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LEARNER RELATED POLICY: COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

The College welcomes views on its services from its customers, including good service compliments and complaints. Feedback received provides the College with important information which can contribute to the review of our services and processes of self assessment and continuous improvement.

A summary of recorded compliments and complaints will be reported to the Corporation through regular updates to the Standards Committee.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Purpose

These procedures describe how the College will respond to a compliment to continually improve the quality of service to our customers through the sharing of good practice or a complaint in order to attempt to resolve it to the satisfaction of the complainant and to prevent recurrence.

Scope

This procedure shall apply to compliments and complaints made by any learner, parent (the term parent means anyone legally caring for a student), employer or member of the community using the College's services or facilities. The College Charter and the Learner Handbook identify clearly what to do if things go wrong.

Customers of the College should be informed that their compliments related to quality of service received will be welcomed, recorded and disseminated to relevant managers. Compliments can be received in any format and can be made directly to the relevant area manager or through the Management Office.

The release of personal information about a learner to any third party (such as concerned parents, employers or learner advocates) will comply with the provisions of data protection legislation.

The College will ensure that as part of the arrangements for Higher Education learners who study with Boston College away from their certificating institution, information will be provided on who to contact within the University in the event that they wish to make an appeal or complaint.

The College will also ensure that learners registered on University awards are made aware that they have the right to pursue their complaint with the University when the College's procedures have been exhausted (under the Quality Assurance Agency's / Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education Code of Practice).

Under guidance from the Higher Education Funding Council for England Boston College will work closely with representatives of the College's Student Union to identify and resolve Higher Education learners concerns or complaints.

COMPLIMENTS PROCEDURE

1. Compliments can be accepted in any format (eg, written, telephone, verbal transcript, etc) and can be made directly to the area staff, managers or sent to the Management Office,
2. Informal compliments will be classed as those received verbally by staff and managers and these should be recorded in the Programme Meeting minutes.

Formal compliments will be classed as those received in written format (email, letter, etc). Staff and managers receiving written compliments will forward a copy to the Secretary to the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality for logging in the database and for distribution to relevant areas.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Responsibility for Implementation

- 1.1 The following are responsible for implementing this policy: -

Stage One (Informal Stage):	Managers, staff members and teams
Stage Two (Formal Stage):	Quality Improvement Manager (QIM)
Stage Three (Appeal):	Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality (VPC&Q)

2. Responding to Complaints

- 2.1 In the vast majority of cases the College will respond to any complaints made in a speedy and efficient way and resolve issues through informal discussion (Stage 1 below) and where this is not possible the formal procedure (Stage 2 below) will be adopted.

2.2 If, during investigation of a complaint, at either Stages 1 or 2, it becomes apparent that staff misconduct or competence issues are involved then the Senior HR Manager will be informed and will monitor and advise the investigation.

3. Informal (Stage 1)

3.1 In the first instance every effort should be made to resolve complaints at the Informal Stage. The member(s) of staff involved and managers should attempt to resolve the problem informally by talking with the complainant. Impartial advice can be obtained at this stage from either the Learner Support Officer or the counselling and guidance team in Learner Services.

3.2 If the complaint cannot be resolved informally (Stage 1) then the Formal (Stage 2) procedure should be invoked. Teams should record informal complaints received and the action taken through team minutes and Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports.

3.3 All informal complaint resolutions will be considered at the Programme or Team Meeting and the outcome reported in the minutes. Actions taken to prevent re-occurrence of informal complaints will be recorded on Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports. In cases where complaints make detailed and specific references to the conduct or competence of individual members of staff, circulation should be restricted on a need-to-know basis.

3.4 Where complaints are made by apprentices or work based learners that relate to employers or partners of the College, it is requested that complaints are made in writing (this can include email) as they refer to third parties that the College work with.

4. Formal (Stage 2)

4.1 Complaint Format: Complaints will be accepted in any format, eg, written, telephone, verbal transcript, etc.

4.2 Complaints received: All complaints received by staff should be sent to the Secretary to the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality for consideration by the Quality Improvement Manager and action.

4.3 Actions on receipt of a formal complaint: -

On receipt of a formal complaint, the Quality Improvement Manager will: -

4.3.1 Through the Secretary to the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality acknowledge the complaint in writing within 2 working days.

4.3.2 Respond to complaints received from parents of learners under the age of 19 in compliance with Data Protection guidance referred to on enrolment forms.

- 4.4 Programme Area Manager (PAM) actions on receipt of a formal complaint investigation request from the Quality Improvement Manager: Upon receipt of a request the PAM will provide the Quality Improvement Manager with a written response to the issues raised within 5 working days.
- 4.5 Misconduct or Competence issues: If during investigation of a complaint it becomes apparent that staff misconduct or competence issues are involved then the investigating line manager will inform the Senior HR Manager who will arrange that the investigation is advised and monitored on these matters.
- 4.6 Quality Improvement Manager actions on receipt of the investigation outcomes: -
- 4.6.1 The Quality Improvement Manager will collect information from the investigation(s) and will compile a reply to the complainant, through the Secretary to the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality, normally within 15 working days of its receipt.
- 4.6.2 Where the complaint was received from any third party (such as concerned parents, employers or learner advocates) the Quality Improvement Manager will, through the Secretary to the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality, only respond to the complainant with the written consent to the release of all information held by the institution from the learner. If the consent is refused or there is no consent within a reasonable time from the learner then the complainant will usually be advised that no answer can be given. In the exceptional circumstance, where it is considered to be in the best interests of the learner, a third party complaint may be answered without explicit permission being given but only after agreement by the College Data Protection Officer and Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality.
- 4.7 Programme Area Manager or Head of Curriculum action on closure of a complaint: A copy of the College's response to a complaint will be sent to the appropriate PAM, or equivalent. The complaint will be considered at the Programme or Team Meeting and the outcome reported in the minutes. Actions taken to prevent re-occurrence of informal complaints will be recorded through the Course SAR process. In cases where complaints make detailed and specific references to the conduct or competence of individual members of staff, circulation should be strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- 4.8 A record of all complaints and their respective reply dates and actions taken / required is to be produced in the form of a complaints grid by the Quality Improvement Manager and Secretary to the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality. Actions will be highlighted to prevent recurrence of similar complaints. Equality & Diversity is also collated at this stage for analysis.

