

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The College has a policy of continual improvement and would wish to hear complaints about any of its services, which do not meet its own high standards. Students following a Higher Education course at AHed should refer to their student handbook or the AHed website for full HE grievance and complaints procedures.

The College Complaints Procedure operates in three stages:

#### **Stage One**

A complainant who is not satisfied with any of the services provided by the College or feels he/she has been treated unfairly should first discuss the matter with their personal/course tutor, Lead Tutor, Curriculum Head or a Head of Faculty/Adult & Higher Education Division Curriculum Head, or Head of Boarding. It should usually be possible to resolve the matter quickly and informally.

#### **Stage Two**

If concerns are not resolved informally then the complainant has the right to make a formal complaint in writing. A complaints form is available for students/employers to use from the Student Services desk in the Paul Woodhouse Centre or from the Café area archway on the Weeke Site, employers can contact AHED reception on 01926 886166 to obtain an electronic copy of the form.

The completed form will be forwarded to the Deputy Principal (Students) for 16-19 students or to the Director of Adult & Higher Education for adult students/employers. They will take all complaints seriously and will always try to seek a resolution. This may involve talking with all parties concerned. The College aims to deal with all complaints within five working term time days of the complaint being received, but it is recognised that in complex situations it may take longer. The College will inform the complainant in writing of the outcome of their complaint.

#### **Stage Three**

In the case of a complainant not being satisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint, then the matter will be referred to the Principal. The complainant should write to the Principal within five working term time days of the receipt of the letter setting out the outcome to their formal complaint, setting out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the outcome.

The Principal will decide how to proceed, depending on the nature of the original complaint and the reason(s) why the complainant feels it has not been resolved at stages 1 and 2. The Principal may review the situation and respond to the complainant or may decide to convene a panel to review the complaint. A panel will usually be made up of three people, with its composition depending on the nature of the complaint. The complainant and any others invited to attend a panel meeting will be informed five working term time days beforehand who is on the panel and how the panel meeting will operate.

Any recommendations or decisions made by the Principal or a panel shall be final.

*This procedure is designed for use by students and employers of students. The College is aware that parents may prefer to complain directly to the Principal or another senior member of staff, in which case they should do so in writing. Such direct correspondence will be treated as far as possible as being within Stage 2 of the procedure. If, however, the complaint has been dealt with at that stage by the Principal, any further complaint will be directed to a Complaints Panel (Stage 3).*

In the event of a formal complaint from a student, employer or parent being about the actions of the Principal, this should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body who, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, will decide how to proceed. For example, there may be a review of the situation by the Chair of Governors or the Chair may decide to convene a panel to review the complaint. A panel will usually be made up of three people, with its composition depending on the nature of the complaint. The complainant and any others invited to attend a panel meeting will be informed five working term time days beforehand who is on the panel and how the panel meeting will operate.

Any recommendations or decisions made by the Chair of Governors or a panel shall be final.

### **Timescales**

Timescales for the college to respond to a complaint at stages 2 and 3 are set out above. Please note that the college will not normally deal with complaints made more than three months after the decision/action the complaint relates to occurred.

### **Scope**

In responding to a complaint at stages 2 and 3, the college reserves the right not to process a complaint which is considered to be disproportionate to the matter concerned. Also, the college reserves the right not to process complaints that are considered vexatious or malicious.

If it has not been possible to resolve a complaint through the college's Complaints Procedure, the complainant can refer the procedure to our funding body, the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For Higher Education provision, this is the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Higher Education students also have recourse to the validation institution's complaints policy and procedures, and ultimately the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, once the College's complaints procedure is exhausted.

Note, for Appeals about examination results, students should contact the Examinations Manager for advice. If there is a right of appeal to the Awarding body, this will usually need to be processed via the College.

### **Monitoring and Review**

Formal complaints are logged and form the basis of an annual monitoring report to the Senior Management Team and Governing Body. This policy is reviewed annually.

*This Complaints Policy is available in alternative formats on request by contacting the Student Services department.*