Compliments & Complaints Procedure

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Elevare™ CIVIC EDUCATION GROUP

LONDON SOUTH EAST ACADEMIES TRUST
LONDON SOUTH EAST COLLEGES
LASER EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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1. Our Mission, Vision and Values



2. Introduction

At London South East Colleges, we aim to provide an efficient and responsive service to our students, employers and the wider communities we serve. We welcome feedback on our services, whether this is in the form of a compliment, comment, suggestion or complaint. Feedback helps us to recognise good practice, celebrate success and identify opportunities for improvement. This procedure explains how you can raise a complaint if you feel our services have fallen below the standard you expect, and how we will manage and respond to your concerns fairly, transparently and consistently.

While compliments, comments and suggestions help us identify and celebrate good practice, complaints will be handled through a consistent and clearly defined procedure to ensure fairness and transparency. This approach promotes equitable treatment for everyone involved and helps maintain trust in the process. By applying the same standards to each case, we aim to resolve concerns effectively while upholding the principles of respect, accountability and impartiality.

3. Complaints Handling Principle

The College will handle complaints in accordance with the following principles:

- **Fairness and impartiality** – complaints will be considered objectively and without bias.
- **Respect and professionalism** – all parties will be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.
- **Timeliness** – complaints will be acknowledged, investigated and responded to within the published timescales wherever possible.
- **Transparency** – complainants will be informed of the process, expected timescales and any reasons for delay.
- **Confidentiality** – information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to investigate and respond to the complaint.
- **Natural justice** – where a complaint relates to a member of staff or another individual, they will be given appropriate information and an opportunity to respond.
- **Learning and improvement** – complaints will be used to identify learning, service improvements and actions to prevent recurrence.
- **Openness and accountability** - where the College identifies that mistakes have been made or service standards have not been met, the College will be open and honest about what has occurred, provide an explanation where appropriate, apologise where necessary, and take reasonable steps to put matters right and prevent recurrence.

No individual will be disadvantaged, victimised or treated unfavourably for raising a complaint in good faith. Any concerns regarding victimisation arising from the complaints process will be treated seriously and may be investigated under the appropriate College policies.

4. Scope

A complaint is defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more people about the College’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College’.

This procedure will be used for all complaints relating to any aspect of the College’s services except:

- Complaints about admissions.
- Academic appeals.
- HE where a separate policy exists.
- Complaints arising from disciplinary policy or the 42-day process.
- Complaints about criminal convictions decisions.
- Whistleblowing complaints.
- Concerns that meet the threshold for safeguarding intervention. These will be managed under the College's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Complaints against Corporation Board members including the Clerk.
- Complaints that are classified as grievances under the College's staff grievance procedures.

Where a complaint falls outside the scope of this procedure, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reason(s) why the complaint cannot be progressed under the Complaints Procedure and, where appropriate, will be signposted to an alternative College process.

This policy may be used by learners, parents/carers and members of the public. The College is committed to ensuring that the complaints process is accessible, fair and inclusive for all complainants and will make reasonable adjustments where required to support individuals to submit, explain or participate in a complaint. This may include providing information in alternative formats, supporting individuals who have difficulty putting their complaint in writing, providing communication support where reasonably possible, and taking account of the needs of individuals with disabilities, additional learning needs, language barriers, literacy difficulties, or where English is not their first language. Complainants who require support or adjustments to access the complaints process should notify the Complaints Administrator as early as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Where complaints are deemed to be vexatious, they will be subject to the 'Vexatious Complaints Policy'.

Complaints may be submitted by an individual or by a group of individuals where they are raising concerns relating to the same issue. Where a group complaint is received, the College may request that a lead representative is nominated to act as the primary point of contact for all communications, requests for information and receipt of the complaint outcome on behalf of the group.

If a complaint relates to an issue regarding a marking or assessment decision this will be dealt with under our published Student Appeals Policy and Procedures.

It is anticipated that complaints should be made in a timely manner, and normally within 20 working days of the matter that caused the original complaint. However, the College reserves the right to exercise discretion in this time limit e.g. should new facts arise outside the time limit that caused a complaint to be considered

Contact details are normally required so that a complaint can be investigated fully, clarification can be sought where necessary, and the outcome communicated to the complainant

All complaints are treated seriously by the College.

The College has the right to extend all deadlines set out in this document due to unforeseen circumstances and/or the requirement to gain further information.

5. Summary of Complaint Stages

Stage	Description	Timescale
Stage 1 – Informal Complaint	Concerns should be raised with the member of staff dealing with the matter or the appropriate manager for that area.	Response within 10 working days
Stage 2 – Formal Complaint	Formal complaints should be submitted in writing using the complaint form or by emailing Complaints@lsec.ac.uk.	Acknowledgement / case information within 5 working days and full response within 20 working days
Stage 3 – Appeal	Appeals must be submitted in writing to Complaints@lsec.ac.uk and addressed to the Group Chief Governance and Administration Officer	Acknowledgement within 5 working days and full response within 30 working days
Stage 4 – External Review	Where the internal procedure has been exhausted, eligible complainants may refer the matter to the Department for Education (DfE) or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), where applicable.	External agency timescales apply

6. Anonymous and Third-Party Complaints

6.1 Anonymous Complaints

The College recognises that, in some circumstances, individuals may wish to raise concerns anonymously. Anonymous complaints will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be investigated where the information provided is sufficiently detailed and where the issues raised relate to matters of significant concern, risk, safeguarding, legal compliance, public interest or the reputation of the College.

