

# LEWISHAM SOUTHWARK COLLEGE POLICIES

LEWISHAM  
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COLLEGE

Policy title:	<b>Compliments and Complaints Procedure</b>
Applies to:	<b>All employees / contractors / students / visitors / external and partnership organisations</b>
Owner of Policy:	<b>Executive Group</b>

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## Introduction

Lewisham Southwark College is committed to providing you and all those we work with and for with high quality teaching, learning and support services and providing this in an environment where all are treated with respect and dignity. We hope that you never have cause for complaint, however, from time to time you may feel that the College has not met the high standards you expect.

We appreciate that you will wish to feedback your experiences, both the positive and negative, and it is the role of the College to help you to do this. Any feedback from you, parents/carers, applicants, employers, organisations and stakeholders will be used as a tool to help the College to improve.

In order that we can address your feedback efficiently and effectively, you should let us know about the grounds for your feedback as soon as possible and no longer than one calendar year after the incident.

We consider all feedback seriously, the positive and the negative. If you are unsure about how to submit feedback to the College, please go to one of the College's Admissions and Student Support Centres which can be found at the front of each campus where our friendly and supportive staff will help you.

## Aims

The Compliments and Complaints Procedure has been designed to be:

- **Fair** by providing a transparent, objective and rigorously monitored process
- **Accessible** to all members of the College community
- **Supportive** to all who use it or find themselves involved in the procedure
- **Timely** to ensure that, wherever possible, your feedback is acted upon and responded to. Complaints are resolved within the required timeframes, and if not, those who have submitted feedback are made aware that the response will take longer and the reasons why.
- **Developmental** by the College reviewing and acting upon comments, compliments and complaints to identify any lessons that can be learnt to improve services contributing to improved student success.

## Scope and Purpose

The Compliments and Complaints Procedure has been designed for:

- Students enrolled on all Lewisham Southwark College courses

- Former college students (as long as the reported incident is within one calendar year)
- Applicants
- Employers
- Organisations
- Members of the general public

Complaints can only be submitted on behalf of others where students are aged under 18 or may be classified as a vulnerable adult. If a complaint is made on behalf of a student who is aged 18 and over, it will only be processed with the consent of the student which will be obtained by the Admissions and Student Support Team.

Complaints by college staff do not fall within this procedure. These complaints or issues should be addressed with Human Resources department by contacting the relevant Human Resources Manager.

### **Complaints Procedure**

The Compliments and Complaints Procedure can be found within:

- Lewisham Southwark College website
- Admissions and Student Support Centres
- Learning Support and Resource Centres
- Student Guide
- StaffNet (Staff Intranet)

### **Comments**

If someone has a comment in relation to a policy, procedure or practice within the College, they should try to raise this directly with a member from the team concerned.

If the comment is not addressed directly with the member of staff concerned, this can then be submitted to a member of Student Services staff in the Admissions and Student Support Centre of all campuses.

If you are not able to come in to the College, your feedback can be submitted by calling 020 3757 3000 and speaking to a member of the Admissions and Student Support Team.

If you would like a written response to a comment, you should tell us this. You are able to tell us whether you would like a written response to your comment from the investigating manager.

The Admissions and Student Support Team will refer the comment to the relevant service manager who will consider the suggestion/comment, and where appropriate, respond within ten working days. This deadline may be extended due to college holidays or exceptional circumstances. In these cases, you will be notified of the new timescale by the college manager who is considering your feedback.

## Compliments

The College values recognition of good service and believes that staff should be recognised and rewarded where they have provided good service. If a student or member of the public wishes to praise a service or individual within the College formally, they can do so in a number of ways:

- Visiting the College and speaking to a member of staff in the Admissions and Student Support Centre at the front of the campus.
- You can send a letter to the College on the following address, Principal's Office, Lewisham Southwark College, Lewisham Way, London, SE4 1UT
- Email [haveyoursay@lesoco.ac.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@lesoco.ac.uk).
- Call 020 3757 3000

Where feedback is positive, the Admissions and Student Support Team will respond to you and tell you how this feedback will be dealt with.

The compliment will then be sent to the Principal's Office who will ensure that the relevant staff are recognised for their good work.

## Complaints

The College takes complaints extremely seriously and will investigate all complaints thoroughly.

Complaints are managed through a staged process and, wherever possible, are dealt with 'informally' with the member of staff concerned. Complaints are also managed 'formally' which is where a relevant college manager thoroughly investigates the issue and responds in writing.

It is our intention to deal with as many complaints on an informal manner to ensure that they are resolved efficiently and effectively and in consultation with those directly affected or concerned.

### Informal Complaints (Stage 1)

If you or someone else is dissatisfied or concerned about the quality of the service you received from Lewisham Southwark College, you should try to resolve this as quickly as possible with the person concerned.

If you are unable to do this, or feel uncomfortable, you should discuss the issue with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. Lecturer, Progress Coach or Head of Department).

If your complaint is not resolved informally, or you are unable to speak directly with the person concerned (or another suitable member of staff), the complaint will be investigated under Stage 2 of this procedure.

