

Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure 2016-17

If you require the Policy in an alternative format, please email feedback@westking.ac.uk



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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

At Westminster Kingsway College we want to provide an outstanding educational experience and an excellent service. One of the ways in which we can improve what we do is by listening and responding to your views. The College values the feedback that students provide and complaints are monitored, evaluated and reported on regularly to the College's senior management team and annually to the College's Corporation. We aim to resolve your concerns quickly.

The Complaints Procedure and Feedback Form is available online at: <http://www.westking.ac.uk/about-us/student-charter/>. Copies are also available in each Westminster Kingsway College centre reception and LRC. If you require the Policy in an alternative format, please email feedback@westking.ac.uk

We aim to provide you with any guidance and support you may need to complete our complaints procedure. If you need any help, please email feedback@westking.ac.uk

1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an aspect of a service or facility provided by the College to enrolled students.

1.2 Who can make a complaint?

Students who are currently enrolled on a course at the College.

This includes students on higher education courses affiliated to partner universities insofar as their complaint relates to a service or facility provided by the College.

Employers who have employees enrolled on a course at the College insofar as their complaint relates to a service or facility provided by the College.

1.3 We will not normally accept complaints from:

- Ex-students unless the complaint is received by the College within four weeks of your end date on your course.
- Students who wish to raise complaints anonymously.
- Third parties on behalf of students e.g. parents / guardians / employers. Students are expected to bring their complaints themselves. The College will allow third parties to bring complaints in very limited circumstances where the College Director of Customer/Student Experience considers it reasonable to do so e.g. where a student has a learning difficulty and/or disability. In such cases, the College will require the prior written consent of the student.

The College reserves the right not to accept complaints (e.g. where a complaint is judged by College Director of Customer/Student Experience to be frivolous, vexatious or malicious).

Complaints raised by individuals in relation to the applications and admissions process, or from members of the public, fall outside the scope of this procedure. Complaints of this nature should be sent for the attention of the College Director of Customer/Student Experience using the contact details set out on page 2 of this procedure who will direct your comments to the appropriate person. We aim to respond to these complaints / concerns within 20 working days.

1.4 Separate procedures exist for:

- Academic appeals relating to assessment decisions, covered by the College's Academic Appeals Procedure.
- Disciplinary issues (covered by the College's Behaviour for Learning Policy). You are unable to use the Student Complaints Procedure to complain about an issue arising under the Student Disciplinary Procedure or which relates to a breach of the Learning and Behaviour Agreement.
- Complaints relating to bullying and harassment covered by the College's Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy - Students.

Copies of the above procedures are available online your Student Learner Portal, <https://vle.westking.ac.uk>. Copies are also available in each centre reception and LRC.

1.5 Informal Complaints Procedure

You should in the first instance raise concerns with your Tutor. You may also raise concerns through your Programme Manager or Class Representative. If the concern is about your Tutor or Programme Manager you should raise your concern with the Head of Faculty. Contact details for your Programme Manager and Head of Faculty can be found on the 'my details' section of your Student Learner Portal, <https://vle.westking.ac.uk>

2.0 Formal Complaints Procedure

If your complaint has not been resolved using the informal complaints procedure, or if it is inappropriate to use the informal procedure because the complaint is of a serious nature, you may make a formal complaint.

2.1 How to make a formal complaint

Formal complaints must be made in writing using either a feedback form available at each centre reception and LRC or online at <http://www.westking.ac.uk/about-us/student-charter/> or by emailing feedback@westking.ac.uk or by letter addressed to:-

College Director of Customer/Student Experience
Westminster Kingsway College
King's Cross Centre
211 Gray's Inn Road
London
WC1X8RA

Your written complaint should include clear detailed reasons for your complaint, an indication of the resolution or outcome you seek and copies of any documents upon which you wish to rely.

The College Director of Customer/Student Experience administers the formal complaint process and will acknowledge, monitor and respond to your complaint in writing.

The College aims to acknowledge, investigate and report on the outcome of your formal complaint and any resulting action within 20 working days of receipt of your complaint. These timescales may be extended by the College in certain circumstances e.g. where the issues raised by a complaint are serious ones or to take account of College vacations.

You can normally expect:

a. Complaint acknowledged

We aim to acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint by the College.

b. Complaint investigation, outcome and action

An investigation of your complaint to be undertaken by an appropriate College manager. The College manager may at his/her discretion meet with you to discuss the complaint, your concerns and the resolution or outcome you seek. The College manager may also meet with other individuals as part of the investigation if appropriate e.g. individuals who may be witnesses. The College manager will reach a determination of your complaint and report the outcome of your complaint and any resulting action to the College Director of Customer/Student Experience.

