Compliments and Complaints Policy

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Reviewed: September 2026

Owner: Kara Hall

Reviewer: Samantha Rooney

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Putting Students First

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Chronology of updates

April 2025	Complete rewrite in line with introducing compliments and the new policy template
July 2025	Amendment to complaint process with 3 stages instead of 4.
July 2025	**Pg 10** Insertion of a timescale (2-4 weeks) for complaints to be satisfied at the informal stage before being moved to the formal stage.
July 2025	**Pg 8 & 11.** Added in clarity on who would conduct an investigation at stage 2
September 2026	Updated policy statement and objectives, Introduction of new online Complaints form and Compliments form, Creation of new Website page dedicated to Compliments and Complaints, added Early resolution principles, updated Appendix A

1. Introduction

We aim to ensure your experience of the Isle of Wight College is positive. However, we know that occasionally people may have concerns about some areas of our work, or the conduct of our staff or students.

We value complaints as they offer valuable insights into areas needing improvement. They help us identify and address issues within our systems, leading to necessary changes and enhancements in our processes and procedures. Likewise, we welcome feedback and compliments on our good work, as they inspire us to continue striving for excellence and improvement.

2. Policy Statement

The college is committed to providing high-quality education and services. We welcome compliments and take complaints seriously, aiming to resolve them promptly and effectively. We want everyone to be able to raise a concern or complaint. You can submit a complaint in writing using our online form, download the form and submit a hand written version, by telephone or through someone acting with your permission.

We will make reasonable adjustments where needed. These may include helping you explain or record your complaint, accepting an audio or video submission, providing information in large print or another accessible format, allowing additional time, or contacting you in a way and at a time that works for you.

Please tell any member of staff what support or adjustment you need. Asking for support will not affect how your complaint is considered.

3. Scope

This policy explains how students, parent/carers, apprentices, employers, former students and apprentices, users of the college's services and other stakeholders can make compliments or complaints about the services offered by the college.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is guided by the following legislation

- Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK
- Young person's guide to the Children and Families Act 2014 - GOV.UK
- Data protection in schools - Guidance - GOV.UK
- Education Act 1996

Related college policies, procedures and documents:

- Data Protection Privacy Notice-College
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Student and Apprentice Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Employees Standards and Code of Conduct
- Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation Policy
- Grievance Policy

5. Definitions

Compliment: Positive feedback about the college's services, staff or facilities.

Examples of compliments can include:

- Positive feedback on teaching and learning experiences.
- Appreciation for the support provided to students and apprentices.
- Recognition of efforts in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Praise for the college environment, including facilities and resources.
- Compliments on the services provided, such as the college restaurant, hair and beauty salons, gym.
- Commendation for accurate and helpful information in prospectuses, promotional material, or other information provided by the college.
- Satisfaction with the college's adherence to obligations outlined in course/student handbooks and student charter.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction about the college's services, staff or facilities. For the purposes of this policy 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*" (which aligns with the definition provided by the Students - OIAHE).

Examples of complaints can include:

- Teaching and learning, including on higher education programmes.
- The experience of apprentices, either in the workplace or in college.
- Equality and diversity issues.
- The college environment, such as facilities and resources.
- The distribution and administration of student support funds.
- The services we provide – e.g. the college restaurant, the hair and beauty salons and gym.
- Franchised provisions.
- Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses, promotional material or other information provided by the college.
- Failure by the college to meet obligations including those outlined in the course/student handbooks and student charter.

6. Policy Objectives

- To provide a clear process for submitting and handling compliments and complaints.
- To ensure all feedback is handled fairly, transparently and in a timely manner.
- Celebrate compliments with relevant staff/teams, SLT and the Governing Body

- Feedback to stakeholders any outcomes of their complaint in accordance with our published timescales detailed in the procedures within this document
- To use feedback to improve the quality of our services.
- Review the policy and procedures to ensure that it remains fit for purpose

