

# Complaints & Compliments Policy

Formal Review Cycle:	<b>Annual</b>		
Latest Formal Review (month/year):	<b>2019-02</b>	Next Formal Review Due (month/year):	<b>2020-02</b>
Policy Owner:	<b>Head of Quality</b>		
Impact Assessed by:		Impact Assessment Date:	

**APPROVAL REQUIRED:**

SMT Y/N	<b>Y</b>	SMT Date approved:	<b>2020-02</b>		
Governor Y/N	<b>Y</b>	Committee:	<b>LTA</b>	Governor Date approved:	<b>2020-03</b>

**PUBLICATION:**

Website Y/N	<b>Y</b>	Intranet Y/N	<b>Y</b>	Student VLE Y/N	<b>Y</b>	Other:	
Area/s of Staff Intranet:		<b>Student Services, Quality</b>					

**Policy description:**

Craven College aims to provide a high-quality and responsive customer-led service. The College values the views and wishes of all those that it supports. The College welcomes every opportunity to monitor and improve its service through a clear procedure for resolving complaints and for receiving compliments.

The College values the views of all its customers and aims to manage complaints in a way that is sensitive to the needs of both individuals and groups. This policy sets out how the College will provide a courteous, professional and efficient service to students, clients and other individuals and organisations with whom it works including those occasions when something goes wrong. It is anticipated that most complaints will be dealt with through informal channels but if a customer feels that it is necessary to pursue a complaint formally, they can be assured that it will be treated seriously and that the College will deal with any complaint promptly and fairly.

**Supporting documentation:**

- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Craven College – *Making a Complaint or Compliment* leaflet and form
- FE Assessment Appeals Procedure
- HE Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy

**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This policy is for students, parents, employers, visitors, staff, agencies, groups, members of the public and anyone who comes into contact with the services Craven College provides.

The College will use feedback received to help improve the quality of service it provides within the resources available. Feedback is analysed and reported on to Senior Management and also the Governing Board.

This policy will be published on the College intranet, the Student VLE and the College website. Leaflets outlining how to make a complaint or compliment are incorporated within a standard College Complaints Form which is published on the Student VLE and the College website and will also be available at College receptions and in Student Services. Compliments and Complaints are also received through other communications channels such as e-mail, telephone, letter and face-to-face.

**2.0 Context****2.1 Informal Complaints**

An informal complaint is an issue which a customer wants to raise with the College / member of College staff without resorting to the formal complaints process. The issue is usually quick and straightforward to resolve and is unlikely to require in-depth investigation.

**2.2 Formal Complaints**

A formal complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service received from a teaching or support department, or about actions or lack of action taken by the College or its staff.

**2.3 Complaints in general**

The College aims to balance the rights of the complainant with the rights of any person about whom a complaint is made, treating all parties with fairness and dignity. A complainant should not suffer any reprisals for making a complaint in good faith and any evidence of recrimination should be brought to the immediate attention of the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality. If, however, a

complaint from a student which is not upheld is found to have been made maliciously, the student may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

## **2.4 Timescales for making a complaint**

Complaints should be made as soon as possible following the event, action or issue causing dissatisfaction. Complaints from students no longer attending College must be made within 3 months of their course completion date.

## **2.5 Expectations**

The College will:

- Listen and take note of the complaint and respond within a stated period of time
- Deal with the complaint reasonably and sensitively
- Take follow up action where appropriate
- Welcome issues being brought to its attention to prevent a possible recurrence of the problem
- Provide feedback to complainants

The complainant will be expected to:

- Explain the problem clearly and fully, including any action taken to date
- Allow the College reasonable time to deal with the matter
- Recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the College's control

## **2.6 Compliments**

Compliments are valuable to provide the College with welcome information on the things it is getting right. Every compliment received is very welcome and appreciated by the staff involved in the provision the service.

Compliments allow the College to:

- Understand the areas of service that are being provided to customers' satisfaction
- Provide positive feedback and recognition to College staff
- Influence organisational and service development
- Inform the Quality Assurance process

Compliments are received through either the Complaints and Compliments Form or a range of communication channels such as e-mail, telephone, letter and face-to-face. Compliments are passed on to the teams or individuals responsible for good service.

