

COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

South Kent College strives to produce the highest quality learning opportunities and services and is determined to be known for excellence in all that it does.

To achieve this, the College is committed to:

- ensuring that all learners, on and off-campus, have a successful and enjoyable experience;
- serving the wider business and social community;
- ensuring that any complaints from learners, stakeholders and/or staff about the standard of services provided will be dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively and within College resources;
- ensuring that complaints will be used actively to improve performance;
- sharing compliments with relevant members of staff;
- ensuring that comments are noted and where appropriate acted upon.

All complaints are regularly analysed and reported to senior managers and to the Corporation. The guidelines on how to complain are set out clearly in the following procedure. The College is always sensitive to issues of confidentiality and works within appropriate deadlines in which to respond to complaints.

This policy applies to learners individually, or in a group, staff and stakeholders including members of the local community who are affected by college services.

This Policy and Procedure works alongside the College's Whistleblowing Policy.

Learner views can be made known via:

- Student surveys and focus groups
- Student Council and Student Union
- Membership of the Corporation
- Student Conference

Location and access to the Policy:

- College Intranet
- Main Reception at each campus
- Online at Learning Resource Centres at each campus
- Office of Deputy Principal, Quality and Curriculum

COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION

South Kent College recognises that students, customers, stakeholders and staff have a right to complain about services with which they might be dissatisfied and which fall short of acceptable standards. The College is anxious that these be reported so that the issue can be rectified. Likewise, the College welcomes feedback on good and exceptional services where applicable.

The College takes the view that complaints provide valuable feedback so that services can be improved. In this sense, complaints are welcome and nobody should feel concerned that there will be negative consequences to the Complainant personally.

The following procedure has four stages but it is anticipated that most complaints can be resolved informally under Stage 1.

2. INFORMAL - STAGE 1

- 2.1 The Complainant should in the first instance take up their complaint with the member of staff or person responsible for the area concerned. In most instances the issue should be resolved through this means.
- 2.2 Students should contact their Pastoral Tutor, Course Leader or Learning Manager who will investigate the issue and take into account all relevant facts, needs and interests of all concerned and use their discretion to resolve the matter with due sensitivity. The Complainant will be contacted with feedback within five working days. If the investigation is likely to exceed five days, the Complainant will be contacted and informed when the response will be available.
- 2.3 If the Complainant does not feel comfortable discussing the complaint with a member of staff from their own area a member of the Lead Tutors Team will be available. The concerns will always be discussed in confidence and help offered with the process. This help could be direct or the Complainant could be referred to others for particular help, eg someone to help with finances or relationships.
- 2.4 Parents, visitors or college partners should contact the Learning Manager or Service Manager for the area concerned. The manager will provide feedback to the Complainant within ten working days. If the investigation is likely to exceed ten days, the Complainant will be contacted and informed as to when a response will be available.

A full list of contacts is provided at the end of this document.

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of this informal stage, then s/he should proceed to Stage 2

3. FORMAL - STAGE 2

All stage 2 complaints will be investigated by the relevant Curriculum Director or Services Director who will respond personally. There are a number of different ways to make a formal complaint.

- 3.1 Complete a **Comments, Compliments and Complaints** form. This is annexed at Appendix A and is also available in reception at all campuses. The form should be completed and handed in at any of the three College's main reception areas.
- 3.2 In writing to the Quality Department at South Kent College, Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone Kent CT20 2TZ. The letter should include your name and contact details to enable the College to respond.
- 3.3 By email to 'compliments-complaints@southkent.ac.uk' Again, this should include your name and contact details.
- 3.4 After the complaint has been received:
 - the complaint will be logged and forwarded to the relevant Director for investigation;
 - a written acknowledgement will be sent within five working days;
 - the complaint will be fully investigated;
 - a written response will be sent within ten working days, setting out the result of the investigation and the action that has been or will be taken.
 - if the investigation is likely to exceed ten days, the Complainant will be contacted by the relevant Director to confirm when a response will be available;
 - a copy of the response will be forwarded to the Quality Improvement Manager and the outcome will be noted on the complaints log.
- 3.5 A complaint can be made anonymously. However, it may not be possible to investigate the complaint fully, nor would it be possible to respond to the Complainant.

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of this stage, s/he may invoke Stage 3 (Appeal Stage) of the formal procedure within ten working days of notification of the decision under Stage 2.

4. FORMAL - STAGE 3 (Appeal Stage)

- 4.1 The Complainant should write to or contact the Principal setting out the issues with which s/he is dissatisfied. The Principal can be contacted as follows:
 - by telephone on 01303 858213,
 - in writing to the Principal, South Kent College, Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone Kent CT20 2TZ
 - by e-mail to 'compliments-complaints@southkent.ac.uk'

4.2 If a complaint is made to the Principal:

- a written acknowledgement will be sent within five working days;
- the procedure will be fully investigated;
- a written response will be sent within ten working days, but if the investigation is likely to exceed ten days, the Principal will contact the Complainant to confirm when a response will be available. The decision of the Principal will set out the steps to be taken to remedy the complaint or the reasons why the appeal has failed. This decision will be final.

5. **FORMAL - STAGE 4**

Where a complaint has not been resolved by the College to the satisfaction of the Complainant then s/he can refer it to the Learning and Skills Council, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families or The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education ("OIA"). Their addresses and phone numbers are as follows:

Kent & Medway Learning & Skills Council
26 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent ME19 4AE
Tel: 0845 019 4152

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London, SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0870 000 2288

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Fifth Floor
Thames Tower
Station Road
Reading
RG1 1LX
Tel: 0118 959 9813

6. **COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE PRINCIPAL, CORPORATION MEMBERS OR CLERK**

- 6.1 Complaints against the Principal should be addressed to the Chair of Corporation, c/o the Clerk to Corporation, who will investigate the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- 6.2 For complaints against the Chairman, a member of the Board, the Governing Body or the Clerk to the Corporation see the 'Procedure for Complaints Against the Corporation' which is available on the SKC Website:

7. COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

In addition to dealing quickly and effectively with any complaints, the College also appreciates receipt of praise or suggestions on how services can be improved. This can be done by:

- writing to the Quality Improvement Manager, whose contact details are set out in stage 2 of this procedure;
- completing the attached **Comments, Compliments and Complaints** form and handing it in at the main reception area at any of the College's sites;
- by e-mail to 'compliments-complaints@southkent.ac.uk'

A record will be kept by the Quality Improvement Manager of all complaints, comments and letters of praise. This record will be carefully monitored:

- to ensure that all complaints are properly addressed within the specified time frames specified and
- to identify where improvements can be made to the services and operations of the College.

SOUTH KENT COLLEGE MANAGERS

CURRICULUM AREAS

Area Director	Telephone No. (Director)	Telephone No. (Administrator)
Construction	01233 655523	01303 858354
Business Admin, and Engineering	01233 655544	01233 655561
Retail & Commerce	01303 858383	01303 858347
6 th Form & Creative Studies	01233 655588	01233 655524
Early Years, Care & Foundation	01303 858318	01303 858258
ESOL & Basic Skills	01303 858242	01303 858258

SERVICE AREAS

Area Director/Manager	Telephone No.
Director of Finance	01303 858226
Manager IT	01304 244341
Estates Manager	01303 858435
Director of MIS	01303 858229
Marketing Manager	01303 858441
Health & Safety Advisor	01303 858212

COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS FORM

Please write your comments in the box and give the form to the Receptionist or put in comments box located in Main Reception.

To: The Quality Unit, Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2TZ

Name		Course (if applicable)	
Student No (if known)	S0	Town/Campus	
Address			
Telephone No.			

Comment/Compliment/Complaint:

Signature: Date:

For statistical purposes would you please complete the section below by ticking the boxes that apply to you.

Equality & Diversity Data

		✓		✓
Attendance	Full-Time		Part-Time	
Gender	Male		Female	
Age	14-18		19+	
Disability	Yes		No	
Learning Difficulty	Yes		No	
Ethnicity	Asian		Indian	
	Bangladeshi		Mixed Race	
	Black African		Pakistani	
	Black Caribbean		White	
	Black Other		Other	
	Chinese			