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### QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM POLICY

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

The implementation of this particular Policy must always be carried out in conjunction with, and meet the requirements of the GDPR Policy.

**Quality Statement**

“The **Engineering College** Quality Management System operates to support and guide staff, learners and employers in effective engagement with the services and products provided by the organisation, seeking to ensure a consistent and continuously improving quality experience to exceed the user’s expectations”.

**Our Vision**

***“To inspire a new generation of Engineers.”***

**Our Mission**

***“Delivering outstanding technical training and assessment, connecting industry with education”***

**Our Values**

***“To act professionally with integrity and strive for excellence”***

QUALITY CHAMPION – J Armour

**Introduction**

This document outlines the process that should be followed by learners, staff, parents/carers, associates and employers. This complaint procedure is not limited to our customers and any person including members of the public may make a complaint to the Engineering College.

We are confident of providing a high quality service and would be extremely disappointed if this is not the case. Therefore, it is important should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is not below your expectations that you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address, resolve and improve them.

**Scope**

A concern may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important to which re assurances are sought.

A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, without actions taken or a lack of action.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Engineering College takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases we suggest that you speak in the first instance your line manager and if the member of staff is directly involved, the HR manager will be available to assist.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, we will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

**Responsibilities**

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our training, and learners, are aware of the contents of this policy. This policy will also be accessible on our website.

The college will have an appeals process in place to deal with complaints about the services they receive from the Engineering College. If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by the centre it must first of all go through the centre’s complaints process before bringing the matter to the attention of the awarding bodies.

If you are unhappy about the way an assessment was delivered and conducted and you suspect malpractice and maladministration you should send your concerns to us in accordance with the arrangements in our malpractice and maladministration policy.

**Review Arrangements**

We will review this policy and its associated procedures regularly as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback (e.g. to align with any appeals and complaints process established by the regulators) and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

**How to make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

All of our staff are trained to help our customers so you should first try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking to the person who dealt with you. Concerns around delivery and training should be raised with either the tutor or training officer.

If they cannot help or you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to their manager.

If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided by the manager, please send a written complaint, normally within one month of the event you are complaining about, and address it to the Centre Manager.

Complainants should not approach individual directors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against college staff (except the CEO) should be made in the first instance, to the Centre Manager***.*** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the CEO should be addressed to the board of directors (chair), via reception. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact any member of the management team. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

**Complaints brought to our attention by the regulators or awarding bodies**

Where the regulators or awarding bodies notify us about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another awarding organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints

**Whistle Blowing**

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, and if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences please inform us that you do not wish us to divulge your identity. If it helps to reassure you on this point, we can confirm that we are not obliged to disclose information if to do so would be a breach of confidentiality.

While we are prepared to investigate issues which are reported to us anonymously and/or by whistleblowers we shall always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those to whom the complaint/allegation relates.

The Engineering College defines whistleblowers as being current or ex members of staff (both permanent and contracted) or third party suppliers of our centre and/or current or previous learners who disclose information about malpractice/wrongdoing

The Engineering College will follow the guidelines and principles raised in Sir Robert Francis’s “Freedom to Speak Up” Review, (2015) a copy of which can be found within the college intranet, but also consider concerns raised by stakeholders of the college, individuals or external bodies.

* workers can raise concerns in the public interest with confidence that they will not suffer detriment as a result
* appropriate action is taken when concerns are raised by workers
* where whistleblowers are mistreated, those mistreating them will be held to account

**Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Engineering College wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

* an explanation
* an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
* an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
* an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
* an undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint
* an apology.

**Withdrawal of a Complaint**

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

## **Stage 1**

Formal complaints must be made in writing or by telephone to a member of the management team.

The member of staff receiving the complaint will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email).

An investigatory period will commence, during this time, the investigator will:

* if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
* keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.
* Check CCTV if required depending on the nature of the complaint.
* If required a multi-agency approach/contact will be undertaken.

At the conclusion of the investigation, a formal written response will be provided to the complainant within 10 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If unable to meet this deadline the complainant will be provided with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions. It will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

**Stage 2**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the Senior Management Team and if required HR, will be formed. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made in writing to a member of the Senior Management Team or HR within 7 days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The manager receiving the complaint will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email).

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

A second letter will follow informing the complainant of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, they will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

Following the meeting, The manager will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a further meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant’s needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. We do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

Stage 2 will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant’s own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The senior management team and if required HR will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

* uphold the complaint in whole or in part
* dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

* decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
* where appropriate, recommend changes to the systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Senior Management Team will provide the complainant with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 working days. If unable to meet this deadline the complainant will be provided with an update and revised response date.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Board Directors (Chair) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled and would like to raise an appeal.

**Next Steps:**

If the complainant believes the Engineering College did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties they can contact:

You should email complaints to complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk, or put them in a letter to:

Customer Service Team,
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester

M1 2WD.

## **Complaint Form**

Please complete and return to the Engineering College who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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| **Your name:** |
| **Address:** **Postcode:****Email:****Day time telephone number:****Evening telephone number:** |
| **Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the college about it.** |
| **What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?** |
| **Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.** |
| **Signature:****Date:** |
| **Official use** |
| **Date acknowledgement sent:** |
| **By who:**  |
| **Complaint referred to:** |
| **Date:**  |