



## **Complaints Policy**

### **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to enable us to identify, assess, address and resolve as quickly as possible, matters which may be negatively affecting the experience of students, staff and other stakeholders, and therefore preventing us from achieving our vision:

*'To be the sixth form of choice for our community: an outstanding, high achieving and inclusive college which inspires and challenges young people to become the best that they can be.'*

1.2. Richard Taunton Sixth Form College therefore welcomes complaints as a means of gathering information and feedback to inform best practice and the achievement of the very highest standards in all we do and to maintain a positive reputation.

1.3 Our Complaints Policy (and related Complaints Procedures) provides the framework within which anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with the College's provision and services can raise concerns.

### **2.0 Scope**

#### *2.1 Complaints against the College*

This policy deals with complaints against the College arising from:

- Delivery (or lack of delivery) of courses or training including teaching, course content, tutoring, learner support Incorrect or misleading information about services provided by the College
- Delivery (or lack of delivery) of support services and/or customer services provided by the College, including administration of financial support, enrolment, and examinations.
- Unacceptable behaviour by college staff/students/others using our facilities
- Poor customer service in our support services
- The content of our website and/or other official publications
- Other matters which may have had a negative impact on the experience of our customers and stakeholders

The College has a separate procedure by which staff may bring grievances against the college through its formal grievance procedure which does not form part of the scope of this policy.

#### *2.2 Complaints against the Corporation:*

This policy also covers complaints made against the Corporation, a Board Member including the Principal (if the complaint relates to his/her role as a Board Member) or the Clerk to the Corporation.

Complaints against the Corporation may be made by an individual or an organisation in relation to his/her or their dealings with the College. Such Complaints must relate to:

- The performance of the Corporation, a Board Member or the Clerk of the functions respectively allocated to them under the Articles of Government of the College, and/or
- The exercise by the Corporation of its powers, and/or
- Any other alleged breach or non-observance of the duties of the Corporation, individual Board Members or the Clerk under the Instrument or Articles of Government of the College, its Code of Conduct for Board Members or Financial Memorandum.

### *2.3 Complaints against an individual member of staff*

Complaints against an individual member of staff will not be dealt with through this route; such complaints will be referred to the Principal's office for consideration within the procedure relating to complaints against the College.

## **3.0 Other Related Policies**

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)  
 Safer Recruitment  
 Equality and Diversity  
 Professional Support (staff capability) and Probationary Review  
 Grievance Policy  
 Staff Disciplinary Policy  
 Sickness Absence Policy  
 Pay Policy  
 Student Behaviour Management  
 Student Financial Support  
 Assessment and examinations  
 Curriculum Policy  
 College Admissions Policy  
 Appeals policy

## **4.0 Our Approach: the Guiding Principles**

4.1 Richard Taunton Sixth Form College is committed to taking complaints and concerns seriously, at the earliest stage. Our prime goal is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. All complaints will be dealt with in an impartial manner, taking full account of the college's duty to promote Equality and Diversity in all its operations.

4.2 Complaints will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and constructively. They will be dealt with in confidence, but shared with any person who may be the subject of a complaint.

4.3 The outcomes of any complaint will be shared with the complainant and any College staff involved.

4.4 Complaints made which, on investigation, are found to be malicious, may result in further action within the college's established procedures.

4.5 These guiding principles apply equally to the handling of complaints against the Corporation. The specific procedures are set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

## **5.0 Complaints against the College: Implementation and Monitoring**

5.1 The College places a high priority on the efficient management and resolution of complaints. All matters relating to complaints are therefore directed to the Principal's Office. The procedure is coordinated by the Principal's PA, who keeps an on-going log of complaints and presents a progress report to the SMT meeting as a standing item every week. The Deputy Principal is the lead Senior manager responsible for dealing with complaints, and will appoint an investigating officer from within the management team using the guidelines set out within the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against the College (see Appendix 1)

5.2 An annual report is produced for the Governors' Students Standards and Quality Improvement Committee. This covers the following aspects:

- Numbers of Complaints of each type
- Time taken to process the complaint
- List of outstanding complaints
- Outcomes of complaints.
- Appeals made and results of appeals
- Analysis of complaints and outcomes by age, gender and ethnicity.

## **6.0 Dealing with 'informal' complaints.**

We recognise that complaints may initially emerge via a number of different routes and at different levels in the organisation, quite often informally.

6.1 Student/Parental Concerns are routinely raised and successfully resolved in the context of the student/personal tutor relationship, supported where necessary by the Learning Area Manager. The nature of the issue and resolution of any concerns is recorded and monitored via our online tracking systems in our Moodle VLE. Should the matter escalate to the formal stage, the early stages will refer to via Moodle.

6.2 Where concerns /potential complaints relate to other aspects of the college's business, these will be referred immediately to the team leader/manager, and every effort is made to resolve the matter immediately. A record will be kept of all such matters and the Principal's PA informed so that the matter can be logged, in case of escalation to the formal stage.

6.3 Should a matter remains unresolved with continuing concern or dissatisfaction, the person dealing with the situation will seek to establish whether:

- a) This is a complaint and the person wishes it to be treated as a complaint
- b) The complainant is prepared to put the complaint in writing themselves or with the support of an advocate

Where this does not apply, the College will respond positively to the concern, and should make it clear that the Complaints procedure is available at any time.

## **7.0 Dealing with formal complaints against the College**

7.1 The College treats complaints formally when they are communicated:

- by letter
- through the College Website 'contact us' section: [comments@richardtaunton.ac.uk](mailto:comments@richardtaunton.ac.uk)
- through Moodle 'General Complaint' form
- by email
- by phone call to the Principal's and Deputy Principal's PA
- through a manager/team leader (normally the escalation of an 'informal' concern.)

7.2 Where a complaint is against the Principal, the complaint has to be addressed to the Chair of Corporation who proceeds in line with the procedure for dealing with complaints against the college.

## **8.0 Complaints against the Corporation**

8.1 A complaint against the Corporation, a Board member including the Principal (if the complaint relates to his/her role as a Board member), or the Clerk of the Corporation, may be made by an individual or an organisation in relation to his/her or their dealings with the College.

## **9.0 Process of Appeal**

9.1 Complaints against the College: Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigations, they may appeal in writing to the Principal. The Principal's nominated representative, who should be a College manager not previously involved in the case, will investigate the matter and the College's response and report to the Principal. Upon receipt of this report, the Principal will respond in writing to the complainant with a decision within 10 working days.

9.2 Complaints against the Corporation: In the case of a complaint against the Corporation, once the procedure outlined in Appendix 2 has been followed to its conclusion, there is no further recourse other than through appeal to the Education Funding Agency (EFA)

## **10.0 Taking a Complaint Further**

10.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response following appeal the matter may be taken to the Education Funding Agency for further investigation.

10.2 The following points should be noted:

- The EFA will not usually investigate complaints until the institution's procedure, including the appeal, has been exhausted.
- The EFA can consider complaints about institutions in the following 2 key areas:
  - The institution did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint
  - The institution has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement.

- The EFA will not normally investigate complaints more than 3 months after the decision or action was taken, unless the complainant has good reason (in the sole discretion of the EFA) for the delay in making the complaint.

10.3 Full contact details and information about the EFA procedure for dealing with complaints about institutions are set out in Appendix 3 of the Complaints Policy, available from the Principal's Office.

### **11.0 Review of Policy and Procedures**

11.1 The terms and operation of the College's Policy will be reviewed by the Corporation on the advice of the Governance and Search Committee

LLE/CJO/JOR Updated May 2017

Date for review: May 2019

Recommended by SSQI Committee: May 2017

Approved by Board: