



Complaints Policy & Procedure

Updated September 2014

1. Policy Summary

1.1 The Complaints Policy and Procedure provides the framework within which:

- anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with College services can raise their concerns, and
- staff should deal with complaints from learners, parents, customers, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors and others.

1.2 It does not replace College procedures for academic appeals and disciplinary action; those procedures should be used where appropriate.

1.3 Contacts for making a complaint in writing are provided in section 13 below.

1.4 The College will receive written or verbal complaints in Welsh or English.

2. College Mission, Vision and Strategic Aims

2.1 Our Mission

To be excellent - the College of choice

2.2 Our Culture

Our culture: to be an innovative bilingual college where excellence is achieved and the wellbeing of our learners is at the heart of everything we do.

- To make learners the focus of our College.
- To inspire our learners and provide them with an enjoyable and enriching experience

2.3 Our Delivery

Our delivery: to achieve innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, that facilitates skills development, progression and employment for our learners

- To ensure consistency in policy, procedure and practice.
- To ensure access to good quality information to inform our decision making
- To communicate effectively.

3. Business Ethos

3.1 Coleg Sir Gâr is committed to business excellence, business ethics and corporate social responsibility.

3.2 Coleg Sir Gâr's Corporation accepts the Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership.

4. Standards of Service

4.1 Coleg Sir Gâr's Mission, Vision and Strategic Aims and Learner Code of Conduct sets out the standards and services that anyone can expect the College to provide, as well as learners' responsibilities.

4.2 Anyone not satisfied with the level of service should feel able to approach relevant staff to address their concern promptly and directly.

4.3 Every attempt should be made to resolve complaints informally through a dialogue with those immediately concerned.

4.4 The College will respond to any dissatisfaction with its services fairly and promptly:

- Where possible an informal complaint will be dealt with directly, but otherwise an initial response will be provided within **5 working days** (see 6.1.8 below).
- A further more detailed response will be made if appropriate.
- You may be offered a meeting with the parties involved if appropriate.
- You may appeal to the Principal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome.
- Information on how to take the complaint further will be provided if you are not satisfied with the College's response.

5. College Accountability

5.1 **All College staff** have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously, and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedures set out below.

5.2 **Members of Curriculum Area & Directorate Management Teams, Curriculum Area Managers, Directors and Assistant Principals** have a responsibility for resolving a complaint, and leading or contributing to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate.

5.3 **The College Principal** is responsible for resolving complaints which have reached the appeals stage, and may nominate an Assistant Principal, Director or other appropriate Manager who has not been previously involved to investigate.

5.4 Where a complaint refers to Work Based Learning the **Assistant Principal (Learners, Estates & Innovation)** will ensure that it is reported to the relevant WBL Consortium committee as specified by the Consortium's operational procedures.

5.5 **The Board of Directors** is responsible for dealing with referrals after the appeals stage where a complainant remains dissatisfied with how their complaint has been dealt with by the College.

5.6 **The Board of Directors** is responsible for ensuring that the complaints policy is operating effectively and may become directly involved if a complaint is directed against the Principal, the Clerk or members of the Board of Directors.

6. Procedures for Dealing with Complaints in the College

6.1 Stage One [Informal - up to Curriculum Area/Functional Manager level]

6.1.1 At this informal stage complaints may be made in person, by phone or by email.

6.1.2 A complaint should be raised in the first instance with the person or area concerned as soon as possible, and not later than within 1 week of the incident.

6.1.3 Every reasonable effort should be made to resolve the complaint promptly and informally at a local level.

6.1.4 If appropriate, a meeting will be offered between the complainant and representative(s) of the area in which the complaint refers to in order to achieve an agreed resolution.

6.1.5 If the complaint cannot be resolved at local level, complainants will be directed to the appropriate Manager or Director.

6.1.6 If a complaint is about a member of staff it should be referred to the immediate Line Manager, Curriculum Area Manager or Director as appropriate.

6.1.7 Verbal complaints to reception and staff in public areas, or requests to meet with a manager should be referred to the appropriate Manager or Director of the area in which the complaint refers to.

6.1.8. The complainant must be kept informed of progress at all stages, with an acknowledgement of the complaint made within **3 working days**, and an initial response within **5 working days**. If the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction it will be referred to Stage 2.