In deciding whether to investigate an anonymous complaint, the College will take account of:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility and specificity of the information provided;
- whether the matter can be investigated without further information from the complainant;
- whether there is sufficient evidence available to support an investigation.

Where a complaint is submitted anonymously, the College may be unable to seek clarification, provide updates or communicate the outcome of any investigation. There is therefore no obligation on the College to investigate or respond to anonymous complaints.

6.2 Third Party Complaints

Complaints submitted on behalf of another individual will only be accepted where the College has received written consent from the individual concerned, or where there is clear legal authority for the complainant to act on their behalf.

Where the complainant is acting on behalf of a learner aged 18 or over, the College will normally require written consent from the learner before sharing information or progressing the complaint with the third party.

The College may decline to progress a third-party complaint where appropriate consent or authority has not been provided.

7. Making a complaint

7.1 The College will maintain clear, accessible and consistent arrangements for receiving complaints. Information about how to raise a complaint, including the Complaints Procedure and relevant contact details, will be available on the College website and through campus reception points. Complaints may be submitted by email, online, in writing or in person. Any complaint received through another channel will be forwarded promptly to the designated complaints mailbox to ensure it is logged, acknowledged and managed in accordance with this procedure. The College will periodically review these arrangements to ensure they remain effective, accessible and easy to use.

7.2 Information required when making a complaint

To help the College investigate and respond effectively, complainants should provide as much clear information as possible, including:

- full name and contact details;
- learner name and student ID number, where applicable;
- the curriculum or service area the complaint relates to;
- a clear explanation of the complaint;
- relevant dates, names and locations;
- details of any steps already taken to resolve the matter informally;
- copies of any evidence or supporting documents;
- the outcome or resolution being sought.

Where insufficient information is provided, the College may request further details before progressing the complaint. Failure to provide requested information may limit the scope of the investigation or delay the response.

7.3 For monitoring, reporting and quality improvement purposes, complaints will be assigned a primary category. Categories may include:

- Teaching and Learning
- Student Conduct
- Staff Conduct
- Exams and Assessment
- Safeguarding / Wellbeing (Including ALS/EHCP)
- Communication / Service Delivery
- Administrative / Process

- Facilities / Resources
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Where a complaint concerns learner behaviour towards a member of the public, visitor, employer or other external stakeholder, the complaint may be categorised as Student Conduct. Where such complaints are upheld, partially upheld, or evidence identifies a potential breach of College expectations, the matter may be referred and managed in accordance with the Relationships and Positive Behaviours Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Student Disciplinary Procedures, or any other relevant College procedure as appropriate.

8. Complaint Stages and Outcome

8.1 Stages in making a complaint

Stage 1	*Informal Complaints* seeking to resolve complaints swiftly and close to the point at which they arise. Informal complaints should be discussed with the member of staff dealing with the matter or the manager for that area.
Stage 2	*Formal Complaints* seeking to investigate complaints fully and resolve them satisfactory to the complainant's complaint reasons. We would encourage you to complete a complaint form (appendix 3) when making a formal complaint. In order for a complaint to be considered under Stage 2, the complainant may provide evidence of attempting to resolve the issue under Stage 1.
Stage 3	*Appeals* are complaints that have not been resolved satisfactory to the complainant following the Stage 2 formal complaint response. Appeals must be made in writing via email to Complaints@lsec.ac.uk and addressed to the Group Chief Governance and Administration Officer stating the case number and grounds for appeal. (see section 7.1).
Stage 4	*Escalation to Funding Agency* – guidance can be found on their website.

In some cases, where the nature of the complaint is sensitive or complex, the complainant may make the complaint in person or may be requested to do so via the Complaints Administrator.

Complainants are entitled to support from friends, family or student union representatives at stages two or three in the complaint process (detailed in Appendix 2), but this excludes legal representation.

General guidance and support in making complaints can be sought from Student Achievement Tutors or the Student Union https://www.nus.org.uk/

8.2 Complaint Outcomes (Formal)

Formal complaint outcomes will normally be recorded as one of the following:

- **Upheld** – the investigation found evidence that the complaint was justified.
- **Partially upheld** – the investigation found evidence that some, but not all, aspects of the complaint were justified.

- **Not upheld** – the investigation did not find sufficient evidence to support the complaint.

The outcome response will explain the decision reached, the reasons for the decision and any actions, recommendations or improvements identified as a result of the investigation.

Where appropriate, the response may include one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an apology;
- corrective action;
- service improvement;
- referral to another College process;
- confirmation that no further action is required.

9. Stage 1 - Informal Complaint

It should be possible to resolve most complaints informally and we will endeavour to manage your complaint as swiftly as we can. All staff are encouraged to seek to resolve any issues informally so as to reduce the need for a formal complaint.

