



**LINCOLN COLLEGE**

**CUSTOMER COMPLAINT AND  
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

**POLICY CQ/PR/9**

**SPONSOR**

Head of Quality Improvement

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

Lincoln College strives to treat all its members and visitors fairly and aims to eliminate unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs or practices, disability, marital status, family circumstances, sexual orientation, spent criminal convictions, age or any other inappropriate grounds.

# CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

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# LINCOLN COLLEGE

## CUSTOMER COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This procedure applies to all customers of Lincoln College and is designed to give the opportunity to have complaints and grievances dealt with fairly and consistently. The procedure is not for use by college staff.
- 1.2 The purpose of the procedure is to maintain a high standard of Customer Care and rectify causes of dissatisfaction as quickly as possible.
- 1.3 This procedure should be considered in conjunction with the Admissions Policy and the Learner Assessment and Appeals Policy. See Appendix E for further guidance.

### 2 AIMS

- 2.1 The procedure aims to ensure that all complaints and grievances are dealt with fully, promptly and allow all persons involved the opportunity to state their point of view.

### 3 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 It is expected that, except in exceptional and fully documented circumstances, a customer who wishes to make a complaint will invoke the Informal Stage within three calendar months of the incident which is the cause for complaint.
- 3.2 All complaints and grievances will be handled as confidential matters.
- 3.3 Any person making a complaint will have the right to appeal against any judgement made as a result of the Customer Complaint and Grievance Procedure being used.
- 3.4 Any person involved will have the right to be accompanied by a friend (who may be a member of staff, student member of the college or a relative) during any part of the Complaint and Grievance Procedure.
- 3.5 Advocates can be used by those individuals who are not able or do not feel sufficiently confident to represent themselves.
- 3.6 Customers who have a disability that prevents them from submitting a written complaint may request that a member of staff completes any required documentation on their behalf.
- 3.7 Where it is not possible to deal with a complaint or grievance to the satisfaction of the customer then the reason given will be provided in writing to them.

- 3.8 In the rare event that complaints are vexatious or malicious, students bringing those complaints may be subject to the college's Student Disciplinary Procedure.

## **4 STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

- 4.1 The Customer Complaint and Grievance Procedure is not intended to replace the established Student Assessment and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

## **5 PROCEDURES**

### **5.1 Informal Stage**

- 5.1.1 When a customer has a complaint or grievance, it may first be discussed with a member of the college staff and attempts should be made to resolve the matter by a direct approach to the persons involved where appropriate.

### **5.2 Investigation**

- 5.2.1 If the matter remains unresolved the customer may raise a formal complaint or grievance either:

- verbally to a manager of the college or member of the Quality Improvement Unit
- in writing: a Customer Complaint Form (Appendix One) is available from College Receptions; or
- in writing to the Head of Quality Improvement
- by email to [quality@lincolncollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@lincolncollege.ac.uk)

In each of the above the details of the complaint or grievance will be recorded on the Customer Complaint Form.

- 5.2.2 All completed Customer Complaint Forms will be passed to the Head of Quality Improvement to be logged and distributed as follows:

- Complaints regarding curriculum areas will be sent to the relevant Head of Learning/Training and Skills.
- Complaints regarding issues that are not directly curriculum-related will be sent to the relevant senior member of the Unit or Directorate.
- Complaints regarding members of staff will be sent to the relevant Head of Learning/Training and Skills or Head of Unit unless they are deemed serious enough to be passed to the Group Head of Human Resources for consideration.

The Head of Quality Improvement will send a letter of acknowledgement to the customer with the name of the allocated respondent and the proposed response date included.

- 5.2.3 The customer may request a personal interview with the allocated respondent. The interview should be arranged within five working days of the submission of the request and the person may be accompanied by a suitable responsible person.
- 5.2.4 The allocated respondent shall conduct an investigation into the matter and send a written reply to the customer within ten working days of receipt of the formal complaint. A copy of the response will be sent to the Quality Improvement Unit. If it is not possible to complete an investigation within that time the customer will be informed in writing and a new deadline given.
- 5.2.5 In cases involving complaints regarding members of staff which have been referred to the Group Head of Human Resources, who will respond directly to the customer and inform the Head of Quality Improvement of the date of the response.

### 5.3 Formal Investigation

- 5.3.1 If, after any action to resolve the complaint or grievance, the customer is still dissatisfied, he/she may request a personal interview with the relevant Director (in cases involving higher education (HE) provision this will be the Director for Sport, HE and the Arts). The interview shall be arranged within ten working days of the submission of the request, and the student may if he/she wishes be accompanied at the interview by a suitable responsible person. The Director will conduct a formal investigation, interview all parties concerned, take steps to resolve the issue and initiate appropriate action.