The College aims to complete this stage within 15 working days of receipt of your complaint.

c. Complaint response

The College Director of Customer/Student Experience will respond to you in writing informing you of the outcome of your complaint and any resulting action. The College aims to provide a written response to you within 20 working days of receipt of your complaint.

3.0 Review of Formal Complaints

The College aims to investigate and resolve all complaints in a fair and reasonable manner. If you are not satisfied with the outcome or any action taken relating to your formal complaint you have the right to request a Review on one or more of the following grounds, that:

- New material evidence has come to light which was not reasonably available when the complaint was investigated.
- You believe the outcome of the complaint was manifestly unreasonable &/or any resulting action was disproportionate.
- The complaints procedure was not followed.

Your request for a Review must be made in writing within 10 working days of the date of the College's written response to your complaint to:

Angela Edwards, Director of Performance and Quality
Regents Park Centre
Longford Street, London
NW1 3HB
angela.edwards@westking.ac.uk

You must explain clearly the reasons for your request for a Review including the grounds upon which it is based and enclose copies of all the documents you wish to rely upon.

The Director of Performance and Quality will consider your request for a Review and determine whether it meets one or more of the above grounds. If your request for a review does not meet one or more of the above grounds, the

College will not consider your request for a Review. You will be informed by the Director of Performance and Quality whether your request for a Review has been successful within 5 working days of receiving your request..

If there is to be a Review, a member of the College's senior management team not previously involved in the complaint will undertake the Review and reach a decision on it.

In coming to a decision on a Review, he/she may consider as appropriate the documents relating to the complaint and the information provided in your request for a Review. The senior manager may hold a Review meeting to which you will be invited in order to gather more information. The Appendix to this procedure provides information on a Review meeting and the process which will normally be followed.

The senior manager may meet with other individuals as part of the Review; this may include individuals named in your complaint or request for a Review and College personnel involved in your complaint.

3.1 Review outcome

The outcome of a Review will be either to:

- Uphold the complaint outcome and/or any action.
- Substitute an alternative outcome and/or action.

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of the Review normally within 5 working days of it being decided upon by the senior manager.

The decision of the senior manager is final and the College will not further consider your complaint.

4.0 Next Steps

Following the conclusion of a Review, you may be able to take the matter further with the Education Funding Agency (EFA) (www.education.gov.uk), Skills Funding Agency (<http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk>) or, if you are on a higher education course, with your College partner university and/or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk>).

5.0 General principles applying to the Informal and Formal Complaints Procedure

- The Complaints Procedure links to the Learner Agreement &/or Employer contract which outlines what you can expect as a student at the College and what we expect from you.
- The College aims to deal with complaints in a fair, reasonable and timely manner.
- Complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to confidentiality for both students and staff. Dealing with a complaint or Review may involve discussion and liaison with College staff and students.
- Staff and students named in a complaint or Review may be informed by the College of the substance of the complaint or Review and where appropriate may receive a copy of the complaint or Review. They may have the right of reply as part of any investigation.

- Complaints are managed and overseen by the College Director of Customer/Student Experience to ensure consistency, fairness and independence. References in this procedure to the College Director of Customer/Student Experience include any nominee appointed by the College.
- You are unable to use the Student Complaints Procedure to complain about an issue arising under the Behaviour for Learning Policy or which relates to a breach of the Learner Agreement.

6.0 Appendix - Review - Notes & Guidance

6.1 Prior to the Review meeting

- If a Review meeting is to be held you will be given at least 5 working days' written notice of the date, time and location of the meeting.
- The senior manager may invite other individuals to attend the Review meeting (e.g. individuals named in your complaint / request for a Review or College personnel involved in your complaint). You will be informed of their name and title 5 days in advance of the Review meeting.
- You may bring one other person with you to the Review meeting e.g. a friend, relative or representative from the Student Union Executive. You should notify the Director Performance and Quality in writing of the name and title of any person who will accompany you 3 days in advance of the Review meeting.
- You may not bring a legal representative with you.
- If you have any particular requirements (e.g. English as a second language, a learning difficulty and/or disability) you may, with the prior agreement of the College, bring a second person with you where it is in the College's opinion reasonable to do so.

6.2 At the Review meeting

The process to be followed during the Review meeting is at the discretion of the senior manager but will normally be as follows:

- You or your representative will present your Review.
- The senior manager may ask questions.
- The senior manager may invite other individuals to comment. The senior manager may question them. You may question them.
- You or your representative will summarise your Review.
- The senior manager will explain that a decision will be made and that you will be informed in writing of the outcome of the Review.
- If you do not attend the Review meeting without good reason the meeting may proceed in your absence and a decision may be made on the Review by the senior manager.