

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK POLICY AND PROCEDURE (including COMPLAINTS)

Policy Review					
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Susie Peart	One change to the "holding email" process if an investigation is delayed.	06.06.2023				
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Andrew Mitchell & Sian Deasy	Establish a pool of investigating managers, SENDCO/Assistant SENDCO for meeting support, Retain complaint records for 3 years.	April 2024		v1.1		
Andrew Mitchell & Sian Pering	Addition of the triaging stage of the process	April 2025		v1.2		
Sian Pering & Katie Lister	Addition of template letter for learners on a UWE Bristol HE Programme & Data Protection Complaints Clarity in line with student feedback in point 1.3 of protocols to follow if uncertain about route to report.	March 2026		v.2		

Initial Equality Impact Screening					
Has anyone else been consulted on this policy and/or procedure?					
What evidence has been used for this impact screening (e.g. related policies, publications)?					
Declaration (please tick one statement and indicate any negative impacts)					
☐ I am satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out on this Policy and/or Procedure and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. There are no specific negative impacts on any of the Protected Characteristics groups.					
☐ I recommend that an Equality Impact Assessment is required by the Equality and Diversity group, as possible negative impacts have been identified for one or more of the Protected Characteristics groups as follows:					
☐ Age ☐ Disability ☐ Gender Reassignment ☐ Race ☐ Religion or belief ☒ Sex ☒ Sexual orientation ☐ Marriage & civil partnership ☐ Pregnancy & maternity					
Completed by:		Position:		Date:	
Reviewed by Equality & Diversity Group: YES/NO If Yes: Date: I confirm that any recommended amendments have been made					
Summary of Comments including Recommendations from Equality & Diversity Group Review:					
Amended by Author:		Position:		Date:	

Contents

.....	1
1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY	4
2. RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY	5
3. PROVIDING FEEDBACK	5
4. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE	5
5. INFORMAL COMPLAINT	6
6. FORMAL COMPLAINTS	8
7. COMPLAINTS FOR STUDENTS STUDYING HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES AT YEOVIL COLLEGE	12
8. APPENDICES	13
APPENDIX 1	14
APPENDIX 2	15
APPENDIX 3	16
APPENDIX 4	21
APPENDIX 5	22
APPENDIX 6	23
APPENDIX 7	25
APPENDIX 8	26
APPENDIX 9	28
APPENDIX 10	30
APPENDIX 11	32

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 To support the college's mission: "To maximise potential for all". The college deals openly, fairly, and effectively with any comment or complaint about services from learners or others and offers an appropriate remedy to anyone who is adversely affected by a service which fails to meet standards.
- 1.2 Yeovil College is committed to a quality learner experience. The college constantly seeks to improve its services and to regularly monitor any complaints or comments received, and the effectiveness of the procedures to address them. Any feedback including positive comments are valuable in helping us to address areas where there is less satisfaction and to help us do more of what is valued.
- 1.3 The supporting customer service procedures provide operational detail of how to record feedback/complain about any service which Yeovil College provides. There are separate policies/procedures for dealing with staff grievances¹, appealing against the outcome of academic assessments², and for making disclosures in the public interest (whistleblowing)³. The customer feedback procedure cannot be used for any of these purposes. If an individual is unsure about what reporting procedure should be used to raise their concern, they can speak to a member of staff at the College for guidance. If feedback is mistakenly given in line with this policy which should instead be reviewed under one of the above processes, this should be communicated to the individual clearly by the member of staff reviewing the feedback.
- 1.4 Complaints procedures and disciplinary procedures are distinct. The complaints procedure aims to address complaints, satisfy complainants, ensure fairness to staff, and extract lessons for better service delivery. If a complaint reveals information suggesting the need for disciplinary action (e.g., allegations involving other students), consideration for disciplinary investigation may arise at any stage of the complaints procedure. Consideration of whether disciplinary action is warranted is a separate matter for management outside the complaints procedure and must be subject to a separate process of investigation. Where it is decided to take action under the disciplinary procedure, the complaint investigation will continue to be taken forward.

¹ Available to staff via the Policies and Procedures area on SharePoint.

² The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure, available at www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports

³ Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure, available at www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports

2. RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

- 2.1 The Principal has ultimate responsibility for customer service and will ensure that the arrangements for fair and effective management of complaints and recording of feedback are reviewed and enhanced.
- 2.2 The Vice Principal Quality of Education and the Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Services are the Principal's representatives on matters related to quality assurance and customer service respectively and are responsible for implementing systems in accordance with the approved College policy.

3. PROVIDING FEEDBACK

- 3.1 If learners/clients wish to provide positive feedback or make a suggestion about improving one of the College's services, they can do so by using the feedback@yeovil.ac.uk email address. The College welcomes comments on the kind of service we provide, the way those services are provided and the level of service experienced.

4. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Learners and other stakeholders who wish to make a complaint regarding services provided by the College should be encouraged to raise the issue with the appropriate member of staff. Issues are best resolved informally with those directly responsible.
- 4.2 However, if the issue is not resolved informally, it should be treated as a formal complaint. Formal complaints must be in writing and forwarded to the Quality Manager at the College address or by email via feedback@yeovil.ac.uk
- 4.3 The Quality Manager will keep a register of all formal complaints received, which includes the department affected, the name of the investigating manager, and the dates of receipt and resolution. Complaints will also be categorised according to the nature and severity of the complaint and reported upon to the Vice Principal Quality of Education monthly, and corporation annually. Complaints will also be monitored in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#) to highlight in reports any areas where protected characteristics are affected.
- 4.4 In compliance with our institution's policies and procedures, all complaints received will be documented and maintained for a period of three academic years.

