

Policy	Complaints & Concerns Policy and Procedure - HR 23
Manager responsible	Director of Communications, Information & Technology/ Company Secretary
Date last reviewed	Aug 2024
Date of next review	Aug 2026
Date of governor approval	Sep 2024
Associated documents	Complaints & Concerns Procedure (Appendix 1) Communications Complaints Procedure Grievance Policy Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy Data Protection (GDPR) Policy Retention Schedule Safeguarding Policy Anti-bullying & Harassment (staff) Policy Violence at Work Policy
References	¹ https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/about-us/our-principles/principles-good-complaint-handling
Initial reviewing body	Senior Leadership Team
Final approval body	Standards & Effectiveness Committee
Published on website	Yes

Purpose	The policy provides those who wish to raise a concern or complaint about Derwen College with a transparent and time-determined framework through which the concern/complaint will be handled. This includes how the concern/complaint is reported, logged, investigated and handled, from receipt to conclusion, and how trend-reports on complaints and concerns will be reported.
Scope	The policy covers complaints and/or concerns received about Derwen College's operations and services. Staff grievances should be raised through the Grievance Policy.
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	<p><i>"[Derwen] College is committed to promoting equality, good relations and to challenging discrimination. This is reflected in all College policies, procedures, processes and practices."</i> Derwen College Equal Opportunities Policy</p> <p>Derwen College's ethos is to embrace diversity, to offer equality of opportunity, and to treat every individual fairly and with respect. Equality, diversity and inclusivity are embedded throughout the organisation. This policy should be applied in accordance with this ethos.</p> <p>If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print, please contact the Human Resources Department who will provide help with alternative formats.</p>
Definitions	<p>Complaint – an expression of dissatisfaction</p> <p>Concern – a worry or anxiety</p>

	“one working day” = one normal weekday (excluding bank holidays) office-hours working day.
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This policy and procedure forms part of our commitment to the safeguarding of adults and children with care and support needs and the protection of all young people and should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policies.

INTRODUCTION

Derwen College strives to achieve the highest standards of operations and service in all its activities. Complaints and concerns are welcomed as they provide the College with the opportunity to address the issues raised, and to make continuous improvements.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal & CEO is responsible overall for this policy and procedure and its implementation. The Leadership Team are responsible for supporting the Principal & CEO in ensuring it is followed. The Company Secretary will maintain the central logging system. All staff are responsible for ensuring complaints and concerns are reported through the correct channels, and endeavouring to resolve matters informally where reasonable and possible.

OUR COMMITMENT

Complaints and concerns will be dealt with in line with this policy and procedure, to provide a timely and appropriately thorough response to the person raising the complaint or concern.

Complaints and concerns will be investigated in a non-confrontational manner, with the overarching aims of user and stakeholder satisfaction, and of meeting the *principles of good complaints handling*¹:

- Getting it right
- Being customer focused
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained. External agencies may be consulted where necessary and reports made to the appropriate authorities as required, e.g. Care Quality Commission, Charity Commission.

WHAT WE ASK OF COMPLAINANTS

Derwen College staff will always treat with respect and courtesy those with whom they come into contact during their work. This includes students, clients, their parents/carers/ families, and third parties, as well as colleagues. The College expects that its staff will be treated with reciprocal politeness. If a complainant is not satisfied with the response that they have received, they should ask for their complaint to be escalated to a member of staff on the next level of seniority.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

The College recognises that staff who are the subject of a complaint may need support. Staff affected in this way should speak to their line manager in the first instance, and/or Human Resources, as required, to discuss the support available.

TRAINING

All staff can be in a position to receive a concern or complaint from any source and therefore must ensure that they are familiar with the policies around complaints handling.

TIMEFRAME

Complaints and concerns will be responded to as swiftly as possible.

An initial acknowledgement will be issued within one working day of receipt by the College. The outcome of the investigation into the concern/complaint will be issued within ten working days of the issue of the acknowledgement of receipt. If a meeting is considered the most appropriate method to communicate and discuss the outcome, the setting of the meeting date will be done within the ten-working day timeframe. If investigations are ongoing and not concluded by the ten-day deadline, the College will contact the complainant at the earliest opportunity, to advise them. The investigation will be concluded as soon as possible. If an appeal is received, an initial acknowledgement will be issued within one working day of receipt by the College.

