

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Introduction**

The aim of Coleg Harlech WEA (North) is to provide high quality standards of service in all aspects of provision and business dealings.

The majority of people we deal with are very happy with the levels of service we provide but occasionally things can go wrong and if it does we would like to know about it so that we can put it right.

We believe that all people have the right to expect a quality service regardless of how or what they pay for it. We also believe that those on the receiving end of our services assist us in maintaining and improving quality standards by providing us with their input.

If you would like to make a complaint please see the section entitled 'Complaints Procedure'. If you would like to appeal against an assessment decision please see the section entitled 'Appeals against Assessment Decisions'.

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### Who can complain?

Anyone who uses, or has used, the college services and/or who uses or has used the facilities whether as a student or as a visitor to any of our provision and/or premises.

#### What can I complain about?

Any aspect related to the quality of our provision, facilities and/or business dealings with you.

#### How will my complaint be received?

We welcome genuine comment regarding all aspects of our work and you will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

#### Who should I direct my complaint to?

Stage 1 – 'Informal Verbal Complaint' – any member of staff

Stage 2 – 'Informal Recorded Complaint' – any member of managerial staff

Stage 3 – 'Formal Written Complaint' – you must submit your complaint in writing to the 'Complaints Officer' by sending it to: Coleg Harlech, St. David's Hill, Harlech, Gwynedd. LL46 2PU or by emailing the relevant complaints online to [info@fc.harlech.ac.uk](mailto:info@fc.harlech.ac.uk).

If you feel at all unsure about how/when to make a complaint or would like help in composing a 'Formal Written Complaint' you can obtain support and advice from our Student Support Officer who is based on the Harlech site.

#### What happens if I want to withdraw my complaint?

You are at liberty to do this at any stage BUT the Association is free to continue with the procedure if there is any perceived potential that a lack of completion may result in potential damage and/or continuance of the issue raised.

What if I am still unhappy at the end of the Stage 3 procedure?

1. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may write a letter detailing the reasons for your dissatisfaction within 5 working days of receiving the letter from the Panel Chair and send it directly to the Principal who will consider all the facts in the case and respond to you directly.
2. If you feel that your complaint is not satisfactorily resolved at this stage, a letter detailing your dissatisfaction may be sent to the Board of Governors and/or ELWa for further investigation.

**Stage 1      Informal Verbal Complaint**

Many difficulties can usually be resolved by informal discussion and this represents the first step in the Complaints Procedure. You can make an 'Informal Verbal Complaint' to any member of staff.

If you are a student here you may be able to sort out any issues by chatting to your tutor about any difficulties that you are encountering. If you do not feel comfortable talking to your personal tutor then you could talk to any of the following people:

Student Support Services staff  
Area office staff  
Facilities/security staff  
Any member of your curriculum area staff team  
Your Student Union Representatives

At this stage your complaint will be listened to and taken seriously. Every effort will be made to assist you in dealing with/resolving the issue **BUT** no written record will be taken of the complaint.

**Stage 2      Informal Written Consent**

If that your concerns remain unresolved following informal verbal discussion or you feel that a record of the complaint may assist us in ensuring generalised improvements in our services i.e. Association wide knowledge about issues being raised may impact on prioritisation of resources/developments you may make an 'Informal Written Complaint'.

You may make an 'Informal Written Complaint' to any member of managerial staff and the member of staff will make an informal record of any matters raised in this way using the format shown below – total numbers and category information of these stage 2

complaints will be submitted to the Complaints Officer for logging on the central complaints record. This record is used to inform planning and development discussions at team and strategic level meetings.

<b>Informal Complaint Log</b>				
Complainant	Issue by Category	Date	Action Agreed (incl. dates)	By Whom
T=Teaching; F=Facilities; R=Resources; S=Support; B=Behavioural; F=Finance; B+A=Business+Admin				

### **Stage 3      Formal Written Complaint**

If you feel that following either the Informal Verbal or Informal Written procedure has not resolved your concerns and/or you feel that the matter is so serious as to warrant Senior Management involvement/awareness of the issue, you may make a 'Formal Written Complaint' to the 'Complaints Officer'. All Formal Written Complaints are recorded and statistics used to inform planning and development discussions at team and strategic level meetings.

You should write an outline account of your concerns which states all main relevant facts and your direct contact details. On receipt of your complaint the following steps will be taken.

1. The Complaints Officer will notify the Principal and/or a member of the Senior Management Team and an Investigating Officer (IO) will be appointed.
2. If necessary the Investigating Officer will contact you within a maximum of 5 working days to take a more detailed statement from you – they will ask questions to illicit all the relevant facts and will need you to supply all names, dates and facts that may be related to your complaint.
3. The investigating Officer will conduct an investigation into the issue/s raised - this may include taking statements from any other people who may also be/have been involved and/or may be able to provide additional information relating to the matter concerned. This investigation will commence within 2 working days of the IO taking your detailed statement. (if your complaint is against a person they will be issued with a copy of the complaint and any witness statements concerned – witness names can be kept confidential in certain circumstances)

If the issue can be resolved at this stage it will be logged and you will be sent a letter outlining the action taken.