### 5.4 Appeals Procedures

- 5.4.1 If a complaint remains unresolved then there is a right of appeal to the Complaint and Grievance Appeals Committee. The complainant should make this appeal to the Head of Quality Improvement within five working days of receiving notification of the outcome of the formal investigation.
- 5.4.2 The Complaint and Grievance Appeals Committee shall comprise the Managing Director of Education and Training (or appointed deputy), a representative of the Student Executive and a member of the Quality Standards Committee. If the appeal is in relation to a Higher Education course, the Head of Higher Education (or deputy) shall also be required to attend. The Head of Quality Improvement shall convene the meeting.
- 5.4.3 All relevant documents shall be submitted to the Complaint and Grievance Appeals Committee within ten working days of the receipt of the notice of appeal. The parties concerned if they so wish, may make additional submissions and should be present at the hearing or may be required to attend and may be accompanied by a friend.

5.4.4 The appeal shall be heard not more than twenty working days after the receipt of the notice, and refusal of either party to attend shall not invalidate the proceedings. A majority decision of the Complaints and Grievance Appeals Committee is final.

## **6 RECOURSE BEYOND APPEAL**

6.1 For all courses, other than those validated by an HEI, if the complainant does not feel that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved at the conclusion of the college Customer Complaint and Grievance Procedure then s/he may complain to the relevant awarding body or funding authority, for example, the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

6.2 For complaints relating to HE provision/higher apprenticeship provision, validated by a higher education institution (HEI) or accredited by an external body, if the complainant does not feel that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved, they have a right to complain to the **validating body**. We make every effort to seek mutual satisfaction to all complaints and where this is not possible, the complainant may refer their case to the **validating body** (see Appendix 3 **for direct links**).

If the complainant does not feel that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved at the conclusion of the **validating body's** Complaints Procedure **procedure**, s/he may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA will not consider complaints relating to areas such as academic judgements or admissions.

## **7 MONITORING OF THE CUSTOMER COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

7.1 For the purpose of monitoring, reports will be presented to the following committees, providing analysis of complaints and grievances received:

- Higher Education Academic Affairs Committee
- Quality Standards Committee
- Board of the Corporation

## **8 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CUSTOMER COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

8.1 The Quality Standards Committee will review the Customer Complaint and Grievance Procedure on an annual basis and make recommendations for its development.





## **APPENDIX B**

### **CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

#### **1 AIM**

- 1.1 To maintain a high standard of customer care and rectify causes of dissatisfaction as quickly as possible.

#### **2 HOW TO MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT**

- 2.1 Verbally to:

- a manager at the College
- to a member of staff at Reception
- by telephone to a member of the Quality Unit

- 2.2 In writing using the Customer Complaints and Grievance Record available from Reception. This should be handed back in to the Receptionist or posted to the Head of Quality Improvement, Lincoln College, Monks Road, Lincoln, LN2 5HQ.

- 2.3 By email to [quality@lincolncollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@lincolncollege.ac.uk)

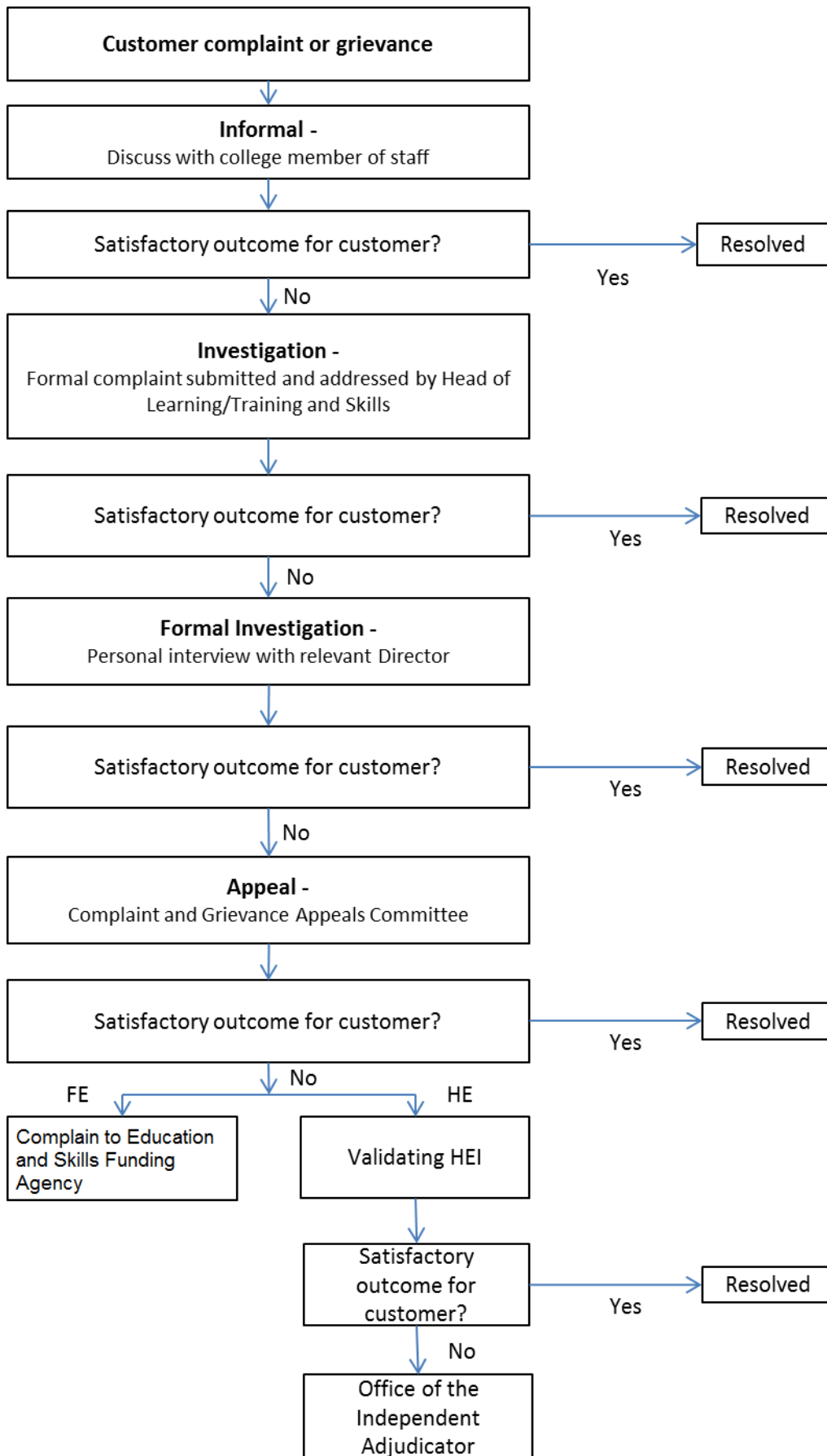
#### **3 RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION**

