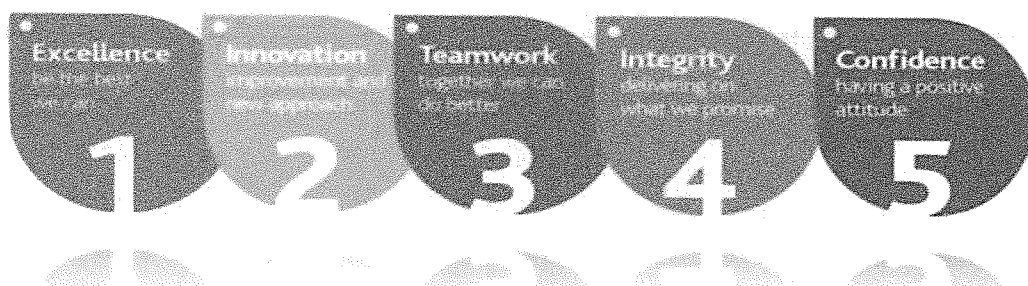




CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

If requested, the College will make the Policy available by means of alternative formats including large print, Braille, audio cassette and computer disc. The Policy can also be downloaded from the College intranet and made available in alternative languages as required.



Document Control			
File Name		Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy	
Original Author(s)		Sector Working Group	
Current Revision Author(s)		Sector Policy	
Version	Date	Authors	Notes on revision
0.1	March 2015	CA Deeny	College Policy and Procedure updated
0.2	May 2016	Sector	Sector review
0.3	August 2017	Sector	Revised Policy created
0.4	November 2017	Sector	Sector review

Enquiries: Any enquiries about the contents of this document should be addressed to:

Title: Compliance & Legal Officer
Address: 2 Mountjoy Road, Omagh, Co. Tyrone BT79 7AH
Tel: 0845 603 1881 ext 5434
E-mail: CarolAnne.Deeny@swc.ac.uk

CONTENTS	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
POLICY STATEMENT	4
SCOPE	4
CATEGORIES OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK	5-6
APPEALS	7
CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS	7
IF A CUSTOMER REMAINS DISSATISFIED	8
MONITORING COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS	8-9
APPENDIX 1 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS FORM	10-11
APPENDIX 2 CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS FORM	12
APPENDIX 3 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROCESS	13

South West College Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

South West College is committed to providing the highest quality of service to all our customers. If a customer is not satisfied with the quality of service provided by the College or College staff, they have the right to complain.

A complaint may be defined as '*A statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.*' www.oxforddictionaries.com

The raising of complaints and the provision of feedback provides the College with an opportunity to improve its services. The College monitors complaints and the outcomes in order to improve the quality of our provision. This policy advises customers of the College's commitment to ensuring that any issues or problems are resolved quickly and as close to the source as possible, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy, a customer may be a student, external customer, member of the public or third party stakeholder.
- 2.2 The College will comply with the Standards for Complaint Handling in the Public Service agreed by the Permanent Secretaries Group, ensuring that:
 - a) There are clear lines of accountability for the handling and consideration of complaints within the College.
 - b) Complainants have open and easy access to the College's complaints policy and information required to enable them to complain about any aspect of service.
 - c) Complaints are dealt with through an efficient and effective process.
 - d) All investigations are conducted promptly, thoroughly, openly, honestly and objectively.
 - e) Complaints are responded to as promptly as possible and all issues raised are addressed.
 - f) The College promotes a culture of learning from complaints so that, where necessary, service, processes and practices can be improved.
 - g) The organisation monitors the effectiveness of its complaint handling and responsiveness.
- 2.3 In addition, the College will:

- h) Ensure that all positive comments are passed on to the relevant staff members.
- i) Process all complaints in a fair, consistent and unbiased manner.
- j) Endeavour to communicate with the customer within agreed timeframes throughout the process.
- k) Ensure no customer is disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint
- l) Promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).
- m) Respect confidentiality and protect customers' data in line with legislation.
- n) Monitor and review complaints and compliments for quality assurance and equality monitoring purposes.

2.4 Exemptions to this policy include:

- a) Anonymous complaints, which will not usually be investigated, but will be recorded.
- b) Matters where another policy or procedure applies; for example, academic appeals¹
- c) The right of the College not to investigate unreasonable or vexatious complaints.

3.0 Categories of Customer Feedback

3.1 Compliments and Comments

3.1.1 If a customer feels that the College has exceeded the expected standard of service or wishes to leave a compliment or positive comment, they can either:

- a) Complete a 'Customer Compliments Form' (Appendix 2). Forms may be downloaded from the College website or they are available at reception.
- b) Email the College on CarolAnne.Deeny@swc.ac.uk
- c) Advise a member of staff in person of the positive experience.

3.2 Informal Complaint

- 3.2.1 If there is an occasion where a customer is not satisfied with the service we provide; they have a right to complain.
- 3.2.2 We would encourage customers to seek to resolve any issues informally with the relevant member of staff e.g. face-to-face discussion.
- 3.2.3 Where a resolution cannot be found, or if the complaint is sufficiently serious, the customer may submit a formal complaint in writing.