## **3.0 THE POLICY**

### **3.1 Informal Complaints**

**3.1.1** In the first instance, individuals wishing to complain should discuss the problem with the staff member directly involved, or the person with responsibility for the area where the issue has occurred, at a mutually convenient time, and appropriate action should be agreed.

**3.1.2** In academic matters the complaint will normally be dealt with by the tutor, HE Sector Tutor, Subject Sector Leader or referred to the Head of Faculty.

If the matter is not raised directly with the Head of Faculty (HoF) or Departmental Manager, then they should be informed by the member/s of staff involved.

In other matters, the manager of the service area involved will normally handle the complaint.

- 3.1.3** A response should be made within a maximum of 10 working days but preferably within a timescale to ensure the matter is resolved as quickly as possible.
- 3.1.4** The person receiving the complaint should obtain the contact details of the person making the complaint, make notes on its nature, how it was dealt with and the outcome, and pass this information to the HoF or Departmental Manager who should enter these details in the Complaints Log on the Staff Intranet, uploading all associated paperwork, letters, and emails. Any notes / paperwork should be destroyed (once uploaded electronically) or, if retained, kept securely and confidentially.
- 3.1.5** If there is no satisfactory outcome or agreed action a formal complaint can be made.

## **3.2 Formal Complaints**

- 3.2.1** Formal complaints may be made if the complainant feels that an informal complaint has not been satisfactorily dealt with, if the issue is of a serious nature or if the complainant wishes to progress straight to the formal complaint stage.
- 3.2.2** Formal complaints may be made verbally (face to face or telephone conversation), in writing by letter or through completion of a standard College Complaints and Compliments Form email or through [feedback@craven-college.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@craven-college.ac.uk). In the case of verbal complaints, the member of staff receiving the complaint should record the details using the standard College Complaints Form. Complaints in writing may be handed to any member of College staff.
- 3.2.3** Formal complaints received by members of staff should be forwarded promptly to the Head of Quality for attention and further investigation.
- 3.2.4** An acknowledgement will be made within 3 working days of the complaint being received by the College with, where possible, a clear indication of when the complainant can expect to hear from the College again.
- 3.2.5** The Head of Quality will investigate the matter with relevant members of staff and students, either directly or through a nominated person, and for HE students in consultation with partner universities as appropriate.
- 3.2.6** A reply will be made in writing within 10 working days from receipt of the original complaint. If the matter is particularly serious or complicated it may take longer to resolve the issue, but information on progress will be provided to the complainant, keeping any university informed as relevant.
- 3.2.7** The Head of Quality will enter the details of the complaint in the Complaints Log on the Staff Intranet and upload any associated paperwork. Any notes / paperwork should be destroyed (once uploaded electronically) or, if retained, kept securely and confidentially.
- 3.2.8** If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of the investigation, they may appeal against the decision by contacting the College's Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality in writing (by letter or email) within 10 working days of receiving notification of the outcome of the initial complaint.
- 3.2.9** The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 3 working days of receiving it.
- 3.2.10** The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality will confirm the outcome of the appeal in writing to the complainant within 10 working days of receiving the appeal.

### **3.3 College Accountability**

- 3.3.1** All College staff have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them as set out in this policy.
- 3.3.2** All staff have a responsibility to ensure information relating to complaints is treated in the strictest confidence.
- 3.3.3** The Head of Quality is responsible for investigating, tracking, recording and reporting on the outcomes of formal complaints.
- 3.3.4** Members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), Heads of Faculty and Department Managers have a responsibility for the resolving of complaints and for leading or contributing to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate.
- 3.3.5** The College Principal is responsible for resolving complaints that remain unresolved following the appeals stages of the process.
- 3.3.6** The Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that the Complaints Policy operates effectively and may become directly involved if the complaint is against the Principal, the Director of Governance, another Senior Post Holder or member/s of the governing body.

