

AWARD-WINNING EDUCATION

HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE

COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY



Policy Cover Sheet

Please fill in the following details:

Policy Name	Compliments & Complaints Policy
Version Number	V2
Policy Owner	Ross Black
Release Date	March 2026
Policy valid for	3 years

Documents included:

Completed Checklist (below)	X
Policy text	X
Filled in EIA	X

Where should this policy be shared? All policies will be shared on the HUB.

The HUB	X
Net Consent	X
Website	X

Policy Checklist

Have you completed the following tasks:

Used the Microsoft Accessibility Checker	X
Used formatted headings	X
Used Arial 12pt font	X
Included numbered paragraphs	X
Included page numbers	X
Included alternative text for all images which accurately describe what's in the picture	X
Checked for gender neutral language e.g. remove dinner ladies, workmen, he/she and replaced with servers, contractors, they.	X
Used the full phrase instead of the acronym at least the first time	X
Used the spelling and grammar check	X
Gained feedback from colleagues to ensure the policy is clear and accurate	X
Included any legal, social or organisational changes since the last policy review	X
Reviewed the connected policies to ensure they are still active	X
Filled in the change log	X
Listened to the policy using the accessible reader	X
Reviewed the policy flowchart	X
Informed the EDI Manager of upcoming policy deadlines	X

Sign Off: To be filled in by the named person only

	Name	Date
SLT	Matthew Taylor	30/01/2024
Corporation (if required)		
Trade Union		
EIA	Adam Carney	30/01/2024

Change log

Version number	Changes description	Major changes? Y/N	Initiator	Rationale	Date of completion	New version number
n/a	Transferred to new format	N	Ross Black	New formatting	12 th Nov 2021	V1
V1	Updated key terminology	N	Ross Black	Updates for 23-26	30/01/2024	V2
V2	<p>Added Freedom Speech Section</p> <p>Refreshed the flow chart in appendix 9</p> <p>Removed reference to ESFA</p> <p>Added a point within section 5 around behaviour of Learners & NoK</p>	N	Ross Black	Updates from 2026	March 2026	V3

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This policy identifies the arrangements to be used by Hopwood Hall College to deal with anyone who has had a positive or negative experience with the College services. This includes compliments, comments, feedback and complaints from students, parents, students, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors and any other users of our services.

2. SCOPE

2.1. This policy and procedure will enable students to provide the college with compliments, comments, feedback and complaints. It will help to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination against any individual who identify within the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage, and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation as contained within the Equality Act 2010.

2.2. Examples of potential complaints:

2.2.1. **Industrial Action**

2.2.1.1. Service disruption as a result of industrial action causing lost learning or course provision where the College has failed to mitigate for missing content and that in some instances alternative arrangements have not been accessible to all students.

2.3. **Service Delivery**

2.3.1. These complaints might relate to the quality of provision which could include facilities, teaching delivery or wider student services offered by the college, where a student has been disadvantaged as a result of poor service delivery or where services failed to meet what was expected.

2.4. **Disciplinary Matters**

2.4.1. The Office of Independent Adjudicator distinguishes between disciplinary cases relating to academic matters and disciplinary cases relating to non-academic matters. These cases are often around students feeling that

disciplinary procedures have been conducted unfairly, disproportionately or failing to act in line with institutional standards.

2.5. Academic disciplinary procedures often relate to issues of academic integrity, plagiarism or misconduct within a course. Whilst non-academic disciplinary procedures relate to issues in which student's behaviour to staff or fellow students fail to meet expected standards.

2.6. The college does not accept any form of sexual harassment, violence or abuse and any member of the college community who wishes to make a complaint of this nature will be supported to do so through the [Positive Behaviour Support and Disciplinary Policy](#) for students or [Professional Guidelines for Staff](#). Any reasonable adjustment or support required to enable compliments and complaints to be made will be put in place.