5. DATA PROTECTION COMPLAINTS

- 5.1. Complaints about the College's processing of personal data are dealt with under the College's Data Protection Policy and the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data Use and Access Act (DUAA).
- 5.2. Data Protection complaints follow a separate statutory process/timescale – they do not form part of the College's customer service complaints procedure; however they have been included in this policy document for completeness.
- 5.3. Individuals have the right to complain if they believe the College has processed their personal data unfairly, unlawfully, inaccurately, or in a way that does not comply with data protection legislation. Before the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will consider a complaint, the individual must first raise their concerns with the College.
- 5.4. The College provides an electronic method for submitting data protection complaints, available at: <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/privacy-policy/>. Individuals may also raise a data protection complaint by email to dataprotection@yeovil.ac.uk or in another accessible format, as outlined in the Data Protection Policy.
- 5.5. In line with data protection legislation requirements, the College will:
 - Acknowledge receipt within 30 days of receiving the complaint.
 - Respond without undue delay, including:
 - making appropriate enquiries into the subject matter of the complaint,
 - keeping the complainant informed of progress, and
 - providing a clear outcome.
- 5.6. The Director of People and Compliance will investigate and assess the complaint, determine the appropriate actions, and issue the College's response. If the Director of People and Compliance has a conflict of interest Onewest will support the investigation.
- 5.7. Where a complaint relates to both service issues and data protection concerns, the DPO and Quality Manager will agree the most appropriate way to coordinate responses while ensuring statutory data protection obligations are met.
- 5.8. Further information about data protection rights and how to raise concerns is set out in the College's Data Protection Policy.

6. INFORMAL COMPLAINT

- 6.1 Yeovil College values open communication and operates a range of mechanisms for students and other stakeholders to share their feedback on both strengths and areas for improvement. As part of this commitment to providing an exceptional customer experience, we encourage all learners and other stakeholders to initially raise any concerns directly with the appropriate member of staff, wherever possible, to allow the issue to be resolved at the 'informal complaint' stage.
- 6.2 We encourage all learners and other stakeholders to share any concerns as promptly as possible, both to allow for the swift resolution of an issue, which may in turn reduce the impact on others, but also to allow for the opportunity for an issue to be resolved informally before the time limit to raise a formal complaint (as outlined in 6.1) has elapsed.
- 6.3 Informal complaints should include specific details regarding the event or issue in question. These concerns may be raised through multiple channels, including:
- 6.3.1 Engaging in a face-to-face conversation with a relevant staff member,
 - 6.3.2 Initiating a phone conversation with a relevant staff member,
 - 6.3.3 Email correspondence with a relevant member of staff,
 - 6.3.4 Sending a Microsoft Teams message to a relevant member of staff (for internal students).
- 6.4 Any staff member who receives an informal complaint should respond in line with the principles outlined in Appendix 3 and should ensure there is written evidence of the informal complaint being raised and their response. This could be in the format of saving a copy of an email or Teams conversation or creating a brief written record of a verbal conversation. Any staff member who receives an informal complaint should aim to respond to the concern promptly to allow the opportunity for the complaint to be resolved informally before the deadline for the complaint to be raised formally, as outlined in Section 6.1, has elapsed. If a staff member is unable to resolve a complaint informally within the six-week window from the event occurring, they should make the learner or other stakeholder raising the informal complaint aware of this, as the individual(s) raising the complaint may wish to progress directly to making a formal complaint so that their window for doing so does not elapse.
- 6.5 Learners and stakeholders should acknowledge that if six weeks are approaching since the occurrence of the event prompting their complaint and an informal resolution has not

been reached, they possess the option to elevate their concern to a formal complaint. This action ensures compliance with the formal complaint timeframe specified in Section 6.1, preventing its expiration. However, it is not mandatory for a learner or other stakeholder to escalate their informal concern to the formal complaint stage, and Yeovil College recognises that not all concerns or issues may warrant a formal complaint procedure.

7. FORMAL COMPLAINTS

7.1 If it is not possible to resolve the complaint informally or if the complaint is considered too serious for informal resolution, complainants should be requested to provide full details as soon as possible. The details should be in writing, either by letter or email; this should be within six weeks of the events about which they are complaining.

7.2 Complaint details should include:

- a) Name
- b) a contact address (and preferably telephone number and/or email address)
- c) programme of study (if a learner at the College)
- d) the date on which the problem arose
- e) an accurate summary of the complaint
- f) any evidence that supports the complaint being made

7.3 Complainants who require reasonable adjustments to access this procedure may contact the college by phone or in person. For complainants who have difficulty communicating in writing, a member of staff will complete the standard Formal Complaint Record form (Appendix 4). The complainant should sign the form and be given a copy of it to ensure they agree to it being factually correct.

7.4 A complaint is deemed a 'formal complaint' when either:

7.4.1 A learner or stakeholder sends a formal complaint to feedback@yeovil.ac.uk, or

7.4.2 A learner or stakeholder explicitly asks for a formal complaint to be raised as it is not possible for their complaint to be resolved informally, either in writing to a member of College staff, or using the reasonable adjustments outlined in 6.3 where a complainant has difficulty communicating in writing.

7.5 If a member of staff receives a formal complaint as outlined in 6.4.2, they must pass this to the Quality Manager immediately. Once a formal complaint is received, it will be logged

by the Quality Manager who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days.

- 7.6 Upon receiving a complaint, the Quality Manager will conduct an initial triage with the complainant to assess its nature, explore potential resolutions, and support the complainant in determining the most appropriate course of action, including whether to initiate a formal investigation.
- 7.7 Any complaints that do not progress to a formal investigation will be documented, with all relevant evidence securely stored for a period of three years. If the complainant chooses to proceed with a formal complaint, the Quality Manager will inform the complainant of the name and contact details of the person dealing with the complaint. The investigating manager will be chosen from a group of appropriate managers and senior managers as determined by the Vice Principal for Quality of Education.
- 7.8 A full investigation will be conducted with the aim of completing a written response within a maximum of 15 working days. If the complaint cannot be investigated within this period, the Quality Manager must write to the complainant before the expiration of the 15-day investigation period, to explain what action is being taken and to provide an estimate of when a full response will be provided. The Quality Manager will monitor compliance with the above service levels and, if necessary, issue a reminder to the investigating manager.
- 7.9 During any investigation we will allow both parties an equal opportunity to present their case and will give reasonable notice of proceedings. If a student is invited to a meeting, they can bring an appropriate person to support them, as required. During any meeting the college expects all parties to act reasonably and fairly towards each other, and to treat the processes with respect. As part of our commitment to inclusivity, if the learner has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), the college will make every effort to allow the learner the option to request the attendance of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO) or assistant SENDCO at meetings whenever it is practical to do so.
- 7.10 All information gained when a formal complaint is made and investigated will be kept as confidential as is reasonably possible. This means that the full details of the complaint will be shared only with the investigating manager and the senior leadership team. However, it may be necessary for the Quality Manager or the investigating manager to share some information about the contents of the complaint with other staff, students or stakeholders where they are related to the investigation, perhaps as subjects to the investigation or

witnesses to the concerns raised. The complaint will not be shared in full with these parties.

- 7.11 Students will not be disadvantaged because they have made a complaint or challenged the college. If a student feels they have been disadvantaged for raising a complaint they should contact the Principal in line with the appeals procedure in section 6 below.
- 7.12 The investigating manager will make their recommendations in relation to the complaint on the basis of a balance of probability. If they believe the complaint is frivolous or vexatious, the investigation manager will make this clear in their response.
- 7.13 Complaint responses will set out how we have investigated the complaint, the evidence we have used, the conclusion we have reached and, if appropriate, the steps we intend taking to put matters right (see guidance in Appendix 3). The Quality Manager will approve the overall content and tone of response letters before they are sent. Please note that at least two working days must be allowed for this process within the 15-day investigation period.
- 7.14 This policy is designed to help us to resolve concerns as promptly and easily as possible. In a situation where legal action was initiated by a complainant whilst the complaints process was still ongoing, we would ask the complainant to stay their action until the College's procedures were completed in accordance with civil procedure rules which encourage the parties to try to resolve issues without court proceedings wherever possible. If legal action was initiated and the complainant did not agree to stay their legal action, the complaints process would initially be paused for a period of up to 10 working days whilst the College sought legal advice to identify whether it was appropriate to run both processes concurrently, or whether the College's complaints process should be paused until the legal action was concluded. In either eventuality, the complainant would be notified in writing both that the process was being temporarily paused, and of the outcome.

7.15 **FORMAL COMPLAINT: APPEALS**

- 7.15.1 If complainants are not satisfied with our response and want to pursue matters further, they should write to the Principal within 10 working days of receiving their response, setting out why they are dissatisfied. Late submissions will also be reviewed where there are legitimate reasons for not being able to comply with published timeframes. The Principal will consult with the investigating manager

and other staff as appropriate and respond to the complainant in writing within 10 working days of receiving the appeal. If the appeal cannot be concluded within this period, the Principal will write to the complainant before the expiration of the 10-day appeal period, to provide an estimate of when a full response will be provided.

7.16 FORMAL COMPLAINT: FINAL APPEAL

- 7.16.1 The College's internal complaints and appeals process must be exhausted before a final appeal.
- 7.16.2 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they have the right to escalate it to the relevant awarding organisation. We encourage them to review the awarding body's specific procedures, as they may vary, and follow their guidelines for submitting an appeal.
- 7.16.3 Yeovil College University Centre complainants should refer to paragraph 9.7 below for further guidance.
- 7.16.4 If other Yeovil College complainants remain dissatisfied with our complaint appeal response and want to pursue matters further, they should write to:

Complaints Team
Department of Education
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

or via [portal](https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/)⁴

They should write within 3 three months of the College making a decision on the complaint.

⁴ <https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/>

8. COMPLAINTS FOR STUDENTS STUDYING HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES AT YEOVIL COLLEGE

- 8.1 Yeovil College University Centre offers Higher Education (HE) students a range of ways in which to raise concerns relating to their time at college through both formal and informal mechanisms. The Complaints Procedure recognises and adheres to the QAA UK Quality Code⁵ and aims to provide procedures which are fair, transparent, accessible, and timely and enable enhancement to both the academic experience and to student support through the monitoring of complaints and the improvements made as a result.
- 8.2 Informal concerns will be dealt with and recorded under the feedback process detailed in sections 3 and 4 of this document. However, we understand that some individuals or groups may wish to escalate concerns via a formal complaint to the College.
- 8.3 Yeovil College University Centre HE students submitting a complaint who are enrolled on an HE programme, such as HNC/HND, FdA/FSc, BA/BSc, or Professional HE programme will have their complaint dealt with under the College Policy and Procedures identified in this document.
- 8.4 If a group of Yeovil College University Centre students wish to make a complaint, they can appoint a representative to act on their behalf. The College will ensure that all members of the group consent to the representative acting on their behalf.
- 8.5 If a student feels they need support with the complaints process, they should initially contact the Head of HE & Adult Learning who will direct them to the person who is best equipped to support them. If it is not appropriate to contact the Head of HE & Adult Learning owing to the nature of the complaint, the learner should instead contact the Head of Student Services who will identify an appropriate person to provide support.
- 8.6 The Quality Manager will inform the Head of HE & Adult Learning of all complaints received related to HE learners, to allow for appropriate processes to be followed, such as notification to partner organisations where required.
- 8.7 Where a HE student reaches the end of the 'Formal Complaint – Appeals' stage of the process, the response provided to the student will be in line with Appendices 8-10. This

¹ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code> (The revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. 2024. Quality Assurance Agency.)

denotes that the college has exhausted the internal complaints and appeals procedure, and explains their options for future recourse, including referring their complaint to the relevant University or Office of the Independent Adjudicator if appropriate.

