

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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At Woking College, we aim to provide the very best standards of service, courses and facilities for our students. We seek to promote inclusivity, tolerance and respect for others at all times within a caring, supportive environment that values diversity. Despite our best intentions, from time to time, things can go wrong. When this happens, you may wish to make a complaint.

This procedure is primarily intended for use by students and/or parents – a separate grievance procedure is in place for staff who wish to make a complaint.

Throughout this procedure, 'working days' refers to Monday to Friday during term-time only.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- a) It is the policy of the College to resolve as quickly and fairly as possible any complaint a stakeholder may have, about services provided by the College. In this context, a stakeholder may be a student, a parent, a member of the public or a member of staff.
  - b) The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to provide an opportunity for the complaint to be resolved as quickly as possible by carefully logging and analysing complaints to provide a means of identifying problems and weaknesses in the services provided by the College.
  - c) In the case of a cause for complaint by a student, in the first instance, the **student** should seek to resolve the matter informally. The matter should be referred to the student's Personal Tutor, or the person responsible for the subject of the complaint. The person dealing with the complaint should attempt to resolve the complaint and record the complaint and his/her action. If the complaint cannot be resolved in this way, then the student has the right to use the Formal Complaints Procedure outlined below.
  - d) In the event of a complaint being made by a stakeholder other than a student, the person receiving the complaint will attempt to resolve the complaint informally. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the complainant has the right to make a formal complaint in writing by sending a letter or email to the Deputy Principal.
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## 2. SCOPE OF PROCEDURES

The College will investigate complaints that include the following areas:

- i) the quality and management of learning provision
- ii) financial irregularity
- iii) undue delay or non-compliance with published procedures
- iv) poor administration, or failure of the College to follow its own policies
- v) equality and diversity issues
- vi) health and safety concerns
- vii) confidentiality

The following areas are excluded from this procedure as they are covered in other policies or procedures:

- a) Representations by students against decisions made by Awarding Bodies (Exams Appeals Procedure).
- b) Complaints against misconduct by another student (Student Disciplinary Procedure).
- c) Complaints involving allegations of misconduct by a member of staff (Staff Disciplinary Procedure).
- d) Complaints relating to sexual or racial discrimination (Equality and Diversity Procedure).
- e) Complaints relating to individual employment issues and contracts (HR Procedures)
- f) Complaints by a member of staff against another member of staff (Grievance Procedure)
- g) Complaints relating to data handling and sharing (Data Protection Policy)
- g) Matters that are subject of any legal action.

The College reserves the right not to investigate complaints considered vexatious and/or malicious.

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### 3. FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

There are three stages in dealing with a complaint. These are:

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|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Stage one –</b>    | Informal resolution by discussion.   |
| <b>Stage two –</b>    | If this is not successful, you may make a formal complaint to the Deputy Principal which will then be investigated.                        |
| <b>Stage three –</b>  | If you are still dissatisfied, the Principal can be asked to consider your complaint on the basis of the stage two investigation.          |
| <b>Appeal Stage -</b> | A panel of Trustees may be convened to further review the evidence that relates to the complaint and the processes followed by the College |

The way in which each of the stages work is set out in detail below:

#### **Stage One**

Many causes for concern arise from a misunderstanding and can be quickly resolved at this stage. Whenever possible, the College will try to deal with your complaint fairly, quickly and informally.

In the first instance, students or parents with a concern are encouraged to raise their complaint informally with the person perceived to be responsible in order for a resolution to be sought. If it is not possible or inappropriate to raise your concern directly with the person concerned, students and parents should approach the relevant Head of Department or Head of Year at this stage.

Records of such complaints will not normally be retained or centrally recorded at this point.

If the relevant person is unable to resolve your complaint informally, they will write to you on behalf of the College setting out their understanding of your complaint and explaining why they are unable to resolve it.

Whilst every reasonable effort should be made to resolve complaints at this point, the complainant has the right to proceed to the next formal stage if resolution has not been possible and/or they remain dissatisfied.

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## Stage Two

If you wish to take your complaint to the next formal stage, you will be asked to explain your complaint in writing. This should be addressed to the Deputy Principal, Nuweed Razaq, and can be sent via email to [nra@woking.ac.uk](mailto:nra@woking.ac.uk).

A formal complaint should be lodged within 10 working days of the act or omission giving rise to it. Only in exceptional circumstances will a complaint be considered outside this timescale.

If formal complaints are received by other members of staff, they should immediately be forwarded to the Deputy Principal before any further action is taken.

The Deputy Principal will notify any member of staff against whom a complaint has been received and inform them that the appropriate College procedure will be followed. The member(s) of staff has the right to see the full details of the complaint.