In the first instance you should speak to the member of staff dealing with the matter alternatively, you can speak to the appropriate manager for that area. The member of staff may be able to deal with the situation immediately. If you are unsure of who to speak to, please contact the Complaints Administrator via the complaints email.

Upon receipt of your Informal Complaint, we will:

- Acknowledge your complaint verbally or via email (dependant on how your complaint is received)
- Send you a full response within 10 working days

If your informal complaint is received into the complaint's mailbox, your email will be forwarded by the Complaints Administrator to the appropriate manager of that area, and you will be notified.

10. Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

If you are unable to resolve your complaint informally, please put your complaint in writing as follows:

- Complete a Complaint Form, appendix 3 (form is also available on the College website and/or at Reception in each Campus)
- Email Complaints@lsec.ac.uk

We would encourage you to complete a complaint form when raising a formal complaint *as this will help to resolve your complaint more quickly.*

10.1 Upon receipt of your Formal Complaint, we will:

- Send an auto-response via email acknowledging your complaint.
- Appoint an appropriate Investigating Officer who will conduct an investigation of your

complaint.

- Send a response within 5 working days of receiving your complaint to inform you of your Complaints Reference Number and Investigating Officer. If you do not receive a response, please contact Complaints@lsec.ac.uk.
- The Investigating Officer may follow this up with a phone call informing you of the next steps (if a contact number has been provided).
- Send you a full response within 20 working days.
- Any complaint which does not follow the process detailed in Section 8 falls outside of the complaints policy. Therefore, a delay of your complaint is possible.
- Should the college be closed, a response will be sent to you on the first working day of the college re-opening.

10.2 Complainants may be requested to have a meeting with the Investigating Officer or another member of College staff to clarify issues about the complaint especially if it is complex or sensitive. Complainants are strongly encouraged to engage in this process as it will help the College carry out a full and fair investigation. Failure to do so may limit the scope of the investigation, inhibit the process from continuing or cause the case to be closed.

10.3 Where complaints have been made about members of staff, they will be notified about the nature of the complaint, but the complainant's identity will not be revealed unless there are compelling reasons to do so.

10.4 The College will aim to comply at all times with the Complaints Procedure. However, this might not always be possible, for example, if a complainant fails to reply/respond to contact made by the College.

10.5 Where a complaint identifies potential misconduct, safeguarding concerns, criminal activity, fraud, discrimination, harassment, regulatory breaches or other serious matters, the College reserves the right to refer the matter into the appropriate internal or external procedure. In such cases, the complaints process may be paused, amended or progressed alongside the relevant procedure where appropriate.

Any member of staff involved in handling or investigating a complaint who identifies a safeguarding concern must report this immediately in accordance with the College's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Safeguarding concerns will take precedence over the complaints process where necessary to protect the welfare of children, young people or adults at risk.

10.6 There may be other circumstances which delay investigation. This includes but is not limited to:

- College closure or holiday
- Staff illness or absence
- Failure by the complainant to follow college procedures

In such cases the complainant will be notified of the delay and given a new deadline date for the College to respond to the complaint.

11. Stage 2 Formal Complaint – Closure

11.1 We aim to provide a full written response to complaints as soon as possible however, for more complex complaints the College will respond within 20 working days. This timeframe excludes any periods when the college is officially closed, as well as any leave taken by the investigating officer during the investigation period. If delays are anticipated, the complainant will be informed and provided with an updated timeline.

11.2 The final response to a complaint may be issued directly by the investigating officer or, where appropriate, by the complaint's administrator on the investigating officer's behalf via email and/or post.

11.3 If we do not receive a response from the complainant within 20 working days following the last contact made by the investigating officer, the complaint will be considered closed, and no further action will be taken. The complaint will not be reopened unless the complainant can demonstrate that there were extenuating circumstances which prevented them from responding within the specified timeframe.

11.4 To request the reopening of a closed complaint, the complainant must provide a written explanation outlining the reasons for the delay to the Complaints mailbox.

12. Stage 3 - Appeal

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your Stage 2 formal complaint, you may submit an appeal within **20 working days** of receiving the complaint outcome.

Appeals must be submitted in writing via email to **Complaints@lsec.ac.uk** and addressed to the **Group Chief Governance and Administration Officer**. The appeal must include:

- the complaint case number;
- the reason for the appeal;
- the specific grounds on which the appeal is being made;
- any new evidence relied upon, where applicable.

An appeal may be considered on one or more of the following grounds:

- new evidence has come to light which was not reasonably available at the time of the original complaint investigation;
- the complainant believes the outcome was manifestly unreasonable and/or any resulting action was disproportionate;
- the complaints procedure was not followed.

The complaints procedure must normally have been followed in full before an appeal is considered. Where the complaints procedure has not been followed, the matter may be referred back to the Investigating Officer or appropriate manager for further consideration.

Upon receipt of an appeal:

- the appeal will be acknowledged within 5 working days;
- the Group Chief Governance and Administration Officer will review whether the appeal meets the stated grounds;

- if the grounds for appeal are not accepted, the complainant will be informed, and the College's internal complaints procedure will be exhausted;
- if the grounds for appeal are accepted, an appropriate senior member of staff who has not previously been involved in the complaint will be appointed to review the appeal.