7. Responsibilities

- Compliments and Complaints Team: Consists of Assistant Principals, Principal Secretariat and Head of Quality. The team plays a crucial role in ensuring that all formal complaints are handled efficiently and effectively and all compliments are passed to the appropriate staff/team.
- Governors and Senior Leadership Team to ensure that the policy is effectively implemented and reviewed for continuous improvement and feedback. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome for their complaint, this will be reviewed by an appeal officer of a more senior position than the investigating officer.
- Heads of Learning and Teaching and Learning Managers to ensure that they handle complaints effectively at the informal stage (1) to ensure customer satisfaction and record this with compliments_complaints@iwcollege.ac.uk as an informal resolution.
- If the complaint escalates, managers are to provide timely responses to ensure that the complaint is handled in accordance with the policy timeframe.
- Student Support Services to support complainants if they are unable to resolve their complaint at the informal 'stage 1' level and to seek a resolution that is satisfactory and to communicate this resolution. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, a member of the team can support the individual with next steps for the submission of a formal complaint (stage 2).
- All staff to ensure that they respond timely to any investigation requirements so that complaints can be handled effectively.
- Students, apprentices, parents/carers, employers and stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback to help improve college services.

8. Procedures

Compliments Procedure

8.1.1 A central log will be kept of all compliments received. These will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team and Governors. Compliments can be about whole organisation, staff and/or students/apprentices and on receipt should be dealt with in the following way:

Compliments about staff will be:

- Shared with the individual/team that the compliment is about

- Shared with their Line Manager/Teaching and Learning Manager, Head of, Assistant Principal, HR and Head of Quality

- May be used to inform appraisals

- Considered in nominations for staff/team awards (internally and externally)

8.1.2 Compliments about students/apprentices will be:

- Shared with the individual(s) that the compliment is about

- Shared with their tutors, Teaching and Learning Manager, Head of, Assistant Principal and Head of Quality

- Considered in nominations for student awards (internally and externally)

8.1.3 All compliments/positive feedback can be submitted via our online form on the Compliments and Complaints page of our website, by phone or in person. The link for our online form can be also be found here: Compliments and Positive Feedback – Fill in form

8.2 . Complaints Procedure

- We will handle complaints promptly and with rigorous standards for action, ensuring that everyone is kept informed. It may not be possible in all circumstances to respond as quickly as the complainant may like given the time of the year, the nature of the complaint and that complaints often change during the review process. Where this occurs, we will record why there are difficulties in handling the complaint promptly and any changes to the complaint as they arise through the process. To the extent that it is appropriate we will inform the complainant of the status of their complaint.
- Our process will be consistent, treating individuals in similar circumstances in similar ways. We will investigate complaints thoroughly and respond in a fair and even-handed manner. Anyone submitting a complaint will not be disadvantaged in their dealings with the college because of their complaint.
- We will provide a comprehensive response that addresses all the issues raised to the extent that is possible or allowed (for example by legal processes). If people are unhappy with the response, we will offer clear information on what to do next, including eventual recourse to an external agency if appropriate. We will prioritise complaints that we consider to be high risk, such as those related to safeguarding or disability support, or where the impact of the issues raised has detrimental consequences for the student's mental health or where the student displays distress.
- Initially, we aim to resolve concerns informally using our Early Resolution principles:
- Staff handling a concern at Stage 1 will:
- **Listen** to understand the concern and its impact.
- **Clarify** the outcome the individual is seeking.
- **Take action** to resolve the concern where possible, including providing an explanation, apology, correction, support, or service improvement.

We aim to resolve concerns within 10 working days. Where a concern cannot be resolved within 15 working days, or where the individual remains dissatisfied, the concern will normally move to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

Please be aware that the timescales identified in this procedure are based on term-time only. Where complaints are received, or investigations fall outside of term-time, this is not included when calculating the response times.

- If you feel your concern should be treated as a formal complaint as set out in stage 2 of the procedure, we encourage you to put it in writing using our online form or make it clear to the person receiving your complaint that you wish your concern to be treated as a formal complaint.
- Our complaints policy is designed to ensure concerns are addressed fairly and transparently. The College is classified as a central government organisation and is subject to Managing Public Money rules (Managing_Public_Money.pdf) with respect to the handling of complaints and their redress. At all times the College will be compliant with those rules and consider the wider implications for the public sector beyond what may be expedient for its own operations.
- **Safeguarding** young people and adults with care and support needs is a central part of our business. Our definition of safeguarding can be summarised as:
    - Protecting young people and adults with care and support needs from maltreatment, harm, risk, attempted harm and abuse – whether this be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological abuse or neglect – with the addition of financial abuse for adults with care and support needs.
    - Undertaking that role to enable young people and adults with care and support needs to have optimum life chances.
    - If you have a concern about the safety of a young person or adult with care and support needs at the college you should contact the college safeguarding team (01983 550847 safeguarding@iwcollege.ac.uk), where you will able to speak to a member of the team. You can read more about our commitment to protecting students in our Safeguarding Policy, which is available on the college website.