Alternatively you can:

- Feedback using the College surveys
- Speak to your Course Representative who will raise this at their departmental forum (and if appropriate, this will be discussed at the cross-college Student Form)

### **Formal Complaints (Stage 2)**

A formal complaint must be submitted in writing either by sending a letter to the college or by emailing [haveyoursay@lesoco.ac.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@lesoco.ac.uk) or calling 020 3757 3000.

The written complaint must contain the following information:

- Your name and contact details
- The date of the original incident and any action taken so far
- Your cause for concern
- Your cause for complaint
- What resolution you would like

Support for students to submit a complaint will be available from a member of the Admissions and Student Support Team if requested.

The complaint will be referred to the relevant college manager who will investigate. If an investigation involves or relates to an individual, it will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

When your complaint is received, the manager responsible for investigating your complaint will send a letter to you acknowledging receipt of your complaint. The letter will also confirm the name of the Investigating Officer and the expected timeframe (if it is expected to be longer than the fifteen working days).

As part of the investigation, the relevant manager will be expected to:

- talk to you, relevant staff, and anyone else involved or witnesses (depending on the nature of the complaint and whether additional information is required)
- consider evidence relevant to the complaint

Where a complaint relates to more than one department or service, the managers will be responsible for working together to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Once a thorough investigation has been undertaken, the appointed manager will write to you (copying in the Admissions and Student Support Team) stating the original basis for the complaint, the action taken and a summary of their findings.

Complaints should be resolved within the fifteen days. The Executive Assistant for Principal and Chief Executive and Executive Assistant for Vice Principal – Curriculum, Teaching and Learning will monitor deadlines and will ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved within fifteen working days. The timescale may need to be extended during College holidays and exceptional circumstances. In these cases, you will be notified in writing by the manager investigating your complaint.

If, as a result of a complaint or an investigation into a complaint, the College has cause for concern about the conduct of a member of staff, contractor (including associate teachers), volunteer or member of staff from a partnership agency, the College's Head of Human Resources and the senior manager responsible for the member of staff will meet to determine what action, if any, needs to be taken.

This action may include:

- No further action being taken
- Invoking one of the College's other relevant policies and procedures

### **Formal Complaints (Stage 3)**

If you feel your complaint has not been dealt with effectively and have new evidence to present, you are able to appeal the outcome and progress your complaint to Stage 3.

After the complaint has been considered and a decision reached under a previous stage, the complaint cannot be referred to the next stage of the process unless new evidence is submitted.

Additionally, if a complaint submitted involves a Director of Faculty or Head of Service, the complaint will be investigated by his/her line manager to ensure that this is managed fairly, sensitively and objectively.

You should outline:

- the nature of your original complaint
- what has been done so far
- why you do not agree with the outcome of the investigation and the new evidence which will be presented. Complaints cannot be referred to the next stage without this new evidence.

### **Formal Complaints (Stage 4)**

The Stage 3 process is repeated for complaints investigated at Stage 4, however, it is the role of the Principal and Chief Executive (or their designated representative) to investigate complaints at this stage of the procedure.

## **Appeals**

To appeal, you should contact the Admissions and Student Support Team within ten working days of the date of the response letter at either stage 2 or 3.

You are not able to appeal to the response submitted by the Principal and Chief Executive (or their designated representative) whose decision is final.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Although instances are extremely rare, it is important to acknowledge that a complainant has the right to complain to external bodies.

These external organisations may include:

- Local Authority
- Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)
- Skills Funding Agency
- Office for Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)
- an employer

If you wish to complain to one of these organisations, you must have followed the College's Complaints Procedure first.

You are able to access information about these bodies from the Admissions and Student Support Team or by speaking to the Clerk to Governors, however, this is not a further stage where the decision can be appealed internally.

## **Nuisance Complaints**

A nuisance complaint is one that:

- clearly does not have any serious purpose or value
- is based on an untruth
- is designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- is meant to harass the College or member of staff from the College.

If a complaint is found to be a nuisance complaint, the College reserves the right to follow the student Disciplinary Procedure, or take appropriate action, legal or otherwise, that it deems appropriate.

## **Withdrawing Complaints**

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, you must tell the Admissions and Student Support Team in writing as soon as possible.

The Admissions and Student Support Team will then contact all relevant parties.

## **Data Protection**

All compliments and complaints / feedback information will be recorded and stored in line with the College's Data Protection Policy.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The Admissions and Student Support Team will oversee the Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure including the monitoring of the resolution of complaints.

Information will be shared with the College's Management Team and the Governing Body. This information will include:

- The nature of the feedback
- How it was investigated and dealt with including the time taken to resolve it
- The outcome/resolution of the feedback
- Future action which will ensure that students have a positive experience and teaching, learning and support services continue to improve

Following investigations as a result of feedback, recommendations and points for action may be made to relevant College managers in order that the College can continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and support services.

The Compliments and Complaints Procedure will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Head of Student Services and the College Management Team.

**January 2016**