- 8.8 Students attending Yeovil College University Centre who are also enrolled on a partner University's programme will have their complaint progressed through the procedures outlined in this document in the first instance. Where an individual feels that their complaint has not been dealt with appropriately by Yeovil College, they can then raise their complaint directly with the relevant University partner. Once internal procedures have been exhausted (or the University procedures) and the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant, advice can be sought from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator who operate an independent review scheme acting as an appeal body. Details can be found at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>
- 8.9 If the complaint links to a claim of compensation under the YCUC Refund and Compensation Policy, then a claim for compensation should be made in addition to the formal complaint and this will be assessed within the complaint investigation.
- 8.10 This document is available in an alternative format; please contact Marketing@yeovil.ac.uk for information.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Formal complaints flowchart

Appendix 2 – Formal complaints appeals flowchart

Appendix 3 – Complaints handling, guidance for staff

Appendix 4 – Formal complaint record form

Appendix 5 – Acknowledgement letter template

Appendix 6 – Response letter template

Appendix 7 - Accompanying response email template

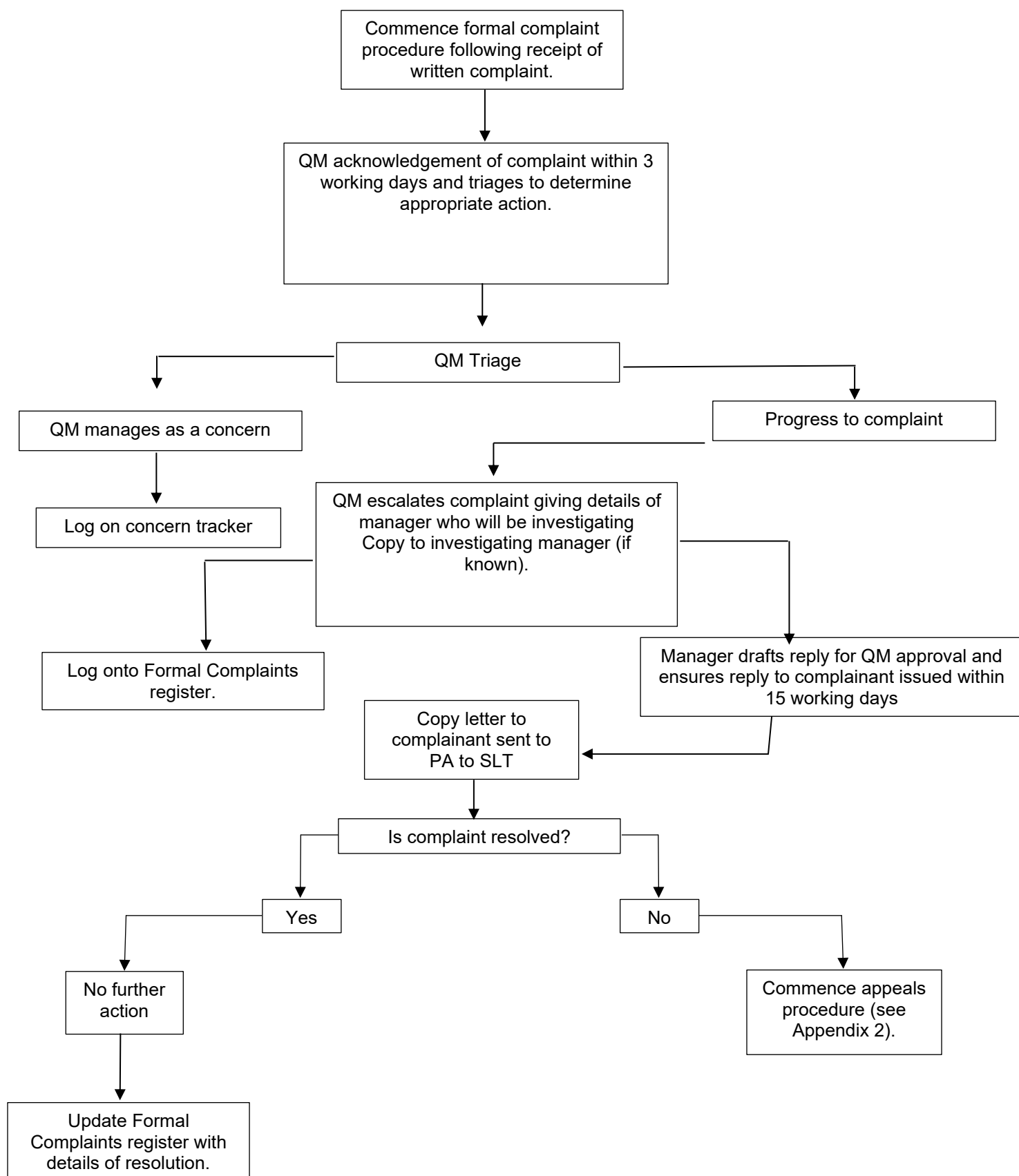
Appendix 8 – Formal complaint appeal template (Open University)

Appendix 9 - Formal complaint appeal template (University of Gloucestershire)

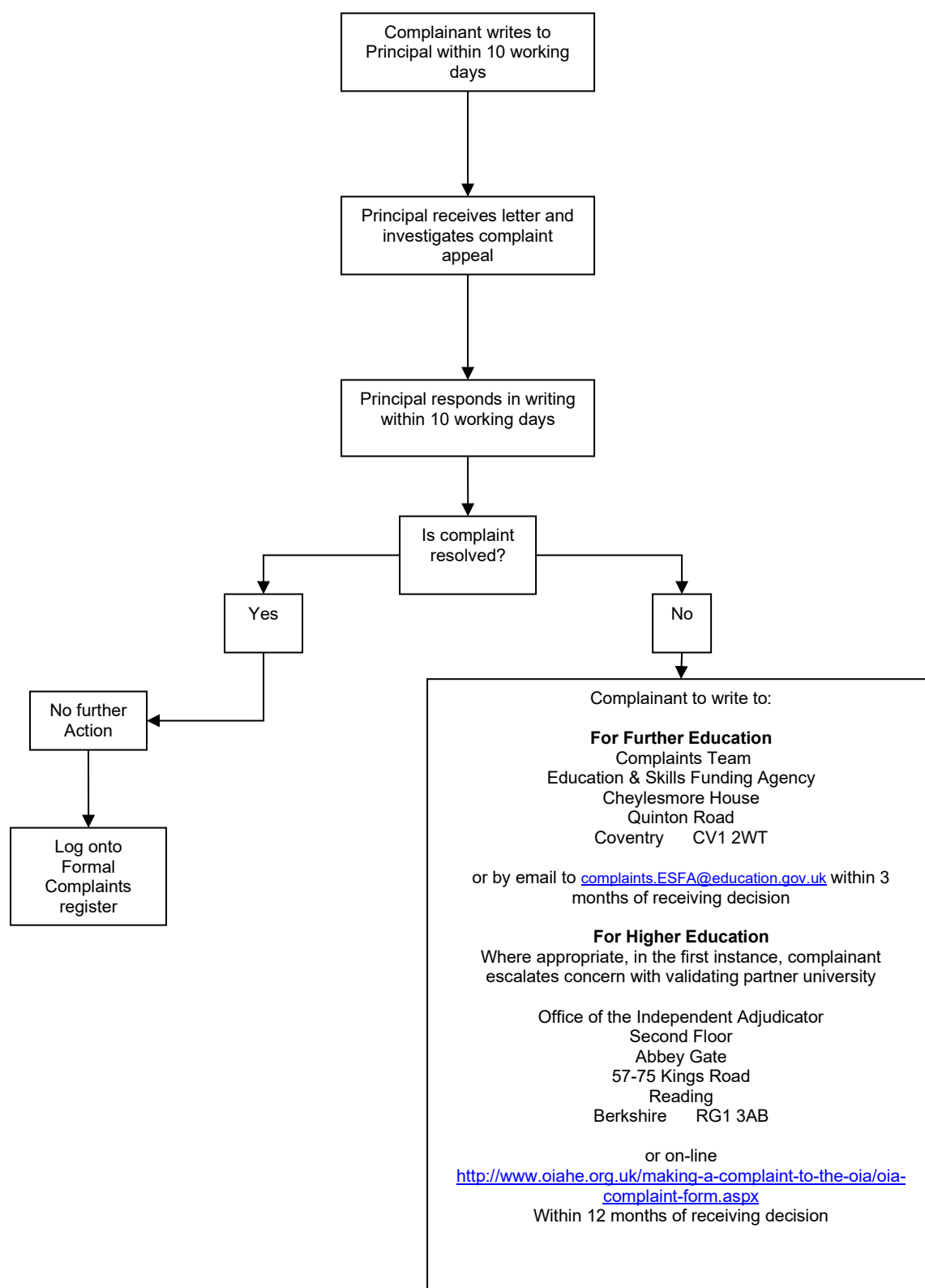
Appendix 10 – Formal complaint appeal template (University of the West of England)

Appendix 11 - Formal complaint appeal template (Higher Education)

Formal Complaints Flowchart



Formal Complaints Appeals Flowchart



Complaints Handling, Guidance for Staff

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Complaints are one way of identifying learners'/clients' perspective of the service the College provides. They can act as an early indicator that a system is not functioning effectively and analysis of the factors that prompted the complaint can provide valuable insight into where service improvements may be required. Therefore, complaints can be used as a positive tool for promoting organisational and individual learning and customer service improvement.
- 1.2 The aim of this guidance is to help staff understand their responsibilities in complying with the complaints policy and procedure; and offers guidance on good practice at each stage of the process to help ensure a consistent, fair and just approach to both complainants and any staff who may be involved in the complaint investigation.
- 1.3 Learners/clients have a right to complain should they feel that the service they have received or the way that they have been treated has been deficient. The fact that a learner/client has made a complaint will not affect the subsequent service they receive, nor will they be treated less favourably.
- 1.4 There are separate policies/procedures for dealing with staff grievances, appealing against the outcome of academic assessments and for making disclosures in the public interest (whistleblowing). The complaints procedure cannot be used for any of these purposes.
- 1.5 Where concerns, queries or complaints are received in person or over the telephone, every effort must be made to resolve the situation at the time. Where the individual receiving the complaint is unable to do this then assistance from the relevant line manager should be requested.

2. Verbal Complaints

- 2.1 In some cases, the complainant may not feel comfortable in making a complaint to those directly delivering the service. If the complainant will not speak with a local manager, they must be offered alternative ways to make their complaint, for example by using the feedback@Yeovil.ac.uk email address. For complainants who have difficulty communicating in writing, a comprehensive record of the conversation and concerns,

along with all necessary details must be made immediately. The standard Formal Complaint Record form (Appendix 4) should be used to record and confirm the details. The complainant should sign the form and be given a copy of it to ensure they agree to it being factually correct. The complaint is then treated as a formal complaint and passed to the Quality Manager.