a) **Submission:**

- Complaints or compliments can be submitted via our online form, phone, or in person. The online form can be found on our website or can be accessed using this link: Complaints – Fill in form
- You may nominate someone else to act on your behalf when submitting your complaint and subsequently liaising with the college. If you wish to do this, we will require from you a signed, written statement, confirming the name and contact details of the person you wish to appoint and the scope and capacity in which they will represent you. In handling the complaint, we will liaise directly with your representative, in accordance with your instructions, but will always send the final outcome letter to both you and your representative. If someone submits a complaint on behalf of someone else, we will first contact that person to obtain their agreement to investigate the concerns raised.
- Provide details of the issue, the date it occurred, and any relevant supporting information (see Appendix 2 for an exemplar template)
- Please outline your desired outcome and/or resolution for the complaint.

b) **Acknowledgment:**

- Upon receipt of the complaint or compliment, the college will acknowledge it within 2 working days where possible and will request the complainant completes a

Complaints Form to answer key questions relating to their complaint. This can be accessed using this link Complaints – Fill in form

- For compliments this will be followed up with teams and awards of recognition determined locally. The compliment may be used as part of feedback for the college and if this is the case the sender will be asked if they are happy with this.
- For complaints, the acknowledgment will include the name and contact details of the person handling the complaint.

c) **Investigation:**

- The college will conduct a thorough investigation into the complaint.
- This will be conducted by an internal manager who has not previously been involved in the case and possesses relevant expertise and a thorough understanding of the issues.
- This may involve interviewing relevant staff members, reviewing documentation, and gathering additional information.

d) **Resolution:**

- The college will aim to resolve the complaint within 10 working days (please note timelines may be extended in periods outside of term time or due to the circumstances of the complaint).
- The resolution will be communicated to the complainant, including any actions taken or planned to address the issue if appropriate given legal constraints.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved in 10 working days this will be communicated and advice given on an approximate timeline.

e) **Appeal:**

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, they can request an appeal (stage 3).
- The appeal will be reviewed by a senior member of staff not involved in the original investigation.
- The college will aim to resolve the appeal within 10 working days (please note timelines may be extended in periods outside of term time)

f) Feedback:

- The college will seek feedback from the complainant on the complaints process and resolution.
- This feedback will be used to improve our complaints handling process.

9. Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

The objective of the complaints process is for the public sector to learn from the complaint to improve its services. The Isle of Wight College may reject any complaint without full consideration if it is considered frivolous or vexatious. Examples of what the college considers to be frivolous or vexatious include:

- complaints which are obsessive, harassing, or repetitive.
- insistence on pursuing unmeritorious complaints.
- seeking unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
- insistence on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value.

If the college considers your complaint falls into this category, you will be advised by email that your complaint will not be considered further. You will be given the opportunity to appeal against this decision by submitting written reasons to the complaints team within 5 working days of the date on receipt of the email.

10. Training and Awareness

New staff undergo training on the college's complaints process and policy as part of their onboarding process. Since policies may evolve, annual refresher courses ensure all staff are up-to-date. These can be delivered in person or online, reviewing any updates in regulations, criteria, or application processing methods.

11. Monitoring and Review

We will regularly monitor complaints and report annually on the level and nature of complaints to the college governors. We will investigate every complaint thoroughly and deal with the issues as quickly as possible. If the facts clearly prove that we have not delivered an acceptable standard of service, we will admit our failings.

The policy will be monitored regularly to ensure its effectiveness. An annual review will be conducted to identify trends and areas for improvement.

12. Confidentiality/Record keeping

All feedback will be handled confidentially. Records of compliments and complaints will be maintained securely and used for monitoring and review purposes.

For any further information in relation to your data please refer to our GDPR policy as stated above.