¹ Please refer to [HE student handbook](#) for information on academic appeals

3.3 Formal Complaint

3.3.1 If a customer wishes to make a formal complaint, they can either:

- a) Complete a 'Customer Complaints Form' (Appendix 1). Forms are downloadable from the College website or available at reception.
- b) Email the College on complaints@swc.ac.uk
- c) If the complaint relates to an academic matter, students have the right to contact and engage with the relevant Awarding Organisation directly, however Awarding Organisations will normally only consider a complaint after it has been managed in accordance with the College's complaints policy.

3.3.2 If a customer wishes to complain verbally, they will be asked to confirm details of their complaint in writing.

3.3.3 If assistance is required with the completion of or the submission of a complaint, customers should contact Reception or Student Services.

3.3.4 Complaints should be submitted to the College no later than three months from the date of the issue arising. In exceptional circumstances, the College may exercise discretion with this timescale.

3.3.5 Complaints may be submitted on behalf of someone else, for example a person under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult. Consent of the individual may be required.

3.3.6 All formal complaints will be forwarded to the relevant Responsible Owner for an open and objective investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, a written response will be issued to the complainant. For the purposes of this Policy, the Responsible Owner is defined as the individual appointed to investigate the complaint

3.3.7 The College will endeavour to adhere to the timeframes detailed below (Table 1).

Table 1

Communication	Response Time
Complaint acknowledgement letter/email to customer	5 working days* from receipt of complaint
Letter/email issued to complainant if further information required to progress complaint	Clarification information to be returned within 10 working days of receipt
Complaint response letter/email to customer	20 working days** from date acknowledgement letter/email issued

**Working days are those days on which the College is open. Weekends, statutory days, Bank Holidays and other College closures are classed as 'non-working' days. Complaints*

specific to course admissions will be acknowledged within 2 working days from receipt of complaint.

****Complaints specific to course admissions will be responded to within 5 working days from date acknowledgement letter/email is issued.**

3.3.8 If, for reasons beyond the College's control the investigation and outcome exceeds, or is likely to exceed the timeframes set out in Table 1, the customer will be notified in writing.

4.0 Appeals

4.1 If a customer is dissatisfied with the College response to their complaint, they have the right to appeal. Appeals should be submitted in writing, with full details of the grounds for appeal, to the Principal and Chief Executive².

4.2 Following receipt of an appeal the College will endeavour to adhere to the timeframes detailed below (Table 2)

Table 2

Communication	Response Time
Complainant submits appeal to the College	10 working days from date customer receives complaint response
Appeal acknowledgement letter/email to customer	5 working days from receipt of appeal from customer
Appeal response letter/email to customer	20 working days from date acknowledgement letter/email issued

4.3 Appeals will be considered by an individual(s) with no previous connection to the original complaint. The individual(s) appointed to consider the appeal request will depend on the nature of the complaint and appeal lodged.

4.4 If, for reasons beyond the College's control the investigation and outcome exceeds the timeframe or is likely to exceed the timeframe, the customer will be notified in writing.

5.0

5.0 Customer Communications

5.1 Telephone communications

The recording of telephone conversations for the purposes of distribution to and use by any third party, without consent, is a breach of the Regulation of

² In the event a complaint made is about the Principal and Chief Executive, the Chair of the Audit Committee will appoint a suitable person to investigate and report. Any subsequent appeal will be addressed by the Governing Body.

Investigatory Powers Act 2000. College employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace and to protect their privacy, the College does not consent to telephone calls being recorded, unless express consent has been obtained.

5.2 Face-to-Face communications

Complaint meetings are confidential. If a meeting is required to resolve the issue, minutes/a record will be taken and made available upon request to those in attendance. If the complainant identifies any inaccuracies, the minute /record will be reviewed, and where an amendment is agreed a revised minute /record will be issued. As minutes/records will be kept, recordings of the meeting or conversations in relation to the complaint are not required. College employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace and to protect their privacy, the College does not consent to recording of complaints meetings, unless express consent has been obtained.

6.0 If a Customer remains dissatisfied

- 6.1 It is hoped that we will be able to resolve any complaint through the complaints procedure. If the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome they have the right to raise the matter with the Northern Ireland Ombudsman's Office (in his/her role as Commissioner for Complaints).

The customer can complain to the Ombudsman; however, the Ombudsman will normally only consider a complaint after it has been managed in accordance with the College's customer complaints policy, and where it is received within six months of completing the College's complaints process. Contact details for the Ombudsman are:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

www.nipso.org.uk

7.0 Monitoring Complaints and Compliments

- 7.1 The College welcomes and values all feedback from customers. The College analyses feedback and areas of complaint in order to improve services. All complaints will be dealt with sensitively and in all cases the documentary evidence gathered and stored remains confidential to those involved. Statistical information will be made available for Quality and Equality monitoring purposes.

Signed: Joseph Mante

(Chairperson)

Date: 10-1-18

Signed: [Signature]

(Principal and Chief Executive)

Date: 10-01-18

