

Complaint Procedure

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1. Introduction

The College aims to provide an inspirational, enjoyable and successful learning experience that supports learners to achieve their goals. However, we appreciate that there may be occasions when you are not completely happy about a part of the service provided by or on behalf of the College and feel this has affected your experience at the College. This complaint procedure has been put in place to help deal with these instances.

The College is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability and seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner, taking into account the requirements of the funding bodies and the standards in public life set out in the reports of the Nolan Committee. If you have a genuine suspicion of bribery, or that there have been breaches of the law and other serious wrongdoings you should raise your concerns under the College's Whistle Blowing Policy with the Director of Governance.

If you wish to appeal against a decision which has been made in relation to an application to study one of our Higher Education programmes, you should refer to the HE Admissions Policy and Procedure for details of the Appeals process. A copy is available on the HBUC home page.

This procedure should not be used to raise a concern or complaint related to the outcomes of assessment performance or academic judgements except where there is a complaint about a service provided which has to be resolved before an appeal decision can be made. If you are an HE student and wish to appeal against an assessment decision based upon your academic achievement or progress, you should refer to the Higher Education Appeals procedure available on the HBUC home page.

It is expected that the majority of concerns and issues can be resolved at either stage 1 or Stage 2 of this procedure. However, in the event of a serious matter being raised with the College it may be decided that the matter should be considered immediately under the formal stage 3 of the Procedure.

2. Stage 1: Raising Issues

If you are unhappy with an aspect of the service you have received at the College, rather than let your concern become a complaint, you should try and resolve your issue promptly and informally by either speaking directly with the person, who in your opinion, is responsible for your dissatisfaction or concern about the service provided or, raising your concerns with the supervisor/manager for the area/service concerned.

If you are a student, you should raise your concerns directly with your tutor/assessor, your Progress Coach/Personal Development Coach or any member of staff to whom you feel comfortable speaking with. You can also talk to your class representative and ask them to represent your views through the learner voice system.

A Stage 1 issue can be recorded through a form that is located on Student Zone, at the bottom of the website:

<https://student.hughbaird.ac.uk/>

3. Stage 2: Informal Complaint

If your concern has not been resolved at Stage 1 or you feel the issue has not been responded to satisfactorily, you can take your complaint to the second stage of the Complaint Procedure by submitting a Customer Complaint Form via the College website at:

<https://www.hughbaird.ac.uk/complaint>

In completing the form, you should identify both the nature of your complaint and, if appropriate, the individual against whom the complaint is being made.

Following receipt of the form, the College will review its contents and determine whether the matter you are raising would be more appropriately dealt with under another College Procedure, such as the processes in place for Safeguarding or the Staff Disciplinary procedure if it is a complaint about the conduct of a member of staff. If a different procedure is to be used to resolve your concerns, you will be notified in writing with an explanation of the process which will be followed.

If your concerns are to be dealt with under this procedure, the Complaints Form will be forwarded to an appropriate manager of the area you are providing the feedback or complaint about. You will be contacted by the relevant manager to discuss the matter, either face to face or by telephone, within five working days.

The manager dealing with your concern at this stage of the procedure will have the authority and discretion to consider any reasonable option to resolve your concerns. It is therefore envisaged that the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily at this stage with no further action being necessary.

4. Stage 3: Formal Complaint

If you feel your issue or complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2 of this procedure, you may request that the matter is dealt with as a formal complaint. You should submit your request in writing to Nicole Phillips, Executive Administrator, Principal's Office or via email to nicole.phillips@hughbaird.ac.uk

On receipt of a formal complaint an appropriate independent College Manager will be appointed to undertake a formal investigation of the facts relating to your complaint. You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint and be provided with the name and contact details of the Investigating Manager within 5 working days¹.

The Investigating Manager may contact you for further information and may ask to meet with you to discuss the details of the complaint further.

The Investigating Manager will normally provide you with a formal written response to your complaint within 15 working days¹ of the acknowledgement letter. If for any reason, there will be a delay in a response being provided we will write to you to let you know.

5. Stage 4: Review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your formal complaint, you have the right to appeal under Stage 4 of the Complaints Procedure. Your appeal must be submitted in writing within 14 calendar days of receipt of the formal outcome under stage 3 detailing the reasons for your dissatisfaction. You should submit your request in writing to Nicole Phillips, Executive Administrator, Principal's Office or via email to nicole.phillips@hughbaird.ac.uk

Your appeal will be acknowledged within 5 working days¹ and you will be informed of the name and contact details of the senior manager who has been appointed to undertake a review of your complaint and the findings and conclusions of the investigation undertaken at Stage 3 of this procedure.

The reviewing manager may contact you for further information and may ask to meet with you to clarify the concerns you have raised.

We will normally write to you within 15 College working days¹ with the outcome of your appeal. If we are not able to do so within this timescale, we will write to you to let you know. This represents the final stage of the College's Complaint Procedure.

Depending upon the nature of your complaint you may, if you remain dissatisfied, have the right to pursue the matter through an external complaint procedure. If this applies, your final outcome letter from the College will signpost the relevant next steps for you.

6. Independent External Review

Depending upon the nature of the matter you have complained about you may have a further right of appeal to either the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or the office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education if you remain dissatisfied.

Complaints regarding FE Provision

You can obtain a copy of the ESFA Complaints Procedure from the Complaints Team, Education & Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT. Guidance on submitting a complaint can also be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>.

You should be aware that any complaint made to the ESFA must be made in writing within twelve months of exhausting the College Complaint Procedure.

Complaints regarding HE Academic Matters

If you are a Higher Education student and remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the College's Complaint procedure you may, depending upon the nature of your complaint, pursue the matter through the Complaint Procedure of the awarding partner for your programme. Links to individual partner institution policies and procedures are available on the HBUC home page, located in the Wider Information Set (WIS) Policies and Procedures.

Following a review of your complaint by a partner institution, you will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. If you still remain dissatisfied you have a right to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education, who provide an independent scheme to review student complaints. You will need to use the OIA's complaints form, which you will find on its website <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/> Please be aware that you have one year from the date of your Completion of Procedures letter to ask the OIA to look at your complaint.

7. Monitoring and Review

Implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Assistant Principal Quality and Learner Services, to ensure it is consistently and fairly applied and reviewed every two years.

Hugh Baird College is proud to promote an inclusive environment for all students regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. As a college it is recognized that diversity of all forms should be celebrated. This is promoted to ensure all staff, students and stakeholders feel proud to explore and share their own identity.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

The College is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and providing a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment means that this policy has been reviewed to ensure that it does not discriminate (either intentionally or unintentionally) any of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender (including gender identity), race, religion or sexual orientation and meets our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

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