

 <p>Farnborough College of Technology</p>	<h2>Complaints Policy & Procedures</h2>
Owner	Principal CEO & Member of the Corporation, acting on the Board's behalf
Approval by Corporation	Yes
Date reviewed	June 2024
Date for next review	June 2026
Impact of changes	A clearer & more streamlined process for learners including work-based learners

OUR PURPOSE

Our vision is to create learners who will be a success for themselves, the economy, and society. Our mission is to be a Technical Community University, facilitating learners' social mobility, fuelling sustainable industries, and empowering inclusive lifelong learning communities.

GROWTH MINDSET VALUES

We will respect and live our values, endeavouring always to:

- Celebrate effort, dedication, growth, and lifelong learning.
- Engender inclusive empathy and respect for diversity.
- Demonstrate commitment to our selfless vocation.
- Embrace successes and challenges equally.

GROWTH MINDSET CULTURE

We will:

- Hold each other accountable to high expectations.
- Nurture a virtuous circle, in which we continuously improve, learning from successes & failure alike.
- Evolve through collaborative and innovative practices to be a 'beyond outstanding' 21st Century institution.

INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY

This policy is for users of the College's services and is intended to deal with concerns such as:

- Delivery of the College's services and activities as it relates to a learner at the College.
- Administration of the College's responsibilities including, enrolment / admissions, TLA, learner conduct and disciplinary.

The College strives to provide the best quality learning and services that meet or exceed the expectations of our learners and users. The College therefore promotes a total quality culture that is responsive to feedback, whether complimentary or critical. Consequently, the College:

- Is committed to providing high standards of education to its learners and a high degree of efficiency in the administration of all related services.
- Encourages a positive environment in which contact and feedback from learners on the quality of services is welcomed, and where constructive complaints can be dealt with effectively.
- Applies procedures to prospective learners, enrolled learners & stakeholder employers of current learners.
- Ensures that where the learner is under 18, or classified as a vulnerable student, then their parent, guardian or carer named on the Joining Form may make a representation on their behalf. Whilst family members may support in the background, the College does not have the capacity to engage with multiple families with varying communications, the College will therefore deal only with the learner or the parent, guardian, or carer named on the Joining Form.
- Has due regard to the personal characteristics which are protected by the Equality Act 2010.
- Encourages complaints are made as soon as possible and no later than ten working days of the date of the incident.
- Welcomes feedback from our neighbours and communities to continually improve the services we offer.

Note:

- If the complaint is about an examination or assessment outcome, the separate academic appeals policy may apply instead.

- This Policy cannot be used by the complainant to complain about staff if they are not happy with the College's findings and decisions at any stage.
- This policy is for guidance, and we may deviate from this where the circumstances are appropriate.

KEY PRINCIPLES

All complaints will be dealt with:

- **Promptly** – the College response to the complaint will be made within a reasonable period of time.
- **Objectively** – those investigating the complaint will take into account the views of all concerned and take account of all relevant evidence.
- **Confidentiality** – reasonable entitlement to confidentiality will be respected. Only those involved would normally be aware, but all complaints are logged, and findings are shared with relevant managers in order to continually improve our performance.
- **Fairly** – if action is required it will be appropriate to the nature of the issue and in accordance with the general procedures and policies of the College.

UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT BEHAVIOUR

FCoT is committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in an open, fair, and timely manner. We aim to respond to all complaints positively such that complainants are satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled. We ask that individuals engage with the College in a constructive manner to help us to understand the concerns raised and investigate the complaint effectively. Our staff have the right to work in a safe environment and should not have to tolerate abusive language or behaviour. The College therefore reserves the right *not* to investigate any complaint considered to be vexatious.

In a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way that is unreasonable. Complainants may behave unacceptably or be unreasonably persistent in their contact with the College. This is resource intensive and hinders our services to other stakeholders. We will not tolerate abusive, offensive, threatening, or other forms of unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour.

This policy is therefore designed to deal with complainants where the Complaints Procedure has been correctly implemented as far as possible and nothing further can reasonably be done to rectify a real or perceived problem. Examples of unreasonable actions and behaviours include:

- Consistently refuses to co-operate with the complaints process.
- Makes repetitive, persistent, and unreasonable demands that are not achievable or realistic.
- Verbally abusive or intimidating towards our staff.
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach, pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with a variety of organisations.
- Makes the same complaint repeatedly after the complaints process has concluded.
- Repeatedly refuses to accept documented evidence as factual.
- Persistently complains about or challenges an issue based on an historic and irreversible decision or incident.
- Submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations.
- Places excessive demands on the time and resource of our employees whilst an enquiry or complaint is still being considered.
- Should the process find malicious or unfounded allegations about our employees post the determination, the complaint is not upheld.