A full appeal response will be sent within **30 working days**, depending on the complexity of the case. The response will confirm whether the appeal has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, and will include the reasons for the decision and any further actions or recommendations.

The appeal outcome will normally represent the final stage of the College's internal complaints procedure.

13. Stage 4 - External Review (DfE, OIA and Free Speech Complaints Scheme)

If you are dissatisfied with the College's final response to your appeal or believe that your complaint has not been handled fairly, objectively or in accordance with the procedures stated above, you may be able to refer your complaint to the relevant external body:

FE: Department for Education
HE: The Office of Independent Adjudicators for Higher Education (OIA)

Before making a complaint to DfE or OIA about the College, you should have exhausted the College's own complaints procedure, including any appeals process.

13.1 DfE

The DfE will only consider complaints about a college or funded training provider once you have completed the providers own complaints procedure, except in the following circumstances:

- You have been prevented from completing the college or training provider's own complaints procedure
- The complaint is related to safeguarding concerns

The DfE will also need you to confirm that that you understand they generally will not (and in some cases cannot):

- Investigate complaints that are more than 12 months old, aside for in exceptional circumstances.
- Reinvestigate your original complaint.
- Force the college or training provider to take disciplinary action.
- Force the college or training provider to apologise to you.

You can raise a complaint via their Customer Help Portal – https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/access-the-enquiry-portal/

When you contact the DfE about your complaint, you will need to provide them with the following:

- Either the Unique Reference Number (URN), Uk Provider Number (UKPRN) or name of the organisation you are complaining about

- if you are acting on behalf of a learner, evidence that you have their permission to do so
- evidence that you have fully exhausted the organisation's complaints procedure, including any appeals process (for example, written correspondence confirming the outcome)
- permission to disclose details of your complaint to the organisation concerned
- details of what your complaint is, together with the relevant documents

13.2 OIA

You can request an independent review within 12 months of your complaint issue completion. Information on the process may be obtained directly from the OIA at www.oiahe.org.uk

You will normally need a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter from the College before seeking a review from the OIA which is a letter issued by the College once you have exhausted our complaints or appeals procedures. This letter, labelled as a Completion of Procedures Letter, will set out the issues that have been considered, the College's final decision and the deadline for taking a complaint to the OIA. (See appendix 4 for COP template).

You can contact the OIA directly:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Third Floor, Kings Reach
38-50 Kings Road
Reading RG1 3AA
Telephone No. 0118 959 9813
Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Further information and guidance on Completion of Procedures Letters can be found here https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/yefjanlx/cop-letter-guidance-note-january-2019.pdf

Guidance from the Consumer Markets Authority can be found here http://bit.ly/HEadvice.

12.3 OfS Free-Speech Complaints Scheme

Where the College is acting as a registered higher education provider, or in relation to provision that falls within the scope of OfS regulation, certain individuals may be eligible to make a free-speech complaint to the Office for Students. The OfS scheme applies from 1 September 2026 and enables eligible complainants to ask the OfS to review whether action or inaction by a registered provider, or constituent institution, has breached the provider's free-speech duty and caused adverse consequences.

Eligible complainants include members or staff of the provider or constituent institution, applicants to become members of academic staff, and individuals who were, or were at any time invited to be, visiting speakers.

The OfS will normally only accept a complaint once the relevant internal disciplinary, complaints, appeals, grievance or similar review process has been completed, or once 90 days have elapsed since that process began.

Staff, managers and decision-makers must ensure that decisions affecting freedom of

speech or visiting speakers are recorded clearly, including the reasons for any restriction, refusal, condition or escalation. The OfS may request information about the College's policies, procedures and decision-making processes where these are relevant to a free-speech complaint.

14. Responsibilities and Investigation Standards

14.1 Responsibilities of Complainant

Complainants should:

- raise concerns as promptly as possible;
- provide clear and accurate information;
- provide relevant evidence or supporting documentation where available;
- explain the outcome or resolution being sought;
- respond to reasonable requests for further information;
- attend meetings where requested and where appropriate;
- treat College staff and others involved in the process with courtesy and respect;
- avoid abusive, threatening, discriminatory or unreasonable behaviour.

Where there is clear evidence that a complaint has been knowingly submitted falsely, maliciously or in bad faith, the College reserves the right to take appropriate action, including managing the matter under relevant College policies and procedures where applicable.

14.2 Responsibilities of Investigating Officer

Investigating Officers will be expected to:

- review the complaint fairly and objectively;
- identify the key issues requiring investigation;
- gather and consider relevant evidence;
- speak with relevant individuals where appropriate;
- keep a clear record of evidence considered;
- consider whether the complaint should be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- identify any recommendations, corrective actions or service improvements;
- provide findings in a clear and evidence-based format.

Where possible, the Investigating Officer should not have had direct involvement in the matter being complained about. Where this is not possible, the College will ensure appropriate oversight is in place.

Where a complaint concerns a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Investigating Officer appointed must have sufficient independence and authority to undertake the investigation. Staff will not normally investigate complaints relating to their direct manager, line reports or peers where a conflict of interest exists. Alternative arrangements will be made where independence cannot reasonably be achieved.

Staff involved in complaints handling must complete complaints handling training before undertaking complaints responsibilities. Refresher training should normally be completed every two years, or sooner where significant procedural changes occur. Investigating Officers must complete complaints investigation training before being allocated formal

complaints and may be required to attend additional development sessions to maintain competency

15. Monitoring

15.1 All complaints are formally logged and monitored regularly by the College Executive Group and monitoring reports are provided periodically for the Governing Body. Feedback is an integral aspect of our quality assurance monitoring.

15.2 Suitable training to investigate complaints will be provided to new and existing staff as and when required.

16. Governance and Reporting

The College will operate a structured framework for the monitoring and reporting of complaints to support effective governance, oversight and accountability. Complaints reporting will be produced on a scheduled basis and reviewed through the College's governance structure to ensure that complaints are appropriately monitored, risks are identified, and opportunities for service improvement are implemented.

Reports must include, as a minimum, complaint volumes, trends, risk levels, key themes, root cause analysis, actions taken, and performance against defined KPIs. All reports must clearly demonstrate the relationship between identified issues, underlying causes, and improvement actions, including named owners and measurable outcomes.

Complaints reporting will include analysis of complaint trends by protected characteristics and vulnerable learner groups where data is available.

All reports must clearly demonstrate the relationship between identified issues, underlying causes and improvement actions, ensuring that learning from complaints informs continuous improvement activities across the College.

Governance Body	Reporting Frequency	Purpose
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Termly	Review performance, overdue cases and risks
EDI Group	Termly	Review EDI and vulnerable learner trends
Group Inclusion, Equality & Fairness Committee	Mid-year and Year End	Scrutinise EDI outcomes and actions
Curriculum Standards Committee	Mid-year and Year End	Challenge performance, KPIs and improvement actions
Corporation Board	Annual	Receive assurance and monitor organisational effectiveness

The Senior Leadership Team will review operational complaints performance, overdue cases, emerging risks and improvement actions. The Curriculum Standards Committee will provide scrutiny and challenge regarding complaint trends, outcomes and service improvements. The Corporation Board will receive annual assurance regarding the effectiveness of complaints management arrangements, key risks and organisational learning.

Governance groups receiving complaints reports are responsible for reviewing complaints performance information, seeking assurance regarding overdue complaints, monitoring progress against improvement actions, challenging areas of concern, and escalating significant risks where appropriate. Actions arising from complaints reporting must be assigned to a named owner and monitored through subsequent reporting cycles until completion.

17. Complaints Performance and KPI's

The College will monitor complaints handling performance through a defined framework of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These KPIs will measure timeliness, escalation, outcomes, and data completeness, in line with agreed service standards. Performance will be reviewed on a regular basis and reported through formal governance structures.
Where KPI performance falls below expected standards, actions must be identified, recorded, and assigned to a named owner with a defined completion timescale. Progress against actions must be monitored through subsequent reporting cycles to ensure that improvements are achieved and sustained.

18. Learning, Root Cause Analysis and Improvement

The College will use complaints data to identify recurring issues and underlying causes to support continuous improvement. Where themes or trends are identified, a root cause analysis must be undertaken to determine the contributing factors and inform corrective action.

All improvement actions must be formally recorded and include a clear description, named owner, defined timescale, and measurable outcome. Actions must be monitored and reviewed to ensure effectiveness and to confirm that the intended improvements have been achieved.

Complaints data and resulting actions will inform quality improvement plans, service reviews, and risk management processes to ensure that learning is embedded across the organisation

Significant complaint findings, recurring themes and identified risks will be shared with appropriate managers and governance groups to ensure that learning is embedded across curriculum and support areas.

Where a complaint identifies a need for improvement, the action required must be recorded, assigned to a named owner and monitored through to completion. Evidence of completed actions should be retained to demonstrate that learning has been implemented and that the risk of recurrence has been reduced.

Complaints data will be used to inform quality improvement planning, service reviews, staff

training, risk management and relevant self-assessment activity.

19. Delegation

Where this procedure refers to a named post holder or role, that responsibility may be delegated to an appropriately authorised nominee. Any nominee acting on behalf of the named post holder must have the necessary authority, knowledge and independence to undertake the role. Where delegation occurs, the complainant will be informed accordingly.

Where a complaint relates to the conduct or actions of a senior postholder, the College will ensure an appropriately senior and independent individual is appointed to oversee the investigation. This may include referral to the Chief Executive Officer, Group Chief Governance and Administration Officer, Chair of Governors or another authorised nominee, depending on the role of the individual concerned.

20. Suggestions, Comments, Compliments and Positive Feedback

Compliments and positive feedback will be used to recognise good practice, support staff development and identify areas of effective service delivery that may be shared more widely across the College.

Themes from compliments, comments and suggestions may be reported alongside complaints data to provide a balanced overview of stakeholder feedback and service quality.

Analysis of compliments and positive feedback will be used to identify examples of effective practice, inform staff recognition, support quality improvement activity and enable the sharing of good practice across the College.

Suggestions and general comments regarding our provision may be submitted on the Comments Form or via email at SuggestionsCommentsCompliments@lsec.ac.uk, These suggestions will be logged and passed to the relevant team.

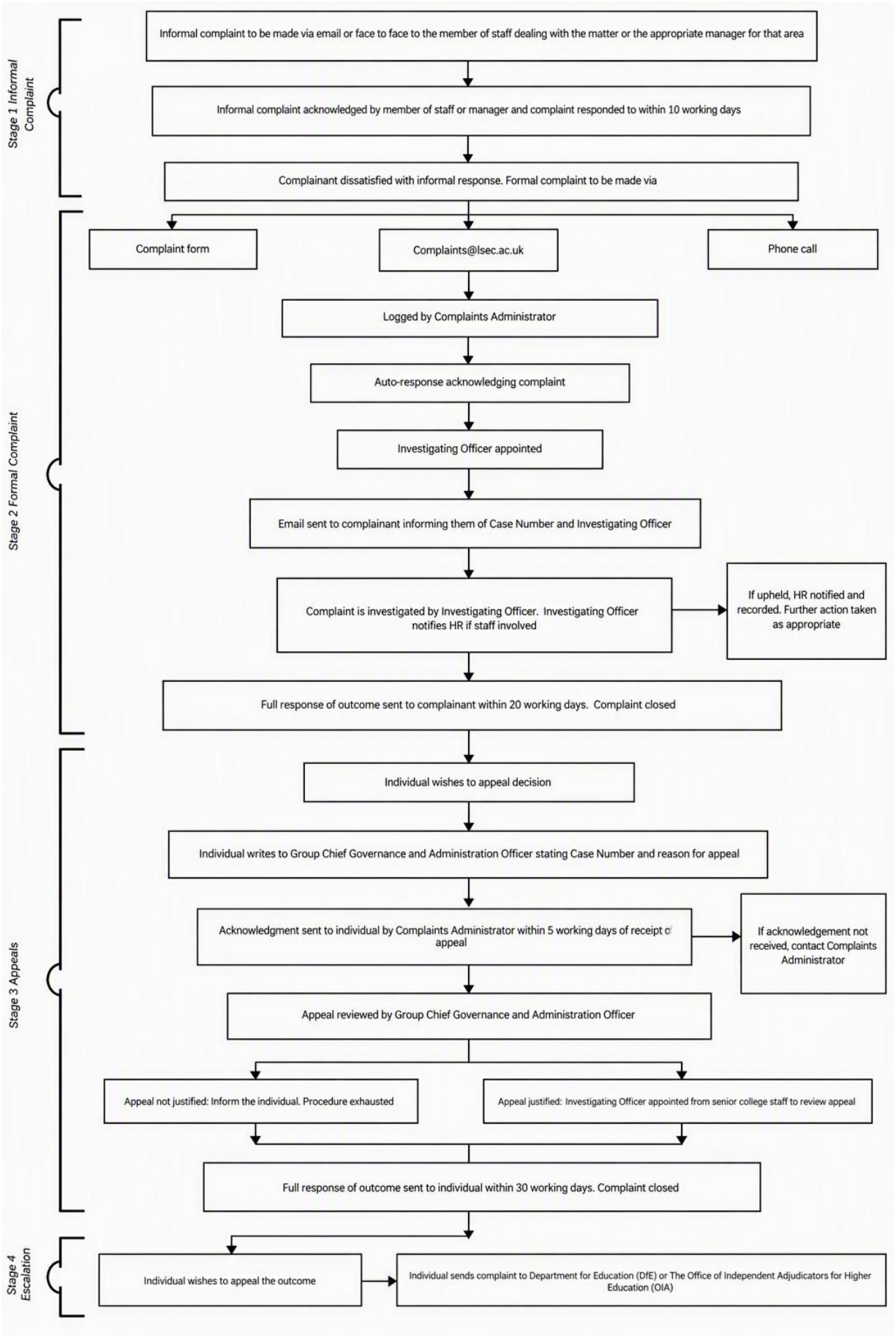
Compliments and commendations on our service and staff may also be submitted via the Comments Form or via email at SuggestionsCommentsCompliments@lsec.ac.uk. Commendations will be acknowledged and drawn to the attention of the member of staff via the Senior Leadership Team. A ‘Register of Commendations’ is kept and maintained by the College and a report is produced annually for review by the Governing Body alongside the complaints report.

Appendix 1 - Associated Documents

All College policies and procedures can be found on the College Website or SharePoint. Alternatively, you can make a request to the Curriculum Admin Office Manager or the HR Department.

- Admissions Policy
- Vexatious Complaints Policy
- HR policies including the Dignity at Work Policy & Procedure
- Safeguarding Procedures
- Relationships and Positive Behaviours Policy
- Complaint Form

Appendix 2 - Complaints Process



Appendix 3 - Complaint Form

COMPLAINT FORM

Who can use this form?

This form may be used by learners, parent/carers and members of the public at stage 2 (formal) of the College's complaint's procedure.
A complaint submitted by a third party will not be accepted unless accompanied by written authorisation from the complainant. Anonymous complaints will only be investigated at the discretion of the College and no response will be given or published.

What is this form for?

This form is used to submit a formal complaint if you have already raised an informal complaint and you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been handled informally, or if you do not feel that informal resolution is appropriate.

What will happen next?