2.7. This policy does not replace the College's Disciplinary Procedure, Speaking Out Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, Allegation Management Procedure, Academic Appeals Policy, Higher Education Policies or Fees Policy which should be followed as appropriate.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1. The College is committed to providing high quality experience for all its students through teaching, learning and a range of professional support and commercial services.

3.2. The College welcomes compliments, comments, feedback and complaints and will deal with them in a sensitive, fair and efficient way. The Policy will be published on the College's website, communicated to all staff via Netconsent and updated accordingly.

4. AIM

4.1. The compliments, comments, feedback and complaints procedure plays an important part in enabling the college to gain awareness of positive aspects of our services and areas that require further development. This policy is in place to:

- 4.1.1. Help students understand the compliments, comments, feedback and complaints procedure
- 4.1.2. Enable students to compliment, comment, feedback and complain
- 4.1.3. Address all complaints effectively
- 4.1.4. Allow speedy handling with established time limits for action
- 4.1.5. Keep people informed of the progress of their complaint
- 4.1.6. Ensure a full and fair investigation where required
- 4.1.7. Respect students confidentiality
- 4.1.8. Collate information to assist the College to improve services and work in a more equitable way.

4.2. The College defines compliments, comments, feedback and complaints in the following way:

- 4.2.1. **Compliment:** 'A polite expression of praise or admiration'.
- 4.2.2. **Comment:** 'A verbal or written remark expressing an opinion or reaction'.
- 4.2.3. **Feedback:** 'Information about [reactions](#) to a [product](#) or a person's [performance](#) of a [task](#), which is used as a [basis](#) for development or praise'.
- 4.2.4. **Complaint:** 'An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of services provided which requires a response'.
- 4.2.5. **Working Day:** this is a college working day and applies to term time only.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. All staff

- 5.1.1. All staff have responsibility for ensuring that students are sign posted to the Student and College Services Team who will receive and record both **informal and formal** compliments, comments, feedback and complaints.

5.1.2. All staff must refer Compliments, Comments, Feedback and Complaints to the Student and College Services team so that they can be logged and tracked **Telephone: 0161 643 7560** or email enquiries@hopwood.ac.uk

5.2. Student & College Services Team

- 5.2.1. Student and College Services staff are responsible for initial clarification and recording of Complaints on the college Compliment and Complaint system.
- 5.2.2. Student and College Services staff will provide students who have made a formal complaint with an acknowledgment letter which is generated by the system automatically once a complaint is recorded.
- 5.2.3. Respond to any reasonable adjustment or support.

5.3. Student & College Services Manager

- 5.3.1. The Student and College Services Manager will ensure that this policy is updated and accessible.
- 5.3.2. The Student and College Services Manager will be responsible for the allocation of Complaints for investigation to the appropriate Manager.
- 5.3.3. The Student and College Services Manager will make the manager of the reviewer aware of investigation.
- 5.3.4. The Student and College Services Manager is responsible for monitoring the compliment and complaints process and for preparing termly reports and an annual report on the operation of the procedure.
- 5.3.5. Respond to any reasonable adjustment or support.

5.4. Investigating Manager

- 5.4.1. The Investigating Manager is responsible for undertaking the timely investigation into a Complaint allocated to them and reaching an outcome or resolving the Complaint and compiling the resolution letter. The Investigating Manager is also responsible for recommendations for future preventive measures.
- 5.4.2. Respond to any reasonable adjustment or support.

5.5. Head of Communications and Marketing

5.5.1. The Head of Communications and Marketing is responsible for tracking comments made on social media channels and over direct messaging, establishing the nature of the comment and, where appropriate, advising the complainant how to follow the College's Complaint Procedure. We reserve the right to remove complaints posted on any public facing platform.

5.6. Students & Next Of Kins (NoK)

5.6.1. Students are required to bring their compliments, comments, feedback and complaints to the college's attention as soon as possible. This can be done in various ways including face to face, writing a letter, by telephone and via the college website.