### **3.4 Complaints Against the Principal, Board of Governors, a member of the Board or the Director of Governance**

- 3.4.1** Complaints against the Principal should be addressed to the Director of Governance.
- 3.4.2** For complaints against the Board of Governors, a member of the Board or the Director of Governance, refer to the Complaints against the Board of Governors Policy which is published on the Staff Intranet, the Student VLE and the College website.

### **3.5 Confidentiality**

If the complainant wishes specific information within a complaint to be kept confidential, this should be made clear to the person to whom the complaint is addressed. Complainants should understand that in some circumstances it may be difficult for requests for confidentiality to be respected, for example where the complaint relates to a possible criminal offence or potential gross misconduct. Additionally, in some circumstances a request for confidentiality might make it difficult for the College to investigate or resolve a complaint.

### **3.6 Anonymous Complaints**

On occasion it might be difficult for someone to make a complaint, if they feel threatened or feel that it might result in some form of reprisal, for example. The College aims to deal with all complaints in strict confidence and it is the individual's right to complain if they are dissatisfied with the standard of service received. Anonymous complaints will be investigated but if the College is not provided with the complainants contact details we will not be able to request additional information or provide feedback on the outcome.

If a member of staff wishes to make a confidential disclosure that is in the public interest or relating to malpractice, please refer to the **Whistleblowing Policy**. This provides information on the process to follow and outlines legal protection for employees.

### **3.7 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults**

It may be that a complaint relates to the possible physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect or radicalisation of someone under the age of 18 or someone who is deemed a vulnerable adult. In

such circumstances, the College has a legal obligation to report cases of suspected abuse or cases of someone being at risk of abuse. Complaints or disclosures of this nature may not remain confidential as those at risk will require protection.

Please contact the Designated or Deputy Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Officers in the College if you wish to discuss this type of incident.

### **3.8 Aggressive or Abusive Complaints**

The College will not tolerate aggressive behaviour, bad language, racist, sexist or any discriminatory comments. The Head of Quality will inform aggressive complainants that their language or behaviour is considered to be unacceptable.

### **3.9 Appeals Against Assessment Decisions**

Information on appealing against Further Education (FE) assessment decisions can be found in the College's FE Assessments Appeals Procedure which is published on the College VLE and website. HE Students may not appeal against their mark/s (academic judgement) but may appeal against the decision of the Board of Examiners. See the College's HE Appeals Policy.

### **3.10 Compliments**

All College staff have a responsibility for receiving compliments and should pass these on to the Head of Quality. The definition of a compliment would be a strong, positive and unprompted response to service received. It would be usual for the source of the compliment to sit outside of the area or person in receipt of the compliment. Compliments are received through either the Complaints and Compliments Form or a range of communication channels such as e-mail, telephone, letter and face-to-face.

### **3.11 Reporting**

The Head of Quality will produce an anonymised report, detailing the number and nature of complaints for the year to date, to SMT monthly during term time. The Head of Quality will produce an anonymised annual report to the Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee giving details of complaints and compliments received in the previous year broken down by a range of characteristics and including a summary of the actions taken as a result of complaints and compliments received.

### **3.12 Equality statement**

If requested the College will endeavour to provide the contents of this policy in other formats and languages. If a potential complainant requires this type of support, they should contact Student Support Services in the first instance.

