

PROCEDURE

Document Title	Customer Complaints Procedure
Version	1.0
Approved by	Senior Management Team
Date approved	13 September 2017
Effective date	14 September 2017
Date of next review	July 2019
Lead responsibility	Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Derwentside College procedure for handling complaints is intended to be a positive model which is used to improve the service provided and the systems of work employed within the College.
- 1.2. There is considerable evidence to support the view that the public's perception of an organisation improves when complaints are handled in an efficient manner. There is also evidence to show that organisations which use the resulting information in a positive and constructive way, provide a better service, have a higher profile and are more efficient.

This procedure is intended to enable a member of staff to handle any complaint in a satisfactory manner and within the established model for Derwentside College.

2. Scope

- 2.1. The College is committed to ensuring that customer complaints are handled positively, with the aim of improving public perception and the quality of services provided.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all employees of Derwentside College and is designed to complement other procedures, such as the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
- 2.3. All employees have a responsibility to ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the processes outlined in this procedure.

3. Principles

- 3.1. The Customer Complaints procedure is designed to:
 - Provide an opportunity for complaints to be made, both informally and formally;
 - Ensure all complaints are resolved within a reasonable timeframe;
 - Ensure lessons learnt are documented and actions are developed where necessary, to improve services.

4. Procedure

4.1. *Informal Complaints/Concerns*

- 4.1.1. It is recognised that many minor problems and student concerns will always be dealt with informally and outside the formal complaints process. This procedure does not seek to prevent staff from managing day to day problems in a mature and sensible manner. However, the complainant should be asked if they wish to make a formal complaint.

4.2. *Formal Complaints*

- 4.2.1. A formal complaint is of a more serious nature where the complainant wishes the complaint to be formally recorded and a complaints process to be invoked. As a result, the complainant would be informed of the outcome of the process and, if appropriate, the steps taken to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

4.3. *The Procedure*

4.3.1. **Receiving complaints**

Complaints may be raised personally, in writing, via email or via the telephone

- 4.3.1.1. In person - At any time a student, employer or member of the public may approach a member of staff with a complaint. The details of the complaint should be passed to the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality via a complaints form.
- 4.3.1.2. By letter or email - A person receiving a letter or email of complaint will forward the letter or email to the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality in a sealed envelope.
- 4.3.1.3. By telephone - Where the complaint is made via the telephone, the details of the complaint will be passed, via a complaints form, to the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality in a sealed envelope.
- 4.3.1.4. When an issue is raised either in person or by telephone the member of staff with whom it has been raised will deal with it by listening to the problem. At some point in the conversation the complainant shall be asked whether they wish to make a formal complaint or whether they wish it to be treated informally. The process should be clearly explained, including the position regarding confidentiality.

4.3.2. **Dealing with complaints**

- 4.3.2.1. Complaints will be recorded on a complaints form.
- 4.3.2.2. The name of the complainant must be placed on the complaints form (any problem in this respect should be addressed to the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality).
- 4.3.2.3. The complainant has the right to request confidentiality and the process of confidentiality should be explained to the complainant.
- 4.3.2.4. Confidentiality is maintained by the letter / email / form going directly to the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality in a sealed envelope. The complaint will then be dealt with by the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality.
- 4.3.2.5. If the complaint cannot be resolved or proceed without a name (e.g. if the complaint becomes part of a disciplinary process), the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality will contact the complainant to explain the options available at this time.
- 4.3.2.6. The Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality will acknowledge receipt of the complaint by letter to the complainant within three working days and will forward details of the complaint to the appropriate Manager.
- 4.3.2.7. The relevant Manager, acting in the spirit of improving the service provided, will investigate and deal with the complaint.
- 4.3.2.8. The results of the investigation, any actions taken, and the means by which recurrence of the problem, where appropriate, is to be prevented will be reported back to the Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality via the complaints form. Written responses should be forwarded to the Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality for approval before they are sent to the complainant by the relevant Manager. The relevant Manager investigating the complaint will then inform the complainant verbally and/or in writing of the initial outcome of the complaint within ten working days.

4.3.2.9. The complaints forms will be logged and at regular intervals the Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality will monitor the complaints received to determine the existence of any patterns in order that the service, systems and procedures can be improved.

4.3.2.10. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality will analyse the complaints annually and a report will be presented to the Board of Corporation each year.

4.3.3. **Appeals**

4.3.3.1. Complainants who are not satisfied with the response of the College must be advised that they can appeal to the Principal.

4.3.4. **Complaints against the Board**

4.3.4.1. Where an individual wishes to make a complaint against the Board or a member of the Board, they should write to either the Chair of the Corporation or the Clerk to the Corporation at the College. This will then be considered under the same procedures as other complaints. The same standards for response will apply.

5. Relevant Legislation / Regulation

5.1. There is no relevant legislation or regulations regarding the management and handling of customer complaints.

6. Related Documents

6.1. The following related documents are relevant to this policy / procedure:

- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure

7. Accountability

7.1. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality is responsible for the drafting and implementation of this policy.

7.2. He or she is also responsible for ensuring that this document is regularly reviewed and updated – and is the first contact point for managers seeking advice and guidance about the Customer Complaints Procedure or making enquiries about its interpretation.

7.3. All managers are responsible for ensuring that they and their team members follow the requirements set out in this document.

7.4. All employees are responsible for adhering to the requirements set out in this document.

8. Equality & Diversity

8.1. The College has paid due regard to equality considerations during the preparation and implementation of this Policy and Procedure.

8.2. These considerations included the potential for any differential negative effect on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour

or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership.

8.3. The College's judgement is that there is no such negative effect on those grounds and, consequently, no potential breach of the Equality Act 2010.

8.4. The operation of this Policy and Procedure will be monitored by the Human Resources Manager in order to establish that no unlawful discrimination is taking place and to identify opportunities for the College to enhance equality of opportunity and fair treatment.

9. Review

9.1. This document will be reviewed by July 2019.

9.2. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality will undertake this review, taking into account the outcomes of the monitoring process, legislative changes and developments in good practice.

9.3. The outcome of the review will be reported to the Senior Management Team.

10. Document Identification

Category [select ONE only]	<input type="checkbox"/> Programmes/courses <input type="checkbox"/> Partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Finance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Services <input type="checkbox"/> MIS <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching and learning <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel
Audience [select ALL that apply]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employees <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Learners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suppliers