5.6.2. Student Group concerns will be considered flexibly, giving individual students the chance to separate their own concerns alongside the group one, so that each individual concern is addressed as well as on the whole.

5.6.3. Representatives in meetings are permitted provided the student's consent is confirmed to allow them to accompany them.

5.6.4. Students can access support and Information advice and guidance from Student College Services, Head of Department (if not involved), Safeguarding Team or from the Learning Support team, including reasonable adjustments to enable them to fully engage with the process.

5.6.5. In the event of learners being involved in an ongoing incident or suspended pending investigation and submitting a complaint or comment, the [Positive Behaviour Policy](#) must be adhered to and any ongoing investigations must first be concluded before a formal complaint can be raised.

5.6.6. Any form of abuse or harassment directed towards staff by learners will not be tolerated when accessing this policy. In such cases, the college reserves the right to withdraw complaints from the procedure if staff are subjected to inappropriate behaviour.

5.6.7. Complainants will not be disadvantaged or discriminated against in any way once they have made a complaint.

5.7. Apprenticeships – End Point Assessment Providers

- 5.7.1. The employer acknowledges that the College does not exercise control over the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO). If the employer has a complaint about the EPAO they should contact the College in the first instance to discuss the complaint by contacting **Training @ Hopwood: Telephone: 0161 643 7560 or email: apprenticeships@hopwood.ac.uk**
- 5.7.2. The College at its sole discretion considers it appropriate to mediate any complaints between the employer and EPAO. The College may, however, determine that it is appropriate for a complaint against an EPAO to be raised directly with the EPAO. If the employer is directed to EPAO to raise a complaint with them, the employer shall keep the College's Training @ Hopwood informed of the progress and resolution of the complaint.
- 5.7.3. In the event that the employer is not able to reach a resolution with the EPAO the College may aid the employer or the EPAO as it considers appropriate in order to resolve the complaint.
- 5.7.4. If the employer has not been able to resolve a complaint with EPAO in accordance with the above the employer could raise a formal complaint with the College regarding the EPAO.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1. Stage 1: Informal compliments, comments, feedback and complaints

- 6.1.1. Informal compliments, comments, feedback and complaints may be received by any member of staff.
- 6.1.2. Staff members should listen and respond to any concerns or negative feedback in a sensitive, fair and efficient way.
- 6.1.3. Informal compliments, comments, feedback or complaints can be initiated verbally, by email or by telephone to the member of staff or Head of Department.
- 6.1.4. Informal compliments and complaints should be referred to the Student & College Services team to be recorded on the college system (this means that if an employee has received a Compliment, Comments or Complaint and resolved the case, they should send the information to Student & College Services for recording purposes only).

- 6.1.5. No formal responses are necessarily required for informal compliments, comments, feedback and informal complaints.
- 6.1.6. Where appropriate staff should make recommendations for improvement within their own area when they have resolved an informal complaint and the learner informed verbally or by phone.
- 6.1.7. Every effort is made to resolve an informal complaint however if resolution is not reached within 10 working days, the complaint becomes formal, and the complainant will be informed of the next steps, as per the below stage.

6.2. Stage 2: Formal compliments, comments, feedback and complaints

- 6.2.1. All formal compliments and complaints should be referred to the Student & College Services Team to be recorded on the college complaint system.
- 6.2.2. Students should outline their complaint and include any relevant accompanying evidence, if not already undertaken at the informal stage.
- 6.2.3. Student & College Services Team will respond to any formal complaints with an acknowledgement letter. The complainant will receive this within 2 working day (face to face complaints may receive an acknowledgement letter immediately).
- 6.2.4. The Student and College Services Manager will allocate an investigator within 2 working days.
- 6.2.5. The investigator may liaise with the complainant to seek further clarification and they may need to provide further evidence if appropriate.
- 6.2.6. The investigator will investigate the complaint using balance of probability standard of proof and aim to find a resolution within 12 working days.
- 6.2.7. The investigator will provide the complainant with an outcome letter within 12 working days outlining how the complaint was investigated, evidence used, conclusion reached and steps to be taken to put matters right where appropriate.
- 6.2.8. The Student and College Services Manager will record the outcome on the college compliment and complaint system.
- 6.2.9. Where further investigation is required and more time is needed, this will be communicated to Student & College Services and the complainant. This will be no more than 12 days.

