



Complaints

Policy Statement Procedure

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Complaints

1. Policy Statement

Forth Valley College is committed to ensuring that any complaints received are addressed in an open, transparent manner to the satisfaction of all parties involved. The College welcomes the opportunity to investigate and deal with any deficiencies in its services.

2. Our Complaints Policy

This policy and procedure is designed to clarify the process both for those making a complaint, and staff dealing with complaints.

A summarised version of the information contained in this document is available on the 'Your Views' forms that are available at the reception areas of all three campuses. This information will also be made available via the student induction pack, the College website, intranet, VLE and the Student Union.

This policy and procedure is designed to address general complaints within the College where the delivery of a College service has resulted in the complainant experiencing injustice or hardship. Any complaints received in areas covered by specific College policies and procedures, such as Internal Assessment Appeals, will be addressed in accordance with these policies and procedures. Where this is the case, the complainant will be notified which policy and procedure will be used to address their complaint.

All complaints received by the College will be treated as confidential and only those staff directly involved will be made aware of the detail of the complaint.

An overview analysis of complaints received by the College is provided to Senior Managers and the Learner Services Committee of the Board of Management for the purpose of performance review.

3. When a staff member receives a complaint

As complaints can potentially cover a wide variety of topics the following are general points on how a member of staff should deal with a complaint. Our commitment is to –

- **Take all complaints seriously.** Whatever the subject of the complaint may be, by complaining the complainant has attached value to the subject and this should be respected by the member(s) of staff involved.
- **Remain professional.** In an organisation with a high degree of face to face contact, it is perhaps inevitable that there will be a proportion of complaints relating to staff. If a complaint relates to you, please remember that you are responding as a member of College staff and not as an individual. In these circumstances, it is perfectly reasonable to refer the individual to the information contained in section 4 below.
- **Clear Communication.** If the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, the complainant should be informed about the complaints process, when a response may be expected and the method to be used for communicating this information. Any response to a complaint should refer both to this policy and also make the complainant aware of the possibility of complaining directly to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO - see section 5 Unresolved Complaints) should they remain unhappy with the outcome.

- **Clear upward referral if required.** If you are unable to address a complaint, or if the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome, please ensure the complainant is provided with the information in section 4 below. If the complaint is from the media acting on behalf of a complainant you must refer to the College media policy and refer the media representative to the Communications and Marketing team.

4. How to take a complaint forward

The governing principle of complaints handling within the College is to resolve complaints quickly when they occur, and we would encourage complainants to make their initial approach to staff in the area of the College related to the complaint.

The College does recognise that in some instances, the complainant may not be comfortable with this as an initial approach, and in these circumstances complainants are advised to discuss their complaint with the relevant Curriculum and Quality Leader, or Head of Department/Service.

If the complainant does not feel comfortable with either of the above options, or feels that the complaint has not been fully addressed, they can bring their complaint to the attention of College management.

The complainant should submit a complaint in writing (via letter, e-mail to feedback@forthvalley.ac.uk; or by completing a 'Your Views' form available from College reception areas) and send this to:

Policy and Planning Officer
Forth Valley College
Grangemouth Road
Falkirk
FK2 9AD

The written complaint should provide as much as possible, including

- Full contact details for the complainant
- The date of the incident resulting in the complaint
- The impact of the incident upon the complainant
- What action the complainant would like to see occur

Please note that if the complainant requires assistance with the formation of a written complaint, reception staff at any campus will be able to direct them to the appropriate support.

The Policy and Planning Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days, and will normally investigate and respond to the complaint within 15 working days. If the response is anticipated to take longer, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for the delay and the anticipated response time.

Should the complainant feel that the complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction, they can appeal the decision made by the College. If this is the case, the complainant should appeal in writing to the Policy and Planning Officer, using the contact details above. The Policy and Planning Officer will then pass the appeal to a member of the Senior Management Team who was not involved in the original complaint investigation, for a further investigation and assessment.

5. Unresolved Complaints

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome from a complaint, provided the steps in point 4 have already been followed, independent external support is available. SPSO will consider each complaint on an individual basis and normally will only consider a complaint within 12 months of the problem arising.

The complainant should be advised to contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman at-

SPSO
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

0800 377 7330

Further information is available on the SPSO website <http://www.spsso.org.uk>