3. Guidance on dealing with verbal complaints

- a) deal with concerns/complaints promptly to reduce the likelihood of issues escalating
- b) if possible, take action to resolve it informally
- c) be polite, courteous and helpful. It makes all the difference!
- d) build rapport
- e) establish key concerns
- f) show understanding
- g) present your / the College's position – explain what you can and cannot do
- h) reach agreement on action/way forward
- i) thank the person

4. Written complaints

- 4.1 Written complaints deemed to be of a formal nature received by any Curriculum area, support department or by any member of staff must be passed on to the Quality Manager without delay.

5. Comments/informal complaints

- 5.1 Comments and complaints deemed to be informal may be resolved and responded to locally.

6. Disciplinary procedure

- 6.1 Complaints procedures are separate from disciplinary procedures. The purpose of the complaint's procedure is not to apportion blame amongst staff but to investigate complaints with the aim of satisfying complainants, while being fair to staff and to learn any lessons in service delivery. Should a complaint identify information about serious matters which indicate a need for disciplinary investigation, a case for considering disciplinary investigation can be suggested at any point during the complaints procedure but consideration of whether disciplinary action is warranted is a separate matter for

management outside the complaints procedure and must be subject to a separate process of investigation. This investigation will be actioned under the College's Disciplinary Policy & Procedures. Where it is decided to take action under the disciplinary procedure, the complaint investigation will continue to be taken forward.

7. Guidance on writing responses

7.1 This guidance aims to assist staff in preparing written responses to formal complaints. It outlines the College's commitment to ensuring that complainants receive appropriate, timely and constructive responses, which address their concerns and provide information on options for further action. Great care needs to be taken when drafting responses to ensure they are written sensitively; most complainants are distressed by having to complain in the first place.

7.2 Read the complaint and identify the key issues.

- a) address each issue as identified by the complainant
- b) think of what the complainant wants, not what you think needs answering
- c) give explanations
- d) avoid using complex educational terminology or being verbose, use laypersons' terms
- e) outline action taken to prevent the event occurring again
- f) avoid using 'if', use 'that', therefore acknowledging the complainant's version of events
- g) leave the complainant feeling that they have been taken seriously and their concerns have been listened to and acknowledged
- h) avoid being patronising or defensive
- i) ensure that all facts are correct
- j) Good responses will include:
- k) an acknowledgement of the complainant's feelings/concerns and an apology
- l) excellent vocabulary and grammar, avoid College jargon
- m) answers to all the points raised
- n) details of the actions taken and any changes following the complaint – demonstrating organisational learning
- o) details of what the appeals process if they are not satisfied by the response
- p) Think of the positive value of Complaints:
- q) as a measure of quality (or lack of it)
- r) as a catalyst for change

- s) as an aid to future planning
- t) as reflecting the opinions and views of our learners/clients
- u) as an opportunity to change perceptions/project a positive image of the College
- v) as an 'early warning system'
- w) Possible shortfalls include:
- x) responses that are defensive rather than constructive
- y) absence of detail that demonstrate an investigation has been undertaken
- z) statements from the complainant not acknowledged
- aa) absence of options for further action
- bb) responses are unduly delayed
- cc) not addressing or answering key points
- dd) not acknowledging feelings or perceptions
- ee) responses which are too technical, patronising or defensive
- ff) factual inaccuracies and mistakes
- gg) using complex language which can come across to the complainant as 'showing off'
- hh) no details of appropriate changes/improvements are given
- ii) too much repetition of what the complainant has already told you in their letter
- jj) Which may lead to:
- kk) delays in meeting the agreed timescale when rewrites are required
- ll) adverse involvement of external bodies, media, MP's, etc
- mm) the appeals process being invoked
- nn) cases being referred to the Education & Skills Funding Agency/Office of the Independent Adjudicator
- oo) dissatisfied complainants / further correspondence
- pp) an invitation to litigate

8. How to ensure the tone of your response is right:

- 8.1 If the tone of your complaint response is in jeopardy of showing a negative view of complaints, it may be better to allow someone else to read it to see if they pick up a negative tone. This practice is recommended for all final responses.
- 8.2 Take the time to do a personal check, where you step out of your role and put yourself in the shoes of the complainant to see if you have satisfactorily answered the complaint. Look at the situation from their point of view – **would you be satisfied with the response?** Re read their letter against your response.
 - a) Remember to:

- b) address the complainant directly
- c) keep sentences short and simple
- d) explain any abbreviations
- e) avoid College jargon

9. Helpful phrases for complaint responses

9.1 The following phrases may prove helpful in drafting responses:

- a) I write further to your letter dated.....
- b) Your concerns have been investigated by.... who would like to apologise for the delay in responding to you. This was due to
- c) I was sorry to hear that you were unhappy with.....
- d) I am sorry that you found (xx) to be upsetting, as this was not the intention.
- e) The normal is (xx). I am sorry that in this instance this did not occur.
- f) I apologise for any upset/concern/anxiety this caused.
- g) As a result of your letter.....
- h) I trust that my letter has answered the issues you raised and I sincerely regret that this situation arose.
- i) It is always our intention to provide excellent and responsive service to learners / clients and I am sorry this was not the case on this occasion.
- j) Your experience of our services falls short of the standards we set for the College and I would like to apologise for the upset / concern / anxiety this has caused you.
- k) I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting us about your concerns. The opinions of those who use our services give us valuable insight into the service that we provide and areas where improvements might be made.