- 6.2.10. Where appropriate the investigator will make recommendations for improvements using the recommendations for improvements form.
- 6.2.11. If there are any Human Resources (HR) implications, these will be sent to the HR Manager for escalation.

6.3. Stage 3: Appeals

- 6.3.1. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome offered by the investigator, the complainant may appeal to the College and request a review of the outcome within 10 working days.
- 6.3.2. The Student and College Services Manager will record the appeal and allocate a Reviewer within 2 working days.
- 6.3.3. The Reviewer will be a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will examine the grounds for review and aim to find a resolution. These grounds include:
- 6.3.3.1. a review of the procedures followed at the formal stage.
 - 6.3.3.2. consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable.
 - 6.3.3.3. new evidence is available from the complainant. **This review would not consider the issues afresh or involve further investigation.**
- 6.3.4. The Reviewer will provide the complainant with a final outcome letter or Completion of Proceeding letter (CoP) for Higher Education, within 12 working days of the date appeal being made.
- 6.3.5. The Student and College Services Manager will record the outcome on the college Compliment and Complaint system.

6.4. Stage 4: Unresolved

- 6.4.1. If the complainant has exhausted all avenues within the college policy and remains unsatisfied with the resolution provided by the College, then they should seek advice from the Department for Education (DfE).
- 6.4.2. In the case of a complaint relating to the college's Higher Education provision, advice should be sought from the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) (OIA). [Complainants will need to submit a form to the OIA within 12 months of receiving the CoP.](#) Complainants are also entitled to progress their complaints through the [Open University](#) if dissatisfied with the appeal

outcome and if they have exhausted all internal processes. When the Open University have completed a review they will issue the CoP.

6.4.3. The process for resolving any queries or complaints regarding the apprenticeship, including quality must include details of the escalation route within the main provider's own organisation and the escalation process to the Apprenticeship Service Support on 08000 150 600 or helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk

6.5. HE Refunds

6.5.1. In the event that the college can no longer offer continuation of study then Higher Education students may receive a refund of their tuition fees and a compensatory payment to offset the additional costs incurred to complete the course of study at an alternative location.

6.5.2. Consideration will be given to other costs incurred such as maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to offer continuation of the course. Students to provide evidence of additional costs prior to any such consideration being made to the student. In these circumstances, the college may also honour student bursaries awarded at the time of enrolment.

6.5.3. Refer to Fees Policy, Terms and Conditions and Student Protection Plan.

6.6. Freedom of Speech Complaints (Higher Education)

6.6.1. Any complaint regarding a Freedom of Speech concern will go straight to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

6.6.2. This reflects the college's duties under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 to take reasonably practicable steps to secure lawful freedom of speech.

6.6.3. SLT will assess complaints using the OfS three-step framework: whether the speech is lawful, whether reasonably practicable steps can secure it, and whether any restriction is prescribed by law and proportionate under ECHR.

6.6.4. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may refer the matter to the **Office for Students (OfS) complaints scheme**.

6.6.5. Complaints will be handled fairly and transparently, balancing freedom of expression with other statutory duties such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Prevent Duty.

6.6.6. For further information, please refer to Hopwood Hall College's Freedom of Speech Code of Conduct.

6.7. Freedom of Speech Complaints (Further Education)

6.7.1. Any complaint regarding a Freedom of Speech concern will go straight to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

6.7.2. SLT will assess the complaints: whether the speech is lawful, whether reasonably practicable steps can secure it, and whether any restriction is prescribed by law and proportionate under ECHR.

6.7.3. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may refer the matter to the **Department of Education (DfE)**.