The appeal will be heard and any follow up investigations will be actioned as soon as possible after receipt. The outcome will be communicated as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

DOCUMENTATION

Correspondence and documents relating to a complaint or concern will be stored electronically. All complaints and concerns are logged on a confidential central database.

ACTIONS FOLLOW UP

Any actions agreed as a result of a complaint made will be reported to the Company Secretary who will log them on the central logging system. Follow-up and close-off of actions should also be reported, and will be closed down on the central log.

REPORTING

The Leadership Team will review the Complaints and Concerns log on a cyclical basis. An overview report will be brought at least annually to governors at an appropriate meeting. The annual reporting period will be from 1 August to 31 July.

DISAGREEMENT OVER RESOLUTION

On rare occasions complainants can become vexatious and persistent in pursuit of their complaint despite the College taking what it considers all reasonable steps to resolve the issue, and despite the Complaints Procedure having been followed fully. Should this occur, the College will not enter into further communication regarding the matter.

COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS PROCEDURE

Note: if a complaint is made against a member of staff, the Human Resources Department will be included in the investigation at the earliest opportunity. This will ensure fairness of investigation and adherence to employment law.

All stages – when regarding a student or client

Documents relating to the concern or complaint should be uploaded to the student's individual file in Databridge, logged as a complaint. This is confidential to the Company Secretary, Admin Team and Admissions Team.

Stage one - informal procedure

All complaints and concerns should, wherever possible, be raised informally in the first instance and, if possible, resolved without resort to the formal procedure. The aim of this is to execute a swift resolution to the issue raised, to the satisfaction of the person raising the concern or complaint.

Concerns and complaints by students or clients

1. Every effort will be made to enable students and clients to communicate their concerns and complaints to any member of staff. They can also be raised by email to: haveyoursay@derwen.ac.uk
2. Any matter raised in this way should be passed on to the Registered Managers who will ascertain, within one working day, the precise nature of the complaint by discussing it with the student or client.
3. Having identified the problem an investigation will commence and a resolution will be suggested, and if agreed by the student or client, will be implemented as quickly as possible. A brief summary of the concern/complaint and the outcome should be sent to haveyoursay@derwen.ac.uk for central logging.
4. Should this not resolve the situation, and a formal complaint is raised, the formal procedure (see below) should be invoked.

Concerns and complaints by parents or carers

1. Parents/carers of students or clients are encouraged to communicate their concerns and complaints via email to: haveyoursay@derwen.ac.uk
2. Any such complaints and concerns will be handled in line with the College's Data Protection (GDPR) Policy
3. Any complaint or concern will be passed on to the appropriate person to provide information about the issue(s) raised, and the matter will be investigated. This could

include speaking with or emailing (as deemed most appropriate) the parent/carer concerned, and/or with the student or client.

4. The conclusion of the investigation will be communicated as appropriate (but usually in writing by email) to the complainant.
5. If actions have been identified to resolve/ improve the situation, these will be implemented as quickly as possible.
6. A brief summary of the concern/complaint and the outcome should be sent to the Company Secretary for central logging.
7. Should this not resolve the situation, and a formal complaint is raised, the formal procedure (see below) should be invoked.

Concerns and complaints from other sources

Derwen College's activities and operations are wide-ranging and therefore complaints and concerns can come from a variety of sources. For any received from a source other than those specified in this policy, the following will apply:

1. Any other concerns or complaints raised should be reported to the Company Secretary by writing to the College, phoning on 01691 661 234, or by email at: haveyoursay@derwen.ac.uk
2. If necessary, an acknowledgement email/ letter will be issued within one working day of receipt.
3. If further action is required the matter will be referred to the most appropriate manager to follow up, depending on the nature of the complaint or concern.
4. Every effort will be made to provide a formal response within ten working days of receipt.
5. A brief summary of the concern/complaint and the outcome should be sent to the Company Secretary for central logging.