Once you have submitted this form, the following process will take place:

- You will receive a response within 5 working days of receipt of your complaint informing you of your complaints reference number and the Investigating Officer.
- You may be asked to meet with the Investigating Officer to discuss your complaint.
- You will receive a full response within **20 working days** of raising your formal complaint.

Important information

Please ensure that you have attempted to resolve your complaint informally by speaking to the member of staff dealing with the matter alternatively, you can speak to the appropriate manager for that area. If you are unsure, please contact the Complaints Administrator via the complaints email.

Where complaints have been made about members of staff, they will be notified about the nature of the complaint, but the complainant's identity will not be revealed unless there are compelling reasons to do so. Please note that by signing the Declaration you consent to the disclosure and sharing of information relevant to your complaint within the College at all stages when necessary.

Complainants are advised to exercise caution regarding use of language and avoid personal abuse as anything appearing in this form will be disclosed to the subject of the complaint during any investigation.

The information you provide on this form will be used for the purposes described and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Further information about how your data is used and your rights can be found in the College's Privacy Notice.

Where do I submit my form?

Please submit your form via email at **Complaints@lsec.ac.uk**. Alternatively, you may submit your form by hand to Reception, who will forward it to the Complaints Administrator, or send it by post to:
Complaints Administrator, **Room LRC103**, **London South East Colleges**, **Rookery Lane**, **Bromley**, **Kent**, **BR2 8HE**.

SECTION A – YOUR DETAILS

Complainant type:

Student ☐ Parent/Carer ☐ Member of the Public ☐

Full name: _____

Student Name: (if complainant is Parent/Carer) _____

Student ID Number: (if applicable) _____

Programme of study: (if applicable) _____

Address: _____

_____

_____ **Post Code:** _____

Telephone: _____ **Mobile:** _____

Email: _____

SECTION B – NATURE OF THE COMPLAINT

Please set out the reason(s) why the complaint is being made and specify:

a. who or what is being complained about;
b. the events that took place in chronological order; and
c. the consequences that you believe you have suffered as a result.

Please use additional sheets if necessary, ensuring your name and student number (if applicable) is on all additional sheets.
Should you wish to provide additional supporting documents, please attach them with this form.

SECTION C – AN OUTLINE OF THE ACTION YOU HAVE TAKEN SO FAR

If you have already taken steps to resolve your complaint ***informally***, please outline below. *If you have not taken these steps, please submit your informal complaint as detailed in the Complaints Procedure, Section 4.1.

Please provide details of attempts to resolve informally including names of people contacted, dates contacted, etc. These people may be contacted in the course of any investigation.

Why do you remain dissatisfied with the response to your informal (stage 1) complaint?

Give us details of anyone else who is acting on your behalf who you consent to us liaising with.

SECTION D – DESIRED OUTCOME

Please say what action you would like to be taken and any suggestion of resolution or redress in order to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction.

SECTION E – DECLARATION

As far as possible, all complaints will remain confidential to those people who are involved in investigating the complaint, providing a response to it and communicating with you, unless there is a serious risk of harm to you or others. In the interest of natural justice, parties to a complaint have the right to know the full details of the complaint.

I declare that to the best of my knowledge all of the information I have supplied is true, accurate and complete.

SIGNED: …….

DATE: ……..

PRINT NAME: ……

Please list any correspondence or other documentation related to your complaint which you have attached along with this complaint form.

Appendix 4: Complaint Investigation Form

CONFIDENTIAL

Complaint Investigation Report

Complaints Reference Number	
Date Complaint Received	
Complaint Stage	
Name of complainant: (Or Name of the lead if submitted by a group)	
Name(s) of person(s) subject to investigation:	
Investigating Officer:	
Date investigation commenced:	

Background of allegation/issue • How did the allegation/issue come to light? • Have any other actions been taken prior to the investigation?
Desired Outcome Sought by Complainant Record the resolution, outcome or remedy sought by the complainant as detailed within the complaint form or subsequent correspondence.
☐ **Safeguarding Referral** ☐ **Safeguarding Practice Review**
Remit of Investigation • What specific allegations/concerns (by bullet points) were investigated?
Relevant Policy, Procedure or Guidance

Consider whether any safeguarding concerns were identified during the investigation and record any safeguarding referrals or actions taken.

☐ Safeguarding Referral ☐ Safeguarding Practice Review

Investigation Process

- A brief description of method(s) used to gather information
- A record of what interviews/statements were undertaken, and documents reviewed

Date	Event/Action

Witnesses

- List of witnesses interviewed

Evidence

List all evidence considered during the investigation, including but not limited to:
Complaint Form, Emails and correspondence, Statements, Meeting notes, Policies and procedures, Student records, Attendance records, CCTV, Teams messages and Other relevant documentation

Findings and Conclusion

- A summary of findings and observations for each specific allegation/issue of concern investigated, cross-referencing any documentation where needed
- For each concern/allegation investigated an overall opinion based 'on the balance of probabilities' on whether there is evidence to support allegations made

Allegation/Issue	Summary of Findings	Upheld/Not Upheld/Partially Upheld	Evidence to support decision

Overall Conclusion:

Upheld/Not Upheld/Partially Upheld

Recommendations and Improvement Actions

- Recommendations should identify any required policy reviews, staff training needs, process changes, service improvements or areas where no further action is required. Where actions are identified, they should be recorded with a named owner, completion date and intended outcome to support monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement.
- Recommendations on whether further actions under the relevant complaint's procedure should be taken
- Root Cause(s) Identified (if applicable)

Recommendation/ Action Required	**Action Owner**	**Completion Date**	**Intended Outcome**

Appendices

- These should be attached and may include witness statements, investigatory interview notes, chronology of events etc.