For all complaints, the Deputy Principal (or their delegated representative) will investigate the complaint including, if necessary, contacting the complainant and any other relevant parties. An appropriate course of action will be recommended in an attempt to resolve the complaint.

The Deputy Principal will normally aim to let you have the results of the investigation within 15 working days of receiving your original written complaint. If the investigation is to take more than 15 working days, you will be informed.

If the complaint concerns the actions of the Deputy Principal, it should be forwarded to The Principal via email [bfr@woking.ac.uk](mailto:bfr@woking.ac.uk). In these circumstances, the Principal reserves the right to instruct an alternative member of staff to investigate the complaint on their behalf.

It is expected that almost all complaints should be capable of resolution. However, if this has not been possible and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to appeal.

## Stage Three

If you are still dissatisfied at the end of the stage two investigation, the matter can be referred to the Principal, Brett Freeman ([bfr@woking.ac.uk](mailto:bfr@woking.ac.uk)). The Principal will review your written statements and the College's response to these and may make further enquiries to clarify any particular points or issues.

At this point, the Principal will either:

- i. Decide to uphold the complaint and direct the measures that now need to be taken as a result of that decision
  - ii. Uphold the decision taken by the College at Stage
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**If the complaint involves the Principal:**

- a) Refer your complaint to the Clerk to the Trustees who will pass it to the Chair of Trustees.
- b) The Chair of Trustees, or delegated representative, will attempt to resolve the complaint. The decision will be reported to the Clerk who will log the response in the College's Complaints Register.

**Appealing against a Stage Three decision: the Complaints Panel Procedure****1. Introduction**

- A Complaints Panel may be convened when a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 3.

**2. Acknowledgement**

- The request to escalate a complaint to a Complaints Panel must be made to the Clerk to the Board of Trustees. They will record the date the request is received and acknowledge receipt in writing (usually by email) within 5 College working days.

**3. Preparation**

- The Clerk will gather all relevant documentation from Stages One, Two and Three and will refer the matter to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. They will review all of the documentation. They may make further enquiries to clarify any points or issues.
  - The Chair of the Board of Trustees will consider whether there are sufficient grounds for an appeal against the outcome of the Stage 3 investigation. The grounds for an appeal are limited to clear evidence of procedural impropriety by the College; irrationality of decisions and/or compelling new evidence relating to the complaint.
  - If the complaint is not to advance beyond this point, the complainant will be written to explaining that decision;
  - If in the opinion of the Chair of the Board of Trustees there are sufficient grounds for an appeal, they will arrange for a panel of at least three members who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint to hear the appeal.
  - The panel will comprise of at least two members of the Board of Trustees, and where possible, one further member who is entirely independent of the College.
  - The complainant and the College will be invited to submit any additional evidence they wish the panel to consider in advance of the meeting date.
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#### 4. Panel Meeting

- The panel meeting will normally be scheduled within 20 College working days of the acknowledgement. If the meeting will be later, the complainant will be notified.
- The panel will consider all information provided including any additional evidence received prior to the meeting.
- The panel will make such further enquiries as it considers necessary before reaching a decision.

#### 5. Decision

- The Panel can:
  - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
  - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- The panel's decision will be communicated in writing to the complainant and the College within 10 College working days of the meeting.
- The decision will include the findings, conclusions, and any actions to be taken.

#### 6. Follow-Up

- The Chair of the Board of Trustees will ensure that any actions resulting from the panel's decision are implemented.
- The decision of the Stage 4 panel is final.
- If the complainant believes that the College did not handle their complaint in accordance with this Policy or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law they can refer this matter to the Department for Education for review, details of this would be provided in the outcomes letter.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees: 07.05.25**

Were changes made to the Policy when received? If YES complete the Partial Equality Analysis table.

Questions for all Policies Is it likely that the Policy Revision could have a negative impact:-		Please Tick Box	
		YES	NO
1.	On minority ethnic groups?		X
2.	Due to gender?		X
3.	Due to disability?		X
4.	Due to sexual orientation?		X
5.	Due to their religious beliefs (or none)?		X
6.	On people due to them being transgender or transsexual?		X
Additional questions for Policies relating to Staff Is it likely that the Policy Revision could have a negative impact:-			
7.	On people due to their age?		X
8.	On people due to their marital or civil partnership status?		X
9.	On people with dependants/caring responsibilities?		X

Date of Review      October 2024

Did you make  
changes?

X

If YES please speak with The Assistant Principal as a full Equality Analysis may be required.

NRA/Complaints Procedure: Oct 2024  
Last Reviewed: March 2025  
Next Review: March 2027