Feedback from other sources

1. Feedback from other sources, e.g. the Station Café, or feedback forms, will be collated periodically on the central logging system and included in the reports made to management/governors.

Stage two - formal procedure (See flowchart below)

It is important that each matter raised is dealt with on a case by case basis, and therefore communication is tailored to being the best approach for the individuals involved.

1. A formal complaint can be one escalated from Stage One, or one made directly to Stage Two, whether received verbally (in person or by phone) or in writing (by feedback form, email or letter). Emails should be directed to haveyoursay@derwen.ac.uk The complaint will be logged on the central system
2. The receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing, by email or letter, within one working day of receipt.

A response will be issued within ten working days of the acknowledgement of receipt.

3. The complaint will be referred to the Principal & CEO who will nominate a member of management to lead on investigating it. Consideration will be given as to whether the Nominated Manager should be one who is not associated with the area that is the subject of the complaint. (Note: if the complaint is regarding the Principal & CEO, a Director, or all of the Senior Team as a group, this complaints process will be undertaken by a governor, or governors, as deemed appropriate by the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board of Governors, or by the Chair of a Board Committee. Governors will decide the outcome and communicate directly, via the Company Secretary, with the complainant. This decision will be final and not subject to appeal).
4. The Nominated Manager will discuss the complaint with those managers and staff who are relevant to the investigation.
5. External agencies may be contacted if necessary.
6. The Nominated Manager will present his/her conclusions and draft response to the Principal & CEO. If necessary, the matter will be discussed in detail by relevant members of the Senior Team and, if appropriate, the Safeguarding team.
7. Within ten working days of the issue of the acknowledgement of receipt, a response will be sent by email or letter to the complainant, or if more appropriate, by phone. Alternatively, a meeting with the complainant will be arranged to discuss the findings, if that is deemed a better approach. The arrangements for the meeting will be made within ten working days timeframe, the meeting itself may, depending on participants' availability, take place beyond that time limit, but every effort will be made to hold the meeting at the earliest possible date.

Note: the College recognises that it may need to adjust the exact procedure followed, to reflect the individual complaint under review.

Stage three – appeals procedure

This appeals procedure applies to complaints made by students, clients, parents/carers, general complaints or for appeals against dismissal of a student.

1. Appeals should be made within ten working days from receipt of the outcome response by writing to the Company Secretary at haveyoursay@derwen.ac.uk or by letter to the address below. An acknowledgement email or letter will be sent within one working day of receipt.
2. The appeal will be passed to the Principal & CEO who will nominate a manager and at least one governor to hear the appeal.
3. The Nominated Manager and governor(s) will, at the earliest possible date, review the case and will either confirm or overturn the original decision. The outcome of the appeal will be emailed or posted to the complainant as soon as practicable after the appeal hearing.
4. In terms of the College, the appeals outcome is final.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied

If the complainant remains unhappy with the College's response there are some external bodies to whom complaints can be escalated.

The **Care Quality Commission** publishes information on how to complain about adult social care if you are not happy with the College response. Complainants should go to their website at <https://www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us/how-complain/complain-about-service-or-provider> or phone them on 03000 616161.

The **Charity Commission** publishes information on how to complain about a charity at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity> which includes links to complaints about how a charity fundraises or how it advertises.

The **Education & Skills Funding Agency** publishes information about providers it funds at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

Shropshire Council is Derwen College's local authority for its Gobowen, Walford and Ludlow campuses. Their customer services team can be contacted on **0345 678 9000** or by email at customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk

Telford & Wrekin is the local authority for Derwen College Telford's campus. Their contact number is **01952 382 006** or at customer.relationship@telford.gov.uk.

Complainants can contact the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** can be contacted on **0300 061 0614**

College contact details

Derwen College
Whittington Road
Gobowen
Shropshire
SY11 3JA

Main switchboard 01691 661 234

Complaints and concerns email: haveyoursay@derwen.ac.uk

Formal-complaints procedure flowchart