FORMAL COMPLAINT RECORD FORM

Form to be completed by College staff to record formal complaint from complainant who is unable to make their complaint in writing. Recorded complaint should be read back to learner/client who should then sign to agree accuracy of record. Copy to be given to complainant, original retained by College and forwarded to the Quality Manager.

Essential Information:

Name:

Address and/or email address:

Telephone no:

Learner details if different from above:

Date of incident if applicable:

Details of complaint: (including course and any witness details if applicable)

Action Taken/Agreed

Signature:

Date:

Staff signature:

Date:

Forward to the Quality Manager

Acknowledgement letter/email template (use with College headed paper)

Date****

Dear****

Formal Complaint ****

Thank you for your letter/email received in my office on ----- . I am sorry that it has been necessary for you to make a complaint regarding the above.

I am writing to advise that we will investigate this matter as a formal complaint. Your complaint has been referred to a senior manager and will be investigated by ****, Curriculum Area Manager for ****. It is our policy to complete investigations and to respond fully to complaints within 15 working days of receipt of your letter; you can therefore expect to hear from **** by ****.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

****Name****

Quality Manager

Complaint response letter - main body template (use with College headed paper)

I am writing to you following my investigation into your complaint or further to your letter to regarding the you experienced on day month year.or and would like to apologise for the delay in responding to your concerns which was due to the need for through investigation etc. (use the latter if the complaint has been delayed).

The issues you raised have been taken very seriously and have been thoroughly investigated and I am now able to respond.

Main body of complaint to include:

appropriate personalisation

responses to each issue raised by the complainant following the formula of:

brief outline of what happened for each issue, where appropriate

an apology if the complaint is justified or an apology for the complainant's perception and feelings the action that will be taken to prevent a future reoccurrence, improvement or change to systems / policies etc. and the timescale.

explanation of any terminology used

In conclusion the College will be taking the following actions in relation to the issues you have raised. Here you must add – actions to be taken, timescales and who is responsible.

Once again please accept my sincere apologies for any upset or distress that was caused to you or upset or distress you felt. (Use the former phrase if the complaint was justified)

I can assure you that every effort will be made to ensure that all future dealings that you may have with the College will prove to be satisfactory.

I hope you will view this response as helpful in addressing your concerns. However, if you have any further concerns, require any information, or would like to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint further, please contact me to resolve any outstanding issues you may have.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting us about your concerns. The opinions of those who use our services give us valuable insight into the service that we provide and areas where improvements might be made.

QA Manager email response template

Dear

I am writing in connection with the formal complaint you raised on [date] and am pleased to be able to attach a summary of our actions and response; we hope that this meets with your approval [and apologise for the delay in getting this to you]. If you are in any way dissatisfied with the way that this investigation has been conducted or concluded, you are entitled to make an appeal within 10 days to the Principal, Mark Bolton. You can do this replying to me, or by using the feedback@yeovil.ac.uk email if you prefer.

With grateful thanks for providing this feedback, and thus for helping us to improve our standards and service.

Yours sincerely

Template letter when ‘Formal Complaint: Appeal’ stage has been concluded internally for students studying on Open University validated courses.

Dear **[Name of complainant]**,

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of Yeovil College in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc*** regarding **[please describe]** have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your **complaint / appeal etc*** were **[details]**. The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc was / were***: **[brief summary of the complaint etc]**.

Our final decision is* **[detail]** because **[reasons]**.

In conclusion the College will be taking the following actions in relation to the issues you have raised. **[Here you must add – actions to be taken, timescales and who is responsible.]**

Once again please accept my sincere apologies for any upset or distress that was caused to you or upset or distress you felt. **[Use the former phrase if the complaint was justified]**. I can assure you that every effort will be made to ensure that all future dealings that you may have with the College will prove to be satisfactory.

I hope you will view this response as helpful in addressing your concerns. However, if you have any further concerns, require any information, or would like to attend a meeting to discuss your **complaint / appeal** further, please contact me to resolve any outstanding issues you may have.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting us about your concerns. The opinions of those who use our services give us valuable insight into the service that we provide and areas where improvements might be made.

Because you are studying on a programme validated by the Open University (OU) you can request that the OU reviews this outcome if certain conditions are met. Please read “Appendix 1: Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure” of the Open University’s Handbook for Validated

Awards⁶ to understand if you would be eligible to request the Open University review this outcome, and if so, the timeline and process you will need to follow. Do read the Open University's documentation for full details, however, you should be aware that it is important that the OU receives any complaints or appeals as soon as possible, and within three months of the date of this letter. A delay may mean that the OU are unable to investigate the matter fully.

Please note, that procedures will not be deemed officially 'completed', and therefore you would not be able to ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to review this outcome until you had also exhausted the Open University's processes. If you were to follow and complete the Open University's processes, you would then be issued a 'Completion of Procedures' letter and at that point would be entitled to request that the OIA review the complaint. Please be aware that there are time limits within which you would have to request the OIA review a complaint – typically students have 12 months to bring an appeal to the OIA, although please visit their website for the most up-to-date information.

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]

⁶ <https://www.open.ac.uk/about/validation-partnerships/about-ou-validation/ou-handbook-validated-awards>

Template letter when ‘Formal Complaint: Appeal’ stage has been concluded internally for students studying on University of Gloucestershire validated courses, relating to matters that have the right of appeal to UoG.

Dear **[Name of complainant]**,

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of Yeovil College in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc*** regarding **[please describe]** have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your **complaint / appeal etc*** were **[details]**. The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc was / were***: **[brief summary of the complaint etc]**.

Our final decision is* **[detail]** because **[reasons]**.