- 4.9 HE Learners: In addition the College will ensure, through appropriate documentation, that HE learners registered on University awards have the right to pursue their complaint with the University when the College's procedures have been exhausted (Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Conduct).

Where a complaint is essentially about an academic matter, the College will inform or involve the relevant Dean of Faculty at the University if the complaint proceeds as far as the final stage of the College's complaints procedure.

- 4.10 If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, the complainant has the right to appeal.

5. Appeal (Stage 3)

- 5.1 Right to Appeal: The complainant has the right to appeal against the formal decision in writing within 15 working days to the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality.
- 5.2 Receipt of an Appeal: Upon receipt of an appeal the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality shall acknowledge the appeal within 2 working days. A formal response will normally be made within 15 working days.
- 5.3 Prior involvement of the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality: In the unusual event that the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality has already been significantly involved in the complaint the appeal will be considered by the Principal.
- 5.4 HE Learners Appeal. The College will ensure that as part of the arrangements for learners who study an award validated by a university, complaints proceeding beyond the final stage of the College's procedure will be referred to the University level for consideration (i.e. beyond the Faculty level where action will be coordinated by the University Secretary).

6. Exceptional Circumstances

- 6.1 In the unusual event that the complaint alleges misconduct by the Principal, then the above procedures will not apply. In such circumstances the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (care of the Clerk to the Corporation). Upon receipt the Chair of Governors shall acknowledge the complaint within 2 working days. The complaint will be considered by a small panel and formal response will normally be made within 15 working days.
- 6.2 If a complainant feels that their complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily by the College they can write to the Skills Funding Agency (for details see www.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk) or OfSTED (for details see www.ofsted.gov.uk) or the Education Funding Agency (EFA) (for details see <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-funding-agency>).

- 6.3 Our regulatory body, OfSTED, also welcomes your views regarding the level of satisfaction you receive from the College. You can provide feedback to them in numerous ways. Visit www.ofsted.gov.uk for information and further details about how to submit your feedback.
- 6.4 HE learners who feel their complaint has not been resolved either by the College or University have the right to take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). As an ombudsman the OIA handle complaints as a final resort and expect learners to have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter from the HE institution to indicate all internal processes have been exhausted.

	FIONA GRADY, VICE PRINCIPAL: CURRICULUM & QUALITY
DATE	2nd SEPTEMBER 2015

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

1. Identifying the policy, procedure or practice

1a. What is the name of the policy, procedure or practice?

Compliments and complaints procedure

1b. What is the aim of the policy, procedure or practice?

To improve the quality of service by responding to customer compliments and complaints

1c. Who does the policy, procedure or practice impact on? *(Please specify)*

All Boston College learners; stakeholders and the community in general

1d. Who implements the policy, procedure or practice? *(Please specify)*

Curriculum Staff
Quality Improvement Manager
College Management

2. Information collection

2a. What information is available on the impact of this policy, procedure or practice?

Informally the curriculum areas hold information

Formally, data is maintained by the Quality Improvement Manager including the nature of the complaint and the actions taken to resolve the issue/s

Data is reported annually to standards committee

The data is analysed by protected characteristics and reported regularly to the college E&D Committee

Data on complaints is reported as part of the Performance Monitoring process

The Learner Surveys highlight customer satisfaction on various issues

Learner Voice forums are a source of feedback on customer views

2b. If gaps are identified in the data available, what records; data or information are you likely to need to develop and monitor this policy, procedure or practice that benefits all groups equally?

Compliments are not routinely collected so analysis is inconsistent and is not given as much emphasis as complaints.

Although complaints are resolved the analysis and review of how to prevent reoccurrence is not formally documented.

E&D analysis is in place but no clear patterns have emerged.

3. Relevance of policy/procedure or practice

What level of relevance does the policy, procedure or practice have to each category?
Tick one box for each equality category

The policy applies equally to all learners stakeholders and members of the community, irrespective of any of the following characteristics.

Category	High	Medium	Low
Race	✓		
Disability	✓		
Gender	✓		
Gender re-assignment	✓		
Age	✓		
Sexual orientation	✓		
Religion/belief	✓		
Pregnancy/maternity	✓		
Marriage/Civil Partnership	✓		
Socio-economic	✓		
Rurality	✓		

What is the overall level of relevance of this policy/procedure to equality and diversity?

High (Over 50% of responses in medium or high category)

Medium (Below 50% of responses in medium or high category)

Low (Responses only in low category)

Actions are to be taken as a result of the Equality Impact Assessment

Item/Activity	Description	Lead Staff	Comp date	Milestones	Outputs/Outcomes
Emphasis collection of compliments	Ensure Prog areas collect compliments as well as complaints to provide opportunity to report good practice	QIM			
Review complaints to establish procedures to minimise re-occurrence	Work with PAMs to review complaints and establish how systems/processes can be adapted to avoid re-occurrence	QIM/PAMs			
Analysis of E&D data relating to complaints	Continue to collect and review E&D from individuals complaining	QIM/E&D Mngr			

Signed:



Position: Quality Improvement Manager

Date: 6-7-15

Date of next Equality Impact Assessment: When changes to policy made as per discussion with E&D Manager