13. Communication

- Policy Dissemination – The compliment and complaints policy is available to all staff, students, parents/carers and stakeholders on the college website.

- Annual Updates - Annual updates are provided to staff through In the Loop and staff portal. Reports are provided to Governors and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

14. Evaluation and Reporting

Feedback will be evaluated to identify patterns and inform improvements. Reports on compliments and complaints will be presented to the senior leadership team.

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains compliant with current legislation and is still effective.

15. Approval

Approved by: Assistant Principal.

Signed off by: Curriculum & Quality Committee

Appendix 1 – Stages for Submission of a Complaint

Stage 1 – Early Resolution

We encourage anyone with a concern or a complaint to raise these as soon as possible so that we can deal with them quickly.

If you are already a student or apprentice at the college you should, in the first instance, speak to your tutor, assessor (if you are an apprentice), course co-ordinator, head of learning, teaching and learning manager, safeguarding team, additional learning support team or student engagement coaches. These people will do all they can to sort out the matters raised, through discussions and asking for advice where necessary. A facilitated discussion or mediation meeting may be used where appropriate to achieve an early resolution

If you are an employer with an apprentice, in the first instance speak to either the assessor of your apprentice or the head of apprenticeships.

If you are not a student at the college, please talk to our staff at reception or in our student support area, who will be happy to help resolve the matter.

To help develop and improve the service we offer, we keep records of matters raised and how they were resolved.

We aim to resolve concerns at Stage 1 within 10 working days. We will listen carefully, understand the outcome you are seeking and work with you to identify a satisfactory resolution. Where a concern cannot be resolved within 15 working days, is particularly complex or serious, or the complainant remains dissatisfied, the matter will progress to Stage 2.

Stage 2 Formal Complaint:

Step	Action	Timeframe
Submission of Complaint	**Complete our online Complaints form which can be found on our website or using this link: Complaints – Fill in form** **Download a PDF of our form and send a handwritten version to Complaints_Compliments at the Isle of Wight College, Medina Way, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5TA** **or phone 01983 550732**	**Immediately (deadline for receiving complaint from date of matter/incident?)**
Acknowledgment	**Acknowledge receipt of the complaint**	**Within 2 working days where possible**
Investigation	**Conduct a thorough investigation into the complaint.** **The investigation will be conducted by an internal college manager who has not been previously involved in the case and possesses relevant experience and expertise to fully investigate the concerns raised.**	**Within 10 working days (please note timelines may be extended in periods outside of term time or due to the nature of the complaint)**
Outcome and Resolution	**Communicate the outcome and resolution to the complainant.**	**Within 15working days (please note timelines may be extended in periods outside of term time or due to the nature of the complaint)** **Or advise on next steps if the complaint cannot be resolved in 15 working days and a timeline advised.**

Stage 3: Appeal – Appointed Appeal Officer

If you remain dissatisfied with stage 2 you can appeal the decision. The appeal officer will be a member of staff in a more senior position than the investigating member of staff. You should make the appeal to the address or email below and request a review of how the complaint was handled and the resolution offered:

Complaints Appeal
The Isle of Wight College
Medina Way
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TA

Or email complaints_compliments@iwcollege.ac.uk

The request needs to be made **within 10 working days of the date of the reply to your Complaint.**

You will receive an acknowledgement within two working days (where possible).

This review will consider matters such as:

- Procedural errors (e.g., not being given a fair opportunity to respond)
- Misinterpretation or misunderstanding of key facts.
- Perceived bias or unfair treatment.
- Adherence to policy and procedure.
- Alleged discrimination or discourtesy.
- Failure to apologise or accept mistakes.
- The appropriateness of the remedies offered.

Appeal to External Agency

If, after having had your complaint appealed (stage 3) you remain dissatisfied and do not believe the correct procedure has been followed, you should contact the Department for Education at the address below. More information can be found on the Gov.uk website Complain about a further education college or apprenticeship - GOV.UK which will guide you through the process and clearly sets out the parameters under which they operate

For Higher Education courses:

Students studying on a higher education course should initially follow the college complaints procedure. If, once your complaint has been reviewed, you remain dissatisfied, then complaints should be directed to the University of Portsmouth, as follows:

University of Portsmouth
Complaints Team

Email: mailto:complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk