



1. Purpose

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire Regional College is committed to offer the best learning opportunity, from initial contact to successful completion of your course. If, for any reason these high standards are not met, then Huntingdonshire Regional College wants to rectify the situation swiftly and put in new strategies to ensure that the same situation does not re-occur. Alternatively, the procedure can be used for positive comments regarding the College and its service.

2 Informal Feedback

- 2.1 Complaints of a minor nature should be raised immediately with a member of college staff with the aim of resolving the problem directly and informally. It is expected that the person receiving the informal feedback will take on the responsibility to resolve the issue without forwarding the informal feedback to another member of staff. It is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be resolved in this way.

3 Stage One - Complaint

- 3.1 Where it has not been possible to satisfactorily resolve matters informally, a formal written complaint should be submitted to the Head of Quality Assurance. The main ways to submit your complaint are:

You could write your complaint on a Customer Feedback Form. These are widely available across the College at all times as well as in Learner Services and reception. You can hand in your Feedback Form to Reception or Learner Services.

You can write direct to the Head of Quality Assurance at, Huntingdonshire Regional College, California Road, Huntingdon, PE29 1BL

You can email: steve-rogers@huntingdon.ac.uk

You can telephone: Extension 215 or 01480 379215

- 3.2 Any complaints sent directly to the Senior Management Team or any other part of the College will be forwarded to the Head of Quality Assurance to formally enter onto the complaints system.
- 3.3 Only when the Head of Quality Assurance receives the complaint will the response timescales provided within this policy apply.
- 3.4 To ensure a prompt response the complaint must be specific and comprehensively documented. The complainant should present full details, including:
- name and address of the complainant,
 - any relevant documentation, dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate.
 - any previous unsuccessful attempts at resolution.
 - what reasonable steps should be taken to resolve the complaint.
- 3.5 The Head of Quality Assurance will respond in the first instance and agree allocation to investigate by a nominated Manager. He will then forward the complaint to the nominated Manager in order to facilitate a resolution of the complaint and then monitor the progression of your complaint until a successful outcome.
- 3.6 Communication with the complainant will be via their preferred route, i.e. post, email, etc. If a preferred route isn't indicated, the response will be via the medium that the complaint was initially sent.
- 3.7 Following submission of the Stage One complaint:
- 3.7.1 The complainant will receive a written acknowledgement within three working days.

- 3.7.2 The complaint will be robustly investigated in a thorough, objective and transparent manner that may include contacting the complainant to gather additional supporting evidence, interviewing members of staff and other learners as necessary.
- 3.7.3 Prior to a final response being sent that outlines the issues identified and how they have been addressed to the complainant's satisfaction a quality check will be completed by the Director of Teaching, Learning, Quality and Systems or if not available another member of the Leadership Team.
- 3.8 The college have a guideline of ten working days from the date of acknowledgement, to provide a written response to the complainant. This response will provide the result of the investigation. If the response is via telephone it will be followed up with a written response.
- 3.9 If the investigation is likely to exceed ten working days, we will contact the complainant and tell them when we expect a response to be available.
- 3.10 Where complaints involve complex or multiple complaints, in order to ensure that the investigation process is complete and robust, investigations may take longer.

4 Stage Two - Appeal

- 4.1 If a Stage One complaint is closed but it is felt that the complaint remains unresolved, complainants can appeal to the Interim Deputy Principal, Alan Jones. You could contact him on 01480 379124 or email alan-jones@huntingdon.ac.uk. This appeal must be made within one calendar month of the date of response. The request should include:
 - 4.1.1 the original reference number of the original complaint.
 - 4.1.2 full and specific details of why the complainant wishes to appeal the Stage One decision.
- 4.2 The appeal will be acknowledged prior to any investigation.
- 4.3 The investigating officer will be of a role higher than that of the Investigating Officer for Stage One.
- 4.4 Following the submission of an appeal:
 - 4.4.1 The complainant will receive a written acknowledgement within three working days.
 - 4.4.2 The outcome of the original investigation will be reviewed.
- 4.5 The college have a guideline of ten working days from the date of acknowledgement, to provide a written response to the complainant. This response will provide the result of the investigation.
- 4.6 If the investigation is likely to exceed ten working days, we will contact the complainant and tell them when we expect a response to be available.
- 4.7 Where appeals involve complex or multiple complaints, in order to ensure that the investigation process is complete and robust, investigations may take longer.
- 4.8 The outcome of the stage two appeal is the final decision of the college and no further internal investigation will take place relating to this specific complaint.

5 Complaints that cannot be resolved by the college

- 5.1 If, after exhausting the two stages of the college complaints process the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the College has dealt with their complaint, the complainant has the opportunity to contact the [Skills Funding Agency](#) and / or the appropriate Awarding Organisation.
- 5.2 The college will support any legitimate external review of an investigation into a complaint, whilst being mindful of the Data Protection Act.

