

- 2 The Executive Support Team will acknowledge the student's formal complaint within 5 working days of receiving it.
- 3 The Executive Support 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 Executive Support Team will not usually be the people investigating the complaint but may do so in exceptional circumstances.
- 4 The complainant must be informed of the outcome or progress made on their complaint within 21 working days of receipt of their complaint. If the complaint has been concluded directly with the student within this time frame, the Investigating Manager must ensure that all correspondence is copied to the Executive Support Team so that they can close the complaint. Where a complaint cannot be concluded within the timeframe, or there is a delay in the investigation, the student will be informed and be given the likely date they should receive a full written outcome.
- 5 If the student is not satisfied by the outcome of their complaint, they can then appeal, in writing within 5 working days. The appeal should be sent to [co-ordinator@stanmore.ac.uk](mailto:co-ordinator@stanmore.ac.uk) where it will be passed to a member of the senior management team.

**See Appendix B Complaints Guidance and Appendix C Complaints Form**

**See Appendix D for Guidelines for Investigating Managers**

**See Appendix F for Complaints Investigation Form**

**See Appendix G for Witness Statement Form**

### **Who should complaints be sent to?**

Formal complaints must be sent to Sonja Devaney: Executive Support Team  
Stanmore College, Elm Park, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4BQ.

[s.devaney@stanmore.ac.uk](mailto:s.devaney@stanmore.ac.uk) or  
[complaints@stanmore.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@stanmore.ac.uk)

### **Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

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. <http://oiahe.org.uk/>

**The Complaints Guidance document for complainants can be obtained from Reception, on the Website, and on Study Space.**

## **Monitoring**

Stanmore College takes complaints, comments and compliments seriously and monitors the feedback received in this way carefully. All complaints are categorised as Red, Amber or Green to aid in the ongoing monitoring of resolution of complaints. The way the rating is applied is in Appendix E.

The Executive Support Team will provide a summary of complaints to date in the current academic year monthly to the Executive Team via the Quality Manager.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality will provide an overview of all complaints termly to the Senior Leadership Team and annually to the Board of Governors in the Complaints Report.

All complaints of an equal opportunities nature, however informal, should be lodged with the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality via the Executive Support 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".

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

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

## **Equality and Diversity**

A wide variety of methods of contacting the College with a concern or a compliment have been provided. This is to ensure that our customers and stakeholders have a choice in the way they are able to raise their views. This could be through a member of staff they trust or impartially with a central team that is quite separate to the area that they are receiving our service from.

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

## **Training for staff**

The Executive Support Team (EST) are the key College team with the experience in handling complaints. Training for key managers in handling complaints will be provided by this team as required. New members of the EST are inducted into the processes for handling complaints by the PA to the Principal.

**Appendix A Comments, Suggestions & Compliments Form**

# COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS



Please write down the details here:

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Who did you receive excellent service from  
Name: .....

Where / how do you usually find information about the college?  
(please tick as appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Website	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reception
<input type="checkbox"/>	Library	<input type="checkbox"/>	Phone
<input type="checkbox"/>	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moodle
<input type="checkbox"/>	ProPortal / ProMonitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moodle
<input type="checkbox"/>	Colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	Study Space
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please enter details below)		

.....

At Stanmore College we are constantly trying to provide the best service possible for you. To help us do this, please take a few moments to tell us what we're doing right or how we could improve...

Which service does your suggestion or compliment relate to?  
(please state if known)

Date: .....

Please also complete the back of this form.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your comments.  
You can hand this form into a Comments and Suggestion box located at Reception or outside the enrichment office.

## Appendix B Complaints Guidance (for complainants)

### 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 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 School.
- A member of the learning support team (if you have learning support).
- A member of 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 School that your complaint is about.
- The evening Duty Manager (please ask the Receptionist to call the Duty Manager for you).

#### 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 Executive Support Team.

If you are not at College you can email your complaint to [complaints@stanmore.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@stanmore.ac.uk) or write to us at:

Executive Support 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 Executive Support Team by phone on 020 8420 7742 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 Executive Support Team who will tell you how a group can complain.

