

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Changes
1.01	Quay Huong Tran ¹	23 rd May 2022	Included a version control table

¹ This date is only indicative, and the said policy may be reviewed before due to changes in the macro and/or micro environment.

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1 Scope of the policy

This policy covers the principles of course management and administrative procedures offered through Bliss College ensuring that the welfare and general interest of learners are prioritised.

2 Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to implement Bliss College's commitment to develop a learning environment where all applicants and learners are given the opportunity to demonstrate and realise their full potential. It aims to create and embed a culture of support and equal opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

3 Location of the policy

You can obtain of this policy by ringing our administration team on 02085144977.

4 Communication of the policy

It is important that both Centre personnel involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of all programs on offer, are fully aware of the contents of the policy. Management will assume the responsibility for communicating all updates to this policy to all stakeholders affected by it.

A note will be provided on the Accreditation Form to confirm that the college is aware of this policy and will abide by it. There is also a note on the Learner Registration Form to the same effect.

5 Review of the policy

This policy is a live document and will evolve over time. Although the review dates are scheduled above, this may change due to feedback from stakeholders, external agencies and regulatory authorities. The review of the policy will ensure that procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied properly and fairly in arriving at judgments in promoting a fair and inclusive learning and teaching environment for all.

6 Introduction

Bliss College is committed to providing education and services of the highest quality. It aims to provide a supportive environment for our learners and to be responsive to concerns or complaints from any source. The college recognises that, in a complex organisation, problems may arise of a teaching related or service-related nature. These problems will be addressed in order to ensure that normal high standards are maintained. We regard feedback, both negative and positive, as a valuable resource to help us improve the quality of our services and provision.

The *Complaints Procedure* is designed to enable anyone interacting with the college to bring matters of concern about their experiences of our services and provision to our attention and to enable investigation of those concerns to achieve satisfactory resolution.

This process provides us with feedback to help us improve our services, as well as helping us resolve any particular problems experienced by an individual's complaint(s).

The procedure aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved. It is based on the belief that complaints should be taken seriously, should be investigated promptly and dealt with as closely as possible to their origins. For this reason, all complainants are asked to try to resolve the issue as informally as possible in the first instance within the relevant department or service area. The intention is that most issues can be effectively handled locally, in a spirit of conciliation. Therefore, the formal complaints procedure should be seen as a last resort in the search for a solution.

Bliss College sees the use of its Complaints Procedures as a positive, non-threatening means for change to the benefit of all.

6.1 Remit of Complaints Procedure

The Procedure deals with complaints arising from:

- Delivery of (or lack of) academic services or training including teaching, course content, tutoring and learner support.
- Incorrect or misleading information about services provided by the college
- Delivery of (or lack of) support services provided by the college, including administration of fees, enrolment and examination/assessment registration
- Unacceptable behaviour by college staff
- Provisions of the college affecting learners, customers, partners and/or stakeholders

It is important to note that the *Complaints Procedure* does not cover the following:

- matters of academic judgement (i.e. matters related to academic performance)
- requests for new or different services or provision
- matters covered by separate policies or procedures, including:
 - Academic appeals
 - Disciplinary-related issues
 - Equal opportunities
 - Public interest (Whistleblowing)

Who can use the Complaints Procedure?

This procedure is for use by any learner or prospective learner, who seeks or receives a service from the college, or person who is directly affected by the activities of the college.

6.2 Guidelines for Making and Handling Complaints

All complaints will be taken seriously and, as far as is reasonable, be treated in a consistent fashion throughout the college. In line with our *Equal Opportunities* policy, all complainants will be treated equally and learners who make complaints will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint. Only where complaints are proven to be malicious or vexatious might there be recourse to disciplinary investigation and possible sanction against the complainant. As a general

rule, complaints which are made more than three months after the incident or action which is the subject of the complaint will not be investigated.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to confidentiality for all concerned. Any person named in a complaint, however, will be informed of the complaint and have a right to reply as part of the investigative process.

6.3 Accompaniment at a Complaint Hearing

In the event that a hearing is arranged to consider a complaint, any learner, customer or member of staff asked to attend such a hearing has the right to be accompanied by a person of his/her choosing.

Complaints Procedure

Any complaint received directly by a senior member of staff will be acknowledged and the investigative process will be initiated. A copy of the complaint and acknowledgement will be logged. A complaint file will be initiated and will contain all further correspondence between the recipient of the complaint and the complainant and any updates and resolution.

6.4 How, Where, When and to Whom to Complain?

The procedure aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved and seeks to allow issues to be explored in a supportive, conciliatory context. Informal resolution is encouraged at every stage of the process. Use of the formal complaints procedure should only be taken as a last resort.