6 Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)

- 6.1 If, after exhausting the two stages of the college complaints process and after raising a complaint with the Skills Funding Agency and / or the appropriate Awarding Organisation the complaint still remains unresolved the complainant can then raise their complaint to the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) whose decision will be final.

7 Complaints for learners on Higher Education courses

- 7.1 If, a learner is on a Higher Education courses (Higher National Diploma (HND), Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Diploma in Education and Training in the FE sector) and after exhausting the two stages of the college complaints process the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the College has dealt with their complaint, the complainant has the opportunity to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for any issues in relation to non-academic matters. Contact details for OIA: by post – Second Floor, Abbey Gate, 57-75 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AB; online – www.oiahe.org.uk; telephone: 0118 959 9813 or email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk.

8 Upheld complaints

- 8.1 Complaints that are upheld receive an internal action plan to prevent future incidents of the same nature.
- 8.2 Upheld complaints are recorded and monitored on an annual basis.

9 If a complaint is about a member of staff, including the Principal

- 9.1 If a complaint is from a member of staff in relation to another member of staff, the complaint will be forwarded to the college's Human Resources department for investigation under the grievance procedure and will not be formally recorded as a complaint.
- 9.2 If a complaint is in relation to a Senior Post Holder the College Governors (via the Clerk to Governors) will be asked to investigate the complaint.

10 Praise and Suggestions

- 10.1 Praise and suggestions provided through the Talkback Policy are welcome and valuable to the College as a whole. These comments are recorded and passed on to the relevant department and/or person.

11 Data Protection

- 11.1 The college is mindful of its requirement to comply with Data Protection requirements and, where personal information of someone considered as an adult may be discussed in a complaint, we will request permission to proceed from the person(s) involved.
- 11.2 Where it is impractical to obtain a letter of consent, a response will be sent directly to the person(s) involved, rather than the nominated complainant. The complainant will be informed of this.

12 General Points

- 12.1 Anonymous feedback cannot receive a formal response, but may still be recorded and investigated.
- 12.2 Abusive feedback containing offensive language is not tolerated. Whilst it is recognised that some communication may be written in anger, it is unlikely that abusive communication containing offensive language will be taken seriously.

13 External Providers

- 13.1 Complaints about courses delivered by Huntingdonshire Regional College, but in partnership with other training providers, will be investigated following the college's Talkback policy in the first instance.

14 How we value feedback

- 14.1 The College takes the view that complaints provide valuable feedback so that we can improve our service. Complaints are welcome and any person(s) should not feel concerned that there will be negative consequences to them if they make a complaint.
- 14.2 In addition to wanting to deal quickly and effectively with any complaints, the College is also very pleased to receive praise or suggestions for how things can be improved.
- 14.3 Whilst the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are supported, it is not recommended that negative feedback is given this way.

- 14.4 The college monitors social networks for feedback relating to the college and challenges accordingly. For Twitter this will be done via an official college Twitter account under the pseudonym [@huntscollege](#) and whilst appreciative of the manner that Twitter is used, each comment will be considered for further action.
- 14.5 Positive and/or negative feedback received by the College in this way will be considered by the Marketing team and a response signposting the user to use the online contact form will be provided.
- 14.6 A confidential and secure record will be maintained by the Head of Quality Assurance relating to all correspondence with the college relating to praise, suggestion or complaint. This record will be carefully monitored:
- to acknowledge praise from our stakeholders
 - to ensure suggestions are carefully considered and responded to
 - to ensure that complaints are properly addressed and that the time frames specified are kept to
 - to identify where improvements can be made to the services and operations of the College

15 Reporting

- 15.1 A termly report will be produced and forwarded to the Leadership Team on the impact of complains received and lessons learnt. Ad hoc reports will be produced and forwarded to Leadership Team on any high impact complaints received for review. An annual report will be produced for Governors. A resultant Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) will ensure that the outcomes of complaint investigations remain a key driver of Quality Improvement.

16 Data Retention

- 16.1 Complaints, Praise and Suggestions received by the College will be retained for a total period of seven years. The information retained will include:
- 16.1.1 All correspondence relating to the praise/suggestion/complaint
- 16.1.2 All items relating to the decision being made for each stage of the process
- 16.2 The retention of information is in accordance with the College's *Data Retention Policy*.

17 Availability

- 17.1 The Talkback form is available across the College at all times as well as in Learner Services and reception and, if requested, can be completed by an independent member of College staff on your behalf.
- 17.2 This policy can be freely accessed by any stakeholder via the College external website.
- 17.3 This policy is provided upon request.
- 17.4 Whilst the policy is available to college stakeholders, it is not to be used by College employees or contracted staff. Staff are encouraged to speak with appropriate line management or seek support via Human Resources.
- 17.5 Learners who have not met their agreed contractual obligations with the college, financially or educationally, are not eligible to use the process.

18 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 18.1 The optional information provided as part of the complaint, praise and suggestion scheme is treated confidentially and will contribute to the development of college policies and procedures aimed at ensuring all groups who may have traditionally been discriminated against will be treated fairly and equally at Huntingdonshire Regional College.