When we consider someone's behaviour unreasonable, we will explain why and ask them to change it. We will also warn them that, if the behaviour continues, we will take action to restrict their contact with the College. The Principal Chief Executive or appropriate delegate will decide whether the circumstances justify any restriction of access. Examples of restrictions the College may apply:

- Implementing a temporary access restriction whereby the individual may only contact the College via one designated route such as a generic email address or telephone number or a single individual point of contact within the College.
- Limit the number and duration of an individual's contact by stipulating set times per week / month they may contact the College.
- Advise the individual in writing that the matter has become exhausted, and all further correspondence will be read but in the absence of any new or additional information this will be logged only.

- Terminate conversations where an individual is aggressive, abusive, or offensive; a warning will be given before terminating.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the safety and welfare of our staff, we may report the matter to the police or consider taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning.

Stage 1: Informal Process for Complaint Resolution

It should normally be possible to resolve complaints using the informal process. If any complaints are of a serious nature they should be brought to the attention of the Principal, preferably in writing to be dealt with under the Formal process.

The process applies to the following stakeholders using the relevant email address below:

- Prospective learners / Applicants wishing to raise issues or make comments about offers or services provided between acceptance and enrolment.
- Enrolled learners, wishing to raise issues or make comments about aspects of their course or college services should make them firstly to their tutor or Programme Manager. Sometimes it may be more appropriate to instead raise issues with the Assistant Principal.
- Employers with learners / Apprentices at the College
- Work-based learners wishing to raise issues or make comments about aspects of their course or college services should make them firstly to their reviewer, lecturer, assessor, Programme Manager or Assistant Principal
- Off campus, the apprentice or employer should be a direct call to the Apprenticeship Programme Lead via email at: apprenticeshipfeedback@farn-ct.ac.uk
- Members of the public, wishing to raise issues or make comments about aspects of the College's business and services should raise them directly by email to centraladmin@farn-ct.ac.uk.

With very few exceptions, the informal process must be exhausted before the formal process is invoked.

Stage 2: Formal Process for Complaint Resolution

If complaints cannot be settled through an Informal process (Stage 1) or are of a serious nature, Formal complaints should be addressed to the Principal in writing and will only be considered as "formal complaints" if stipulated as such in the written complaint. Written complaints may be submitted by email to centraladmin@farn-ct.ac.uk or letter sent to Farnborough College of Technology, Boundary Road, Farnborough, GU14 6SB.

The following procedures will apply:

- The complaint will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt. Outside of term time, this may take longer.
- Whilst confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is not normally possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant staff and to allow the College a fair opportunity to resolve the issue.
- The individual who has raised the formal complaint will at the request of the College provide any further information necessary to assist the College in investigating and responding to the complaint.
- A Senior Manager designated by the Principal will assess the nature of the complaint before appointing an appropriate manager to investigate the matter in accordance with the key principles set out above.
- A written response to the complainant based on the investigation will normally be sent within ten working days of the matter being reported, outlining any specific actions which may be appropriate. The letter / email may refer to further recourse available to other named agencies. Outside of term time, this may take longer.
- If the matter is likely to take longer to investigate, the complainant will be informed of this before ten days have elapsed and kept informed as the investigation proceeds.
- The outcome of the Formal process will be one of the following:
 1. to dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons.
 2. to partially uphold the complaint identifying the actions to address the issue - actions relating to staff cannot be shared.
 3. to fully uphold the complaint identifying the actions to address the issue - actions relating to staff cannot be shared.

Stage 3: Appeal Procedure

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, then he/she/they may appeal directly to the Principal, in writing as per above. The appeal must be received within 10 working days of the outcome of the Formal process being communicated to the complainant.

The following procedures will apply:

- This Appeal will be acknowledged within three working days. Outside of term time, this may take longer.
- The Principal (or on their behalf, a member of SMT or a named delegate) will reconsider the matter directly in accordance with the key principles set out above.
- A formal response to the Appeal will normally be issued within ten working days of the receipt of the Appeal. Outside of term time, this may take longer.
- The Principal or appointed SMT member or named delegate may decide to:
 1. uphold the original decision.
 2. partially uphold the complaint.
 3. fully uphold the complaint.

At appeal, the decision of the Principal CEO as a member of the Governing Board is final.

The Board of Governors does not investigate complaints or appeals directly as this is delegated to the Principal CEO as a Member of the Board.

Please note - this policy does not extend to raising a complaint about the Principal where the process has been followed.

If you are unhappy with the decision after appeal, the internal processes are exhausted, but you do have the option to write to the following:

Further Education Learners	University of Surrey Learners	Higher Education Learners
Education & Skills Funding Agency Cheylesmore House, Coventry CV1 2WT	Academic Registry University of Surrey Guildford GU2 7XH	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education Abbey Gate, 57-75 Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3AB Telephone: 01189 599813 Website: www.oiahe.org.uk