6.5 Stage 1 - The Informal Stage

The college believes it is in everyone's interest to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, as close to the source of the problem as possible, and by informal means in preference to formal ones. Dealing with small problems or areas of concern as they arise will often prevent them becoming larger problems which are harder to resolve.

Therefore, complainants are encouraged to raise any issues at an early stage and to discuss the matter with the person responsible for the issue giving rise to the complaint. Many apparent concerns result from misunderstandings which can often be resolved quickly and easily by talking through the matter.

This can be done by:

- a telephone conversation with the appropriate person
- a face to face meeting with a 2-metre distance with the appropriate person
- an email or letter to the appropriate person

Informal complaints should normally be responded to within 7 days of receipt of the complaint. Records of such complaints will not normally be retained or recorded centrally, unless the complainant and member of staff dealing with it wishes to do so.

If the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at this stage, complainants are encouraged to raise the matter with the line manager of the relevant teaching or

support department. That person will make enquiries with those concerned and report back to the complainant on the outcome.

Stage 2 - The Formal Stage

Every effort should be made by complainants and staff to use the informal mechanisms available to resolve issues of dissatisfaction. However, the college recognises that there may be problems that either have not been resolved, or are too serious to be dealt with informally. The college is also aware that there may be occasions in which, for whatever reason, a complainant feels that it is impossible to raise an issue directly with the member of staff it concerns. In any of these circumstances, the college's formal complaints procedure should be used.

A formal complaint should be submitted to the Head of Academic (HoA) on the complaint form, available from the reception in the college.

The statement of complaint should be as complete as possible and should include any supporting documentation (copies of previous correspondence, for example).

The HoA will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 48 hours. The complaint will be referred to the appropriate person, who will carry out an investigation and report the findings back to the HoA.

The HoA will reply to the complainant in writing within 20 working days of its receipt. At this stage, the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily with no further action being necessary. However, if the complainant is not satisfied with the response received as a result of Stage 2, the complaint may be taken to Stage 3 of the procedure.

Stage 3 - The Appeals Stage

If a complaint has still not been satisfactorily resolved after Stage 2 of the procedure, a copy of the complaint, together with any documentary evidence relating to the complaint, should be sent to the HoA within 14 days of receiving the Stage 2 response.

The Dean will decide whether to convene a panel to hear the complaint and review the evidence.

7 Membership and Conduct of the Complaints Panel

The Complaints Panel will normally comprise the following people: the HoA and Academic Director, HR Manager and Lead IQA.

Panel members will not have had any previous involvement in dealing with the complaint at either Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Details of panel membership will be given to both parties to the complaint in advance of the panel hearing. Any request to veto a member of the panel for good reason must be made in advance to the Dean in writing, stating clearly the reason for the request.

The panel will investigate the complaint, including all documentary evidence relating to the complaint. The panel may seek to resolve the complaint on the basis of the documentation provided alone. However, if necessary, the panel will invite both parties

to the complaint to a panel meeting to present evidence and to be questioned on the evidence provided.

After investigation of the complaint, a written response will be produced to all parties involved in the complaint, outlining whether the complaint is upheld or not and detailing what actions, if any, are necessary to resolve the issue.

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final. This exhausts the college's own internal complaints procedures.

8 Learning from Complaints

The college will keep all records of complaints received and the resulting correspondence, interviews and actions as part of our commitment to become a better college. A report on complaints received and their outcomes will be submitted to the Academic Board at least once per academic year to help improve our customer service and monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure throughout the college.

9 External Review

If recourse to the college's internal procedures has not resulted in the resolution of a complaint or appeal to your satisfaction, you may wish to consider pursuing it with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Where a case is considered eligible, the OIA will provide independent adjudication on the resolution of complaints, once the institution's internal procedures have been exhausted. The Union of Learners Advice Centre can advise on this external review process. The OIA website can be found at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>.

9.1 Time Limits

The college is unlikely to consider a complaint from a former learner who has not been registered for the relevant programme of study for a period of six months or more at the time of making their complaint. Note that these procedures do not affect your legal rights in any way.

10 Monitoring the Procedure

It is essential that complaints are resolved promptly. The Registrar will check the Register of Complaints every month to identify outstanding complaints and ensure that the procedure is following the set time limits.

The Registrar will present a schedule of complaints received to the College Management Team and will produce a report based on the Register of Complaints analysis, and cover the following items:

- Number of complaints of each type
- Time taken to process complaints
- List of outstanding complaints
- Outcomes to complaints
- Appeals made and results of appeals
- Analysis of complaints and outcomes by age, gender and ethnicity of complainant

Complaints Procedure Policy

The Administration Office will hold a record of all complaints for 2 years for audit purposes.

End.

Policy: Complaints Procedure	Date created: December 2017	Date implemented: January 2018
Responsibility: Quay Tran	Approved by: Management	To be reviewed: May 2023