

General Principles

The Shrewsbury Colleges Group is committed to ensuring the high quality of its provision and the satisfaction of all those who attend the Colleges along with members of the wider community. The aim of the Complaints procedure is to resolve individual concerns or complaints. It is our intention that formal complaints will be dealt with fairly and efficiently, with an acknowledgement and an initial response made within a maximum period of ten working days of receiving the complaint during term time, or out of term time 21 days.

The Shrewsbury Colleges Group will aim to maintain confidentiality wherever reasonable. If the individual making the complaint wishes, they may be accompanied by another person, acting as a witness and support, at any stage. If the nature of the concern is a Safeguarding allegation this will be referred immediately to the College's Safeguarding and Welfare Lead, before any communication to the people involved takes place. Where the safety of an individual is a consideration then the Allegations procedure will be followed, confidentiality cannot always be offered as information will be shared with the Safeguarding and Welfare Lead, and other authorities as detailed in the Allegations procedure within the Safeguarding Policy.

Stage 1: Concerns

Concerns are defined where a person wishes to register unease about a situation without (at least initially) proceeding to make a formal complaint. Some issues or concerns may arise as a result of a misunderstanding, which can be quickly resolved at this stage. Students, apprentices, parents, employers, or other stakeholders with an arising issue or concern are encouraged to raise these informally at source with the person directly involved. You may also wish to be accompanied by a fellow student, apprentice, parent, or other nominated person (including your employer). The agreed outcome of this informal stage will be recorded by the member of staff involved and forwarded to the Group Vice Principal for Quality. If the issue or concern is not resolved at this initial stage, then a formal complaint can be made – refer to the procedure under “stage 2”.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints

A formal complaint should normally be lodged within 20 working days of the alleged incident, act, issue or omission. Only in exceptional circumstances will a complaint be considered outside this timescale.

Complainants may also choose to make a formal complaint without going through the informal procedure (stage1).

Any written complaint is automatically considered to be a formal complaint but completing the complaints proforma should be the preferred method of complaint. All written complaints including those addressed to Governors or the CEO will initially be passed to the Group Vice Principal for Quality.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

The complainant should address the complaint to the Group Vice Principal for Quality, details can be provided at the Reception, of any campus. If formal complaints are received by other staff, they should be forwarded to the Group Vice Principal for Quality before any further action is taken.

Complaints are formally documented and logged, with a written record of the complaint and a written response to the complainant.

The Group Vice Principal for Quality will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within ten working days and share with the appropriate manager who will:

- Inform any members of staff concerned within three working days that a complaint has been submitted, unless the matter is a safeguarding concern.
- Investigate the complaint including interviewing the complainant, if this has not already been done at informal stage
- Identify an appropriate course of action in an attempt to resolve the complaint.
- Communicate back to the Group Vice Principal for Quality to provide a resolution where appropriate.

It is expected that almost all complaints should be capable of resolution by Formal Complaints - Stage 2, by following this procedure and that the matter will be resolved within 20 working days and a written response or meeting will be arranged to inform the complainant of the findings. If however this has not been possible, the complainant has the right to appeal.

Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs)

Complaints about the award of Teacher Assessed Grades (“TAGs”) as part of the 2021 Summer Exam series are outside the scope of this Policy and will be considered under the separate Summer 2021 TAG Appeal Policy and Procedure only. An exception is where matters relate to TAGs but lie outside of the TAG Appeal Policy and Procedure’s remit and at the express discretion of Shrewsbury Colleges Group e.g.:

1. any decision to withdraw an entry due to insufficient evidence on which to determine a Teacher Assessed Grade, or not to make an entry in the first place,
2. any failure or delay in offering or following the TAG Appeal Policy and Procedure.

Any continuing concerns following completion of the Shrewsbury Colleges Group complaints process may subsequently be raised through the awarding organisation’s complaints process.

Stage 3: Appeal

The appeal should be made in writing to the Group CEO stating the ground(s) on which the appeal is based within 20 days of the outcome which is being appealed; after 20 days there will be no right of appeal. An appeal hearing will then be arranged.

The Appeal Hearing is not intended to repeat the detailed investigation of the complaint, but to focus on specific factors which the complainant feels have received insufficient consideration, and are grounds of the appeal, for example:

- Inappropriate conduct of the investigation
- Unfairness of the investigation
- New evidence in relation to the complaint subsequently coming to light.

The Group CEO may decide that there are insufficient grounds for an appeal in which case the complainant will be notified and there will be no further right of appeal to the College.

Where an appeal Hearing is convened, it will normally be held as soon as can be arranged following receipt of the letter and no later than 20 working days.

Appeals will be heard by the Group CEO. Unless the complaint is about the CEO, in which case will be held by a panel of Governors.

The complainant has the right to be accompanied to the Hearing by a person of his/her choosing, the name and status of the person to be notified to the Group CEO at least five days in advance of the Hearing.

Any member of staff who is a witness will have the right to be accompanied by a person of their choosing, the name and status of the person to be notified to the Group CEO at least five days in advance of the Hearing.

A College administrator will be present at the Hearing to keep a record of proceedings and the Shrewsbury Colleges Group reserves the right to have a legal adviser present during the Hearing.

Both parties, that is, the complainant(s) and the Shrewsbury Colleges Group representatives (previously involved at an earlier stage) will be invited to submit and present evidence and to be questioned on the evidence provided.

Witnesses may be called as part of the evidence and all parties will have the right to question such witnesses.

When all the evidence has been heard the Hearing will be adjourned and the Group CEO will consider the merits of the complaint before reaching a decision.

The Group CEO will, whenever possible, inform the complainant of the outcomes of the Hearing, in writing, no later than ten working days after the hearing. A written report of the Hearing will be prepared and issued to the complainant.

The decision of the Group CEO is final and there will be no further right of appeal to the Shrewsbury Colleges Group.

Right to Complain to Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Following conclusion of the College's complaints process, the complainant has the right to complaint to the ESFA if they remain dissatisfied.

The ESFA Complaints Procedure can be found at this web address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

Alternatively, a complaint can be made in writing to: Complaints Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.

Monitoring and reporting complaints

Monitoring and reporting complaints is the responsibility of the Group Vice Principal for Quality.

The Governor's Quality & Standards Committee monitors the approach to complaints received.

The Group Vice Principal for Quality will ensure that updates (where appropriate) and an annual report on the operation of this procedure and on the number and nature of formal complaints received during the preceding academic year is made to the Quality & Standards Committee each Autumn term.

Where complaints are found to be of a malicious nature the College reserves the right to invoke the disciplinary policy where relevant.

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COMPLAINTS POLICY

Approved by:



Group Vice Principal for Quality

Associated Policies:

Safeguarding Policy
Whistleblowing Policy

This policy is not for use for:

Staff Grievances
Allegations of Bullying towards a member of staff
Union Concerns

COMPLAINTS POLICY

COMPLAINTS FORM

Name:

Address:

Telephone No:

Email address:

Course:

STATEMENT

Please complete this form if you wish to raise an issue, to include relevant dates and any steps which have already taken place to resolve this matter.

Continue over if required....

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please hand the completed form in an envelope to Reception or post to the
Group Vice Principal for Quality, Shrewsbury Colleges Group, London Road, SY2 6PR

Date received in College:

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Statement Continued