4. Where the issue cannot be resolved in the first instance the IO and one other member of staff, who is unconnected with the complaint, will schedule a Panel Meeting with you to hear your complaint.

If you wish to do so, it is your right to bring someone to the meeting with you to offer you support. This could be a Student Union Representative, a friend, a family member or anyone else of your choice. If you do not wish to attend you may send a Nominated Representative – this person must bring written and signed authorisation from you to act on your behalf with them to the meeting.

Every effort will be taken to ensure that the meeting takes place within 15 working days of receiving the initial complaint form but if the investigation is large or complex it may take longer than this. The IO will inform you of the expected timescale if it is likely to exceed 15 days.

5. The Panel will also hear the views of other people concerned with the complaint.
6. The Panel Chair will write to you within 5 working days of the meeting, outlining any action to be taken.
7. The proceedings will be recorded and filed confidentially.

### **Appeals against Assessment Decisions**

The aim of Coleg Harlech WEA (North) is to provide high quality standards of service in all aspects of provision and business dealings.

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If you would like to make an appeal against an assessment made by your tutor for a piece of work that you have submitted, for a grade given for the examination and/or the execution of examinations please follow the procedures outlined here.

If you would like to make a complaint about anything other than assessment and/or examination please see the section entitled 'Complaints Procedure'.

In addition to the procedure open to you here there are several other options available to learners who believe that procedures have not been operated correctly.

## **Internal Assessment Appeals Procedure**

**Where a student feels that his/her work has been unfairly assessed by the tutor the following procedure should be followed**

Step 1            Verbal discussion between the learner and the tutor at the earliest possible convenience.

(If matter remains unresolved)

Step 2            All relevant learner and tutor documents/records submitted to the relevant Curriculum Area Co-ordinator for second opinion assessment by the tutor and/or student.

Documents must reach Curriculum Area Coordinator within 2 weeks of verbal discussion date (if no specific curriculum area coordinator is identified these should be sent to the Manager of the provision area – who will request assistance from another tutor who teaches within the curriculum area field).

Step 3            Written notification of second opinion assessment by C.A. Coordinator sent to

- i)            Learner
- ii)           Original Tutor
- iii)          Provision Area Manager

Notification must reach all of the above within 14 days after receipt by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marker.

**(NB All BA Social Studies work is 2<sup>nd</sup> marked as part of normal procedures)**

(If matter remains unresolved)

Step 4            The learner must contact the Accreditation Officer on the Harlech Site within 7 days after receipt of 2<sup>nd</sup> Marker assessment to request that the matter be referred to the relevant external moderator/examiner for external assessment verification.

The Accreditation Officer will collect all the relevant paperwork and send it to the relevant external moderator/examiner for final assessment.

The Accreditation Officer will write to you detailing the outcome of your appeal following response from the external moderator/examiner.

**THE MODERATOR/EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S DECISION IS FINAL.**

**External appeals against the incorrect operation of assessment/examination procedures**

In relation to procedural issues only – the following options are available to learners who believe that assessment/examination procedures have not been carried out in accordance with the policies and procedures used by Association staff in the execution of their duties.

For learners on undertaking provision accredited by the Open College Network Wales

Write a letter stating the details of your complaint to:

Quality Assurance Officer  
Open College Network Wales  
14/15 Llys y Fedwen  
Parc Menai  
Bangor  
Gwynedd  
LL57 4BL

For learners on undertaking provision validated by the University of Wales

*University of Wales Foundation Certificate*

The University of Wales has established appeals procedures for candidates for University examinations including students being examined for the Foundation Certificate. Any appeal against an examination should be sent in full, in writing to the University Registrar and must reach him no later than ten days after dispatch to the candidate of the verification of his /her results. The University is only prepared to consider appeals which are based on one or both of the following grounds:

1. Defects or irregularities in the conduct of the examinations or in written instructions or advice relating thereto when such defects, irregularities or advice can be shown to have had an adverse effect on the candidate's performance.
2. Exceptional personal circumstances which were not known to the Examining Board when the candidate was assessed and which can be shown to have had an adverse effect on the candidate's performance.

*University of Wales Bangor BA in Social Studies (yr 1) provision*

Write a letter stating the details of your complaint to:

Dr. David Sullivan  
Director of BA Social Studies  
Lifelong Learning Department  
University of Wales Bangor  
Bangor  
Gwynedd

Full details of the University of Wales Verification and Appeals Procedure is available from the Director of Finance & Administration.