By completing this form, I confirm that:

- I have conducted this investigation fairly, objectively and in accordance with the College Complaints Procedure.
- I have considered all relevant evidence available to me.
- I have reached my findings on the balance of probabilities.
- I have no known conflict of interest in relation to this investigation.

Date investigation was concluded:

Appendix 5 – Formal Complaint Outcome Letter Template

Please note - the format may be adjusted to meet the individual circumstances of a complaint provided that the key points below are included.

Dear [Complainant Name],

Re: Formal Complaint Outcome (Stage 2 Closure)

Thank you for your formal complaint received on **[insert date]**, which has been logged under Complaint Reference: **[insert reference number]**.

Your complaint has been investigated in accordance with the Colleges Complaints Procedures, which ensures that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently, and transparently.

I am writing to confirm the outcome of the investigation conducted.

Your complaint raised the following concerns:

- **Concern 1:** [Insert clear description]
- **Concern 2:** [Insert clear description]
- **Concern 3:** [Insert clear description]

In line with the complaint's procedure:
- An Investigating Officer was appointed to review your complaint
- Relevant documentation, policies and correspondence were reviewed
- Discussions/interviews were carried out where appropriate

The investigation has been completed within the formal complaints process timeframe, and a full written response is provided as required.

Each allegation has been considered on the balance of probabilities.

Concern 1: [Insert allegation]
Outcome: [Upheld / Not Upheld / Partially Upheld]

Summary of Findings:
[Clear, factual summary of what was found, referencing evidence reviewed. Keep concise and objective.]

Concern 2: [Insert allegation]
Outcome: [Upheld / Not Upheld / Partially Upheld]
Summary of Findings:
[Brief summary]

Concern 3: [Insert allegation]
Outcome: [Upheld / Not Upheld / Partially Upheld]
Summary of Findings:
[Brief summary]

Following a full review of all evidence:

[Short concluding statement explaining the overall position]

Where appropriate, the following actions will be taken:

- [Action 1 – e.g. service improvement, review of processes]
- [Action 2]

******Please note that where your complaint relates to individual members of staff, any actions taken are managed in line with internal procedures and may remain confidential.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may request an appeal (Stage 3). Appeals should be submitted to **Complaints@lsec.ac.uk** within **20 working days** of receiving this outcome. When submitting your appeal, you must clearly outline the grounds for your request, which may include the provision of new evidence, concerns that the outcome was unreasonable, or that the complaints procedure was not followed correctly.

This letter constitutes the College's formal response to your complaint at Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Yours sincerely,

[Investigating Officer Name]
[Job Title]

Appendix 6 – Completion of Procedures Letter Template

Completion of Procedures Letter Template

For use where the student is studying for a qualification awarded by an external Awarding Body which is not a member of the OIA Scheme (for example an HNC or HND awarded by Pearson)

Please note - the format may be adjusted to meet the individual circumstances of a complaint provided that the key points below are included.

Dear [*Name of complainant*],

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of *London South East Colleges* in relation to your *complaint / appeal etc** regarding [*please describe*] have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your *complaint / appeal etc* were* [*details*]

The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your *complaint / appeal etc was / were**: [*brief summary of the complaint etc*].

The final decision of *London South East Colleges* is* [*detail*] because [*reasons*].

The procedures / regulations applied were*: [*details and date as supplied to the OIA's electronic Regulations Bank*].

London South East Colleges subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you may be able to apply for a review of *your complaint / appeal etc** to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form **must be received by the OIA** within **12 months** of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA **on or before** [*insert date - e.g. if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 9 December 2023, this date should be 9 December 2024*].

[*Include here any factors of which the provider is aware which mean that it is particularly important for the student to bring the complaint promptly.]*

You can fill in the OIA's complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website. https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/. The OIA also publishes *An Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students*, which can be downloaded from https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/can-you-complain-to-us/. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. **You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA [optional - and our final decision] with your OIA Complaint Form.**

Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/. You may also wish to seek advice from [*refer to students' union or advice service if any]* about taking your complaint to the OIA. Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

Your qualification is awarded by [*name of awarding body*], which has some responsibility for considering complaints about the overall quality or standards of your qualification. [*name of awarding body*] is not a member of the OIA Scheme.

In the event that you submit a complaint to the OIA, it will consider your complaint to identify whether it relates to: (1) an act or omission of [*name of higher education provider*] relating to the service provided which falls within the OIA's remit; or (2) the overall quality or standards of the qualification itself. Complaints relating to the design, delivery of assessment, moderation and awarding of the qualification are likely to fall into (2). However, this will be for the OIA to determine.

If the OIA considers that your complaint relates to the overall quality or standards of the qualification itself, it will refer the complaint to [*name of awarding body*].

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]