- 3.1 You should expect to receive a written reply to a complaint made within 10 working days.
- 3.2 If it is not possible to complete an investigation within that time you will be informed in writing and a new deadline given.

#### **4 REVIEW AND MONITORING**

- 4.1 Review and monitoring will be undertaken at least annually by the Quality Standards Committee

## CUSTOMER COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE



## APPENDIX C

### VALIDATING ORGANISATION PROCEDURES

#### UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Following completion of the College Formal Investigation (5.3), dissatisfied students enrolled on University of Lincoln Validated courses may refer their complaint to the University. This will enter the University Student Complaints Procedure (available from [secretariatemail@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:secretariatemail@lincoln.ac.uk)) at the Independent Reviewer Stage (E9). For further information please refer to the University of Lincoln Student Complaints Procedure.

#### BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

Following completion of the College Formal Investigation (5.3), dissatisfied students enrolled on Bishop Grosseteste University validated courses may refer their complaint to the University. The BGU policies and procedures are available at <http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/Documents/Policies%20and%20Procedures%20-%20Governance/StudentComplaintsProcedure.pdf>

#### UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Following completion of the College Formal Investigation (5.3), dissatisfied students enrolled on University of Hull validated courses may refer their complaint to the University. The University of Hull complaints information can be found at [http://www2.hull.ac.uk/administration/leap/quality\\_standards/qualityhandbook/appeal sandcomplaints.aspx](http://www2.hull.ac.uk/administration/leap/quality_standards/qualityhandbook/appeal sandcomplaints.aspx)

#### CHARTERED MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE (CMI)

Following completion of the College Formal Investigation (5.3), dissatisfied students enrolled on CMI accredited provision may refer their complaint to the CMIU by going to <https://www.managers.org.uk/~media/Angela-Media-Library/New%20EP/PolicesProcedures/Procedures/CMI%20Complaints%20Procedure.pdf>

#### OPEN UNIVERSITY

Following completion of the College Formal Investigation (5.3), dissatisfied students enrolled on Open University validated courses may refer their complaint to the Open University. Eligible students can do this by following the link: [HTTPS://HELP.OPEN.AC.UK/DOCUMENTS/POLICIES/COMPLAINTS-AND-APPEALS-PROCEDURE](https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/complaints-and-appeals-procedure)

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Procedure for Appeal Hearings**

Appeals will be heard by the Complaint and Grievance Appeals Committee, which shall be chaired by the Managing Director of Education and Training (or appointed deputy).

All correspondence and information relating to the outcome of the complaint in question will be made available to the committee, prior to the hearing.

### **Order of the Hearing**

1. The Managing Director of Education and Training will welcome the complainant and committee members to the hearing, make introductions and will clarify if notes are to be taken at the meeting and to whom they shall be made available. It is standard practice for both sides to take their own notes should they wish.
2. The complainant will be given the opportunity to state the grounds for their appeal and their preferred outcome to the situation.
3. The Managing Director of Education and Training may ask the complainant any questions relating to the situation.
4. Committee members may ask the complainant any questions relating to the situation.
5. The complainant may be asked to withdraw from the meeting to allow the committee time to consider the appeal.
6. The complainant shall be recalled to the hearing once the committee has considered the appeal and, if a decision has been reached, informed of the outcome of the appeal.
7. The complainant will be advised of their right to appeal against the decision and informed who the appeal should be lodged with and in what timescale.
8. Written confirmation of the decision will be sent to the complainant within 7 working days of the hearing.
9. Should the committee be unable to reach a decision, for example due to requiring more evidence, the hearing shall be adjourned and reconvened at the earliest convenient opportunity.

## APPENDIX E

### Lincoln College Higher Education Student Journey How to raise an official concern