In conclusion the College will be taking the following actions in relation to the issues you have raised. **[Here you must add – actions to be taken, timescales and who is responsible.]**

Once again please accept my sincere apologies for any upset or distress that was caused to you or upset or distress you felt. **[Use the former phrase if the complaint was justified]**. I can assure you that every effort will be made to ensure that all future dealings that you may have with the College will prove to be satisfactory.

I hope you will view this response as helpful in addressing your concerns. However, if you have any further concerns, require any information, or would like to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint further, please contact me to resolve any outstanding issues you may have.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting us about your concerns. The opinions of those who use our services give us valuable insight into the service that we provide and areas where improvements might be made.

Because you are studying on a programme validated by the University of Gloucestershire (UoG), you can request that UoG review this outcome if you are dissatisfied with the outcome reached, if certain conditions are met. Please visit the ‘Academic Appeals and Student Complaints’⁷ section

⁷ <https://www.glos.ac.uk/information/knowledge-base/appeals-and-complaints/>

of the UoG website to review UoG's procedures and understand if you would be eligible to request UoG review this outcome, and if so, the timeline and process you will need to follow. Do read the UoG documentation for full details, however, you should be aware that it is important that the UoG receives any complaints or appeals as soon as possible, and within their published timescales. A delay may mean that UoG are unable to investigate the matter fully.

Please note, that procedures will not be deemed officially 'completed', and therefore you would not be able to ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to review this outcome until you had also exhausted the University of Gloucestershire's processes. If you were to follow and complete UoG's processes, you would then be issued a 'Completion of Procedures' letter and at that point would be entitled to request that the OIA review the complaint. Please be aware that there are time limits within which you would have to request the OIA review a complaint – typically students have 12 months to bring an appeal to the OIA, although please visit their website for the most up-to-date information.

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]

Template letter when ‘Formal Complaint: Appeal’ stage has been concluded internally for students studying on University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol validated courses, relating to matters that have the right of appeal to UWE.

Dear **[Name of complainant]**,

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of Yeovil College in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc*** regarding **[please describe]** have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your **complaint / appeal etc*** were **[details]**. The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc was / were***: **[brief summary of the complaint etc]**.

Our final decision is* **[detail]** because **[reasons]**.

In conclusion the College will be taking the following actions in relation to the issues you have raised. **[Here you must add – actions to be taken, timescales and who is responsible.]**

Once again please accept my sincere apologies for any upset or distress that was caused to you or upset or distress you felt. **[Use the former phrase if the complaint was justified]**. I can assure you that every effort will be made to ensure that all future dealings that you may have with the College will prove to be satisfactory.

I hope you will view this response as helpful in addressing your concerns. However, if you have any further concerns, require any information, or would like to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint further, please contact me to resolve any outstanding issues you may have.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting us about your concerns. The opinions of those who use our services give us valuable insight into the service that we provide and areas where improvements might be made.

Because you are studying on a programme validated by the University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol, you can request that UWE review this outcome if you are dissatisfied with the outcome reached, if certain conditions are met. Please visit the Complaints and Appeals⁸ section

⁸ <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/about/contact-us/complaints>

of the UWE website to review UWE's procedures and understand if you would be eligible to request UWE review this outcome, and if so, the timeline and process you will need to follow. Do read the UWE documentation for full details, however, you should be aware that it is important that the UWE receives any complaints or appeals as soon as possible, and within their published timescales. A delay may mean that UWE are unable to investigate the matter fully.

Please note, that procedures will not be deemed officially 'completed', and therefore you would not be able to ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to review this outcome until you had also exhausted the University of the West of England's processes. If you were to follow and complete UWE's processes, you would then be issued a 'Completion of Procedures' letter and at that point would be entitled to request that the OIA review the complaint. Please be aware that there are time limits within which you would have to request the OIA review a complaint – typically students have 12 months to bring an appeal to the OIA, although please visit their website for the most up-to-date information.

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]

Template letter when ‘Formal Complaint: Appeal’ stage has been concluded internally for students studying on a higher education programme which does not have the right of appeal to a partner university.

Dear [Name of complainant],

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of Yeovil College in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc*** regarding **[please describe]** have been completed. The issues that you raised in your **complaint / appeal etc*** were **[details]**. The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your **complaint / appeal etc was / were***: **[brief summary of the complaint etc]**.

Our final decision is **[detail]** because **[reasons]**. The **procedures / regulations** applied were: **[details and date as supplied to the OIA’s electronic Regulations Bank]**.

In conclusion the College will be taking the following actions in relation to the issues you have raised. **[Here you must add – actions to be taken, timescales and who is responsible.]**

Once again please accept my sincere apologies for any upset or distress that was caused to you or upset or distress you felt. **[Use the former phrase if the complaint was justified]**. I can assure you that every effort will be made to ensure that all future dealings that you may have with the College will prove to be satisfactory.

I hope you will view this response as helpful in addressing your concerns. However, if you have any further concerns, require any information, or would like to attend a meeting to discuss your **complaint / appeal** further, please contact me to resolve any outstanding issues you may have.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting us about your concerns. The opinions of those who use our services give us valuable insight into the service that we provide and areas where improvements might be made.

Yeovil College subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you may be able to apply for a review of your **complaint / appeal etc*** to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA on or before **[insert date - e.g. if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 9 July 2015, this date should be 9 July 2016]**.

[Include here any factors of which the provider is aware which mean that it is particularly important for the student to bring the complaint promptly.]

You can fill in the OIA's complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website⁹. The OIA also publishes An Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students, which can be downloaded from the OIA website¹⁰. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Complaint Form.

Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website. You may also wish to seek advice from the Students' Union about taking your complaint to the OIA.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]

⁹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>

¹⁰ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/can-you-complain-to-us/>