

# Making a complaint to the College



*Building on Success!*

Our aim is get things right first time and therefore we value student comments and suggestions. We have a range of customer consultation and feedback mechanisms to help us improve our levels of service. However, we do recognise that, on occasion, our service may fall short of expectations and therefore we also value any complaints we receive.

The most effective way to resolve an issue is to deal with it immediately and therefore we request that in most instances you should speak directly to a member of staff.

Please note that requests for services or changes to services, comments and suggestions on service improvement and assessment / bursary / disciplinary appeals are not considered complaints and do not fall within this procedure.

## Frontline Resolution

We will make every effort to resolve a complaint at the first point of contact. If that member of staff is unable to deal with your complaint, they will signpost you to the appropriate person.

The types of issue we will try to resolve at the frontline are non-complex / non-contentious issues including:

- A service that should have been but has not been provided
- A service that has not been provided to an appropriate standard
- A request for a service that has not been answered
- A complaint that a member of staff was rude or unhelpful
- A staff member who failed to attend a scheduled appointment

## Timescale for Frontline Resolution

We aim to resolve a complaint immediately or within 24 hours. If it is necessary to obtain further information, the timescale should extend to no more than 5 working days before a response is given. In exceptional circumstances, we may negotiate an extension of a further 5 working days if this will increase the possibility of the complaint being resolved.

## Issues requiring investigation

If an investigation is to be undertaken, you will be asked to make a formal written record of your complaint. This may be by email, letter or by completing the complaint form available at reception and on our website.

[www.slc.ac.uk/policies/complaints](http://www.slc.ac.uk/policies/complaints)

If you require help to complete the form, a member of Student Services will be happy to assist you.

An investigator will be appointed who will provide you with their name and contact details as a single point of contact as soon as possible after a decision to investigate has been made. The investigator will give due regard to information that may be confidential, sensitive, restricted or covered by data protection legislation, with consent to access / share information being obtained where appropriate.

The types of issue which will require investigation include:

- The student remains dissatisfied
- The student refuses to engage
- The issues are complex and require detailed investigation

- The issues are deemed serious / high risk / high profile, for example
  - a death or terminal illness
  - homelessness
  - a vulnerable person
  - child protection issues
  - equality/discrimination issues relating to age, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity
  - major delays in service provision
  - repeated failure to provide a service
  - press interest
  - a risk to the organisation has been identified

## Timescale for Resolution

Complaints requiring investigation will be acknowledged within 3 working days. A full written response will be provided within 20 working days. If the complaint is complex, or where there are clear and justifiable reasons for extending the timescale, an extension may be negotiated and you will be kept updated of the reason for the delay and the revised timescale. If, in special circumstances, the investigation has to be suspended for any reason, the decision to suspend for a defined period will be formally recorded.

## Written Response

The investigator will provide a full, objective and proportionate response, endorsed by the College Principal or other member of the Senior Management Team, that represents the College's definitive position and outlines any action that will be taken and when.

## Unacceptable actions by students

We recognise that people may be angry and upset when making a complaint and that a person may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. However, we will not accept unreasonable behaviour towards College staff. We record all incidents of unacceptable actions by complainants

The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards College staff is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact and further contact may be restricted and incidents may be reported to the police, particularly if physical violence is used or threatened.

Any appeal regarding restricted contact will be heard by a senior member of staff who was not involved in the decision to restrict contact.

## Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about most organisations that provide public services in Scotland, including South Lanarkshire College. Their service is independent, free and confidential.

The SPSO will normally only consider a complaint after you have completed the College's complaints procedure and cannot normally look at complaints more than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about, or complaints that have been or are being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO for advice and to request a complaint form on Freephone 0800 377 7330 [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)