6.1.9 Any complaint which cannot be resolved within Stage 1 procedures will be referred to Stage 2.

6.2 Stage Two [Formal - up to Assistant Principal Level]

6.2.1 Where a complainant has been through Stage 1 and remains dissatisfied they should be advised to submit their complaint in writing to the relevant Assistant Principal with a copy to the Principal's PA. All letters of complaint addressed to the Principal will be forwarded to the relevant Assistant Principal for action. This would normally mean:

- **Assistant Principal Teaching, Learning & Quality** for all aspects of quality, academic results, curriculum, communication and planning (also complaints relating to Llanelli campuses);
- **Assistant Principal Planning, Information & Finance** for finance, freedom of information, data security and insurance (also complaints relating to Myrddin campuses);
- **Assistant Principal Learner, Estates & Innovation** for student support, college resources, campus management, health & safety, adult & community learning, student transport, commercial courses, enterprise and partner relations (also complaints relating to Dinefwr campuses).

6.2.2 The Assistant Principal dealing with the complaint will investigate and decide to:

- dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons.
- propose an amicable settlement.
- uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, take appropriate steps to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

6.2.3. All formal complaints will be acknowledged, with an initial response provided within **5 working days** and a further more detailed response provided where appropriate within **10 days**.

6.2.4 All formal complaints receive a written response outlining the outcome, and the right of appeal where appropriate. All formal complaints will be recorded and periodically reported to the College Board of Directors and where they refer to Work Based Learning they will also be reported to the relevant WBL Consortium committee as specified by the Consortium's operational procedures.

6.3 Appeals [Principal]

- If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response to their complaint under Stage 2, they may appeal in writing to the Principal.

- The Principal's nominated representative, who should be a College Manager not previously involved in the case, will investigate the complaint and the College's response, and report to the Principal.
- An Assistant Principal not previously involved with the case will deal with the appeal if the Principal is not available.

6.3.1 The Principal will decide to:

- uphold the original decision/dismiss the complaint as unfounded.
- refer the complaint back to an area and propose an amicable settlement.
- uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, recommend appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

6.3.2 The decision of the Principal is final and the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within **10 working days**.

7. Taking a Complaint Further

7.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response following appeal they should write to the Chair of the Board of Directors, c/o the Clerk to the Board, Coleg Sir Gâr, Graig Campus, Sandy Rd. Llanelli, SA154DN (see 13 for e-mail contact).

7.2 Only after all College procedures for dealing with complaints have been exhausted should a complaint be referred to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This does not apply where a complaint is the subject of legal proceedings or relates to the quality of service provided by external bodies such as an examination board.

8. Complaints against the Principal or members of the Board of Directors

8.1 Complaints against the Principal should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Directors, c/o the Clerk to the Board.

8.2 Complaints against the Chair, a Director or the Board of Directors should be addressed to the Clerk to the Board or the Principal.

8.3 Complaints against the Clerk should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Directors or Principal.

9. Unsure How to Proceed?

9.1 For any instances where it is felt that the complaints procedure does not set down a precise course of action, reference should be made back to the underlying principles of natural justice and equity. When in doubt the basic principles of timely response, appeal and fair hearing should apply.

10. Getting Help

10.1 This Complaints Policy and Procedure will be published on the College website, on the Student and Staff Gateway.

10.2 Staff requiring help should contact their Curriculum Area Manager, Director or Assistant Principal.

10.4 Students requiring help should approach their tutor or Learner Services representatives on their campus.

10.5 The College Executive Management Team and Board of Directors will keep the policy and procedure under review.

11. Related Policies

11.1 Academic Appeals, Student Disciplinary, Staff Grievance, Fees Policy, Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Student and Staff Malpractice, Special Circumstances (HE), Student Code of Conduct.

11.2 College Health & Safety Policy, Educational Visits Procedure and Internal Accident Report.

12. Record-Keeping and Reporting

12.1 College Managers should maintain a clear record of all complaints dealt with.

12.2 At Stage 2 [formal] the Principal's PA will log all formal complaints either in progress or resolved.

12.3 The Principal's PA will maintain a record of all appeals and outcomes for a minimum of 2 years.

12.4 The Clerk to the Board will maintain a record of all referrals following appeal in line with normal Board meeting records.

12.5 Complainants will be advised that, while confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is not normally possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant staff in order to allow the College a fair opportunity to resolve the issue.

13. Contacts for making a complaint in writing

Principal: barry.liles@colegsirgar.ac.uk

Principal's PA: lynette.copland@colegsirgar.ac.uk

Assistant Principal (Llanelli): andrew.cornish@colegsirgar.ac.uk

Assistant Principal (Myrddin): mike.williams@colegsirgar.ac.uk

Assistant Principal (Dinefwr): peter.rees@colegsirgar.ac.uk

Clerk to the Board of Directors: marcus.beaumont@colegsirgar.ac.uk