### **3.13 Taking A Complaint Further**

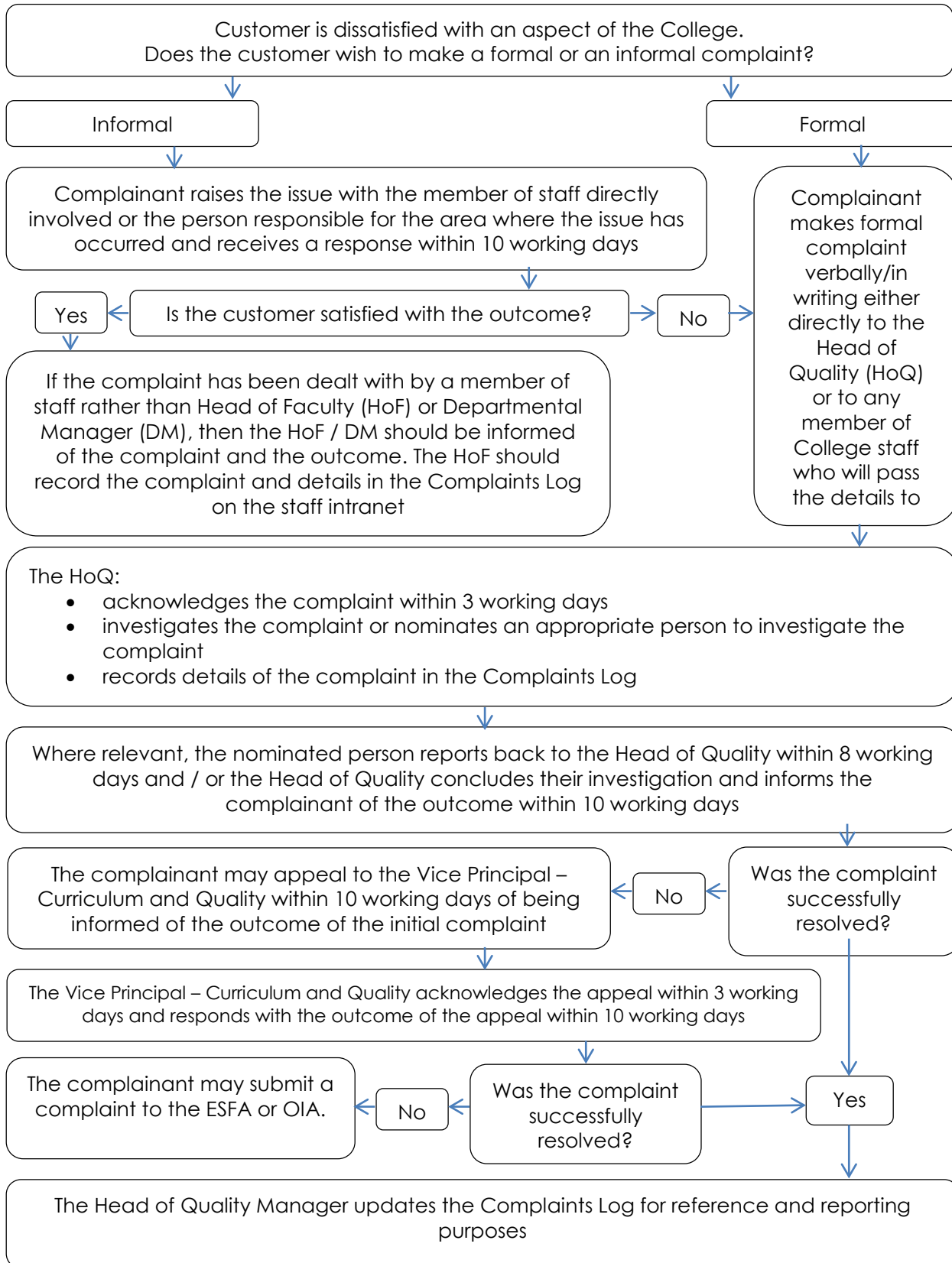
**3.13.1** If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response following the appeals process, they may refer their complaint to external agency/ies. This does not apply where a complaint is the subject of legal proceedings or relates to the quality of service provided by external organisations such as an examination board. Only after all College procedures have been exhausted should the complaint be referred by the complainant to the Funding Body or relevant Government Agency.

**3.13.2** If a complaint against the College remains unresolved, the complainant may refer the complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The College is able to provide further information about this process. Complaints should be sent in writing to the ESFA, Complaints

Team, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT or by email to [complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk)

- 3.13.3** Higher Education: If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the student they may apply for a review of their case to the relevant University by contacting the relevant Assistant Registrar. If, after consideration of the case by the partner University the complainant continues to be dissatisfied, they can make a formal complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE). For more information go to: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

## FLOWCHART FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS





## FLOWCHART FOR DEALING WITH COMPLIMENTS

Compliment is received by the College and passed to the Head of Quality.



Compliment is communicated to relevant staff involved.  
Details are logged onto central feedback system.  
Feedback is analysed and reported on.



Quality Assurance processes are improved where best practice can be more widely adopted.