6.7.4. Complaints will be handled fairly and transparently, balancing freedom of expression with other statutory duties such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Prevent Duty.

6.8. Feedback & Comments

6.8.1. The college will also offer a wide range of opportunities for Students to provide feedback and comments including during Enrolment and Open Days, Learner Voice mechanisms, Principal's Question Time, Tutorials / Progress Reviews, email, Its Learning and via Social Media.

6.9. Data

6.9.1. Learner Data will be held on the secure College server – handled by the allocated Investigating individual at each stage of the process in accordance with [Data Protection Policy](#).

7. MONITORING & EVALUATION

- 7.1. The Student and College Services Manager will track the progress of all complaints and will submit a termly report to the wider management team summarising compliments and complaints. Any concerns or complaints relating to inclusion will be shared with the Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Manager and reported annually to the Equality & Diversity steering group.
- 7.2. This policy will be shared through the following methods:
- 7.2.1. All employees (via Netconsent)
 - 7.2.2. All students (Tutorial Sessions)
 - 7.2.3. All Students and visitors (via college website and Student & College Services)
 - 7.2.4. All employers (via a services agreement)
 - 7.2.5. All Apprentices (via e-portfolio and induction)

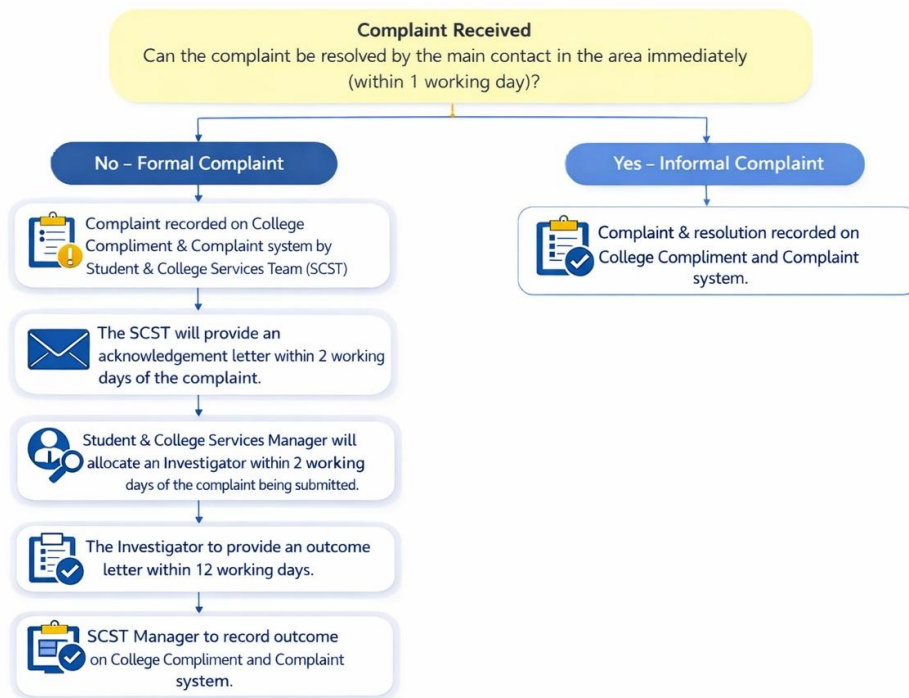
8. DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS POLICY

Available at [our Reports & Policies page](#):

- 8.1. Positive Behaviour Policy
- 8.2. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- 8.3. Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- 8.4. Bullying & Harassment Policy
- 8.5. Speaking Out Policy and Procedure
- 8.6. HE Policies ([/www.hopwood.ac.uk/university-centre/legal](http://www.hopwood.ac.uk/university-centre/legal))
- 8.7. Data Protection Policy
- 8.8. Fees Policy

If this document is required in an alternative format, please contact enquiries@hopwood.ac.uk

9. APPENDIX A: COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS FLOWCHART



Where customers are not happy with the response from the investigator, they can appeal. The process above is repeated but is investigated by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.