When we get formal complaints, the Executive Support 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 look into 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 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 21 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 Management Team. To do this you should inform the Executive Support 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 Management Team for review within 5 working days from when the Executive Support Team gets your written appeal. The Executive Support 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 Management 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 Executive Support 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 Management Team agrees with your complaint. If the Senior Management 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 Executive Support 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:

Executive Support Team  
Stanmore College  
Elm Park, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4BQ  
Telephone: 020 8420 7723 or 020 8420 7742



## Appendix D

### Guidelines for Investigating Managers

1. Agree and carry out necessary actions to make a thorough investigation into the complaint. You may delegate this to a member of your team if appropriate but the investigation will remain your responsibility.
2. If the investigation includes interviews, meetings or telephone conversations please ensure notes of these are taken. Please also keep copies of any related mail or email correspondence. Normally an investigation will include an interview with the complainant, if you have decided that this is inappropriate then the reason for that should be noted in the investigation report.
3. If the investigation requires written witness statements to be taken, then the Stanmore College witness statement form (in Appendix G) should be used.
4. Return your draft response and supporting documents (original copies of all meeting records, witness statements, notes of conversations, written correspondence, and printouts of any relevant emails) to the Executive Support Team for agreement BEFORE sending to the complainant. To ensure that we meet our Complaints timescales, your draft response should be received by the Executive Support Team at least 3 working days before the response is due to reach the complainant. If the investigation proves to be complex the Executive Support Team must be notified so that a revised deadline can be agreed and a holding letter sent to the complainant. Any extended deadline will not normally be more than 5 working days. You may find the Complaint Record form useful to summarise the actions you have taken.
5. Your draft response will be reviewed by the Executive Support Team. The main purpose of this review is to ensure that:
  - (a) it responds to the issue/s raised in the complaint
  - (b) It does not include unnecessary/inappropriate information
  - (c) It is written 'without prejudice'
  - (d) It is written in a 'corporate' format, including references to the Complaints Guidance where required.

Any suggested amendments to the letter will be agreed with you before the response is sent.

6. Once a response has been agreed you are responsible for forwarding this to the Executive Support Team so a response can be put into a standard college format and respond to the complainant. A copy of the final response will be sent to the investigating officer.
7. If the complaint involves concerns about a member of staff you may wish to seek additional advice from Quality/HR.

## Appendix E

### Complaints RAG Rating

#### GREEN

- Individual case – easily resolved or proves to be student who has not met pre-determined rules/conditions.
- Offsite student antisocial behaviour where individuals cannot be identified.

#### Amber

- Individual case – involves financial implication to student.
- Relates to a group of students.
- Systematic error, e.g. in Marketing materials.
- Includes evidence of safeguarding, bullying or E&D concerns from member of staff or other student.

#### Red

- Individual case with potential for negative publicity and/or court case.
- Involves large number of students.
- Evidence of systematic/long term issue.
- Will take a long time to resolve.
- Requires action.
- Plan and follow up.

**Appendix F**

**Complaints Investigation Form**

<b>Complaint Ref:</b>	<b>Date received:</b>	<b>Category:</b>
<b>Investigating Manager:</b>	<b>Deadline for Response to Executive Support Team:</b>	<b>Deadline for Response to complainant:</b>

<b>Details of investigation:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Further details:</b>

<b>Details of related</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Attached Y/N:</b>

<b>Comments/additional information:</b>

<b>Summary of outcome of investigation to be used in response to complainant:</b>

Date of return to Executive Support Team:	Date response sent to complainant:

It is essential to refer to the Complaints Guidance when investigating complaints. It is also essential to keep copies of related documents and two copies of the response signed by the Investigating Manager; one for the Manager's file and one for return to the Executive Support Team for the complaints records.

**Appendix G – Witness Statement Form**

This is a personal statement for any person who is involved in or witnessed any related incident.

Use the reverse side or additional pages as needed. Thank you for completing it.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Incident date : \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what happened (what you saw or heard, what you did, actions you saw being taken by anyone else, or other observations):

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Other witnesses or people present :  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comments:  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Statement date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness name in block capital letters \_\_\_\_\_

Witness signature \_\_\_\_\_