

Acceptable Engagement Policy

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Quick Links

We are inclusive and diverse, and this is one of our values.

We are committed to the FREDIE principles of Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement.



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2. Introduction

South Lanarkshire College (SLC) believes that all customers have the right to be heard, understood, and respected. However, occasionally, the College is required to deal with customers (anyone who engages with the college including students, student representatives, stakeholders or suppliers) whose actions or engagement could be considered unacceptable. When this occurs, the College will take steps to protect its employees and ensure that our ability to work effectively is not undermined.

This policy will explain the College's approach to these situations and is based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Engagement Policy.

https://www.spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/communications_material/leaflets_public/general/SPSOEngagementPolicy.pdf

Annex 2 provides a list College policies that may relate to this policy.

3. Aims of the Policy

The aims of the Policy are:

- to deal fairly, honestly, consistently, and appropriately with all customers, including those whose action the College considers unacceptable;
- to provide a service that is accessible to all customers, while retaining the right to restrict or change access to our services;
- to ensure that SLC's effectiveness is not compromised by customers who make excessive and unacceptable demands on college resources; and
- to provide a safe working environment for staff, where they are treated with respect and dignity.

4. Defining unacceptable engagement

The College does not view engagement as unacceptable solely because a customer is forceful or determined, recognising that individuals may act out of character in times of distress. However, engagement such as anger, demanding attitudes or persistence may lead to what could be defined as unacceptable

conduct towards SLC staff. It is these actions that the College considers unacceptable.

4.1 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes engagement, or language (oral, written or non-verbal language) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

Examples of aggressive or abusive engagement may include, but are not limited to:

- threats;
- physical violence;
- sexual harassment;
- verbal abuse; language that is designed to insult or degrade;
- non-verbal e.g. body language and tone; and
- unsubstantiated allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt or perverse conduct.

4.2 Unreasonable demands

Customers may make what the College considers unreasonable demands, through the amount of information, they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances of the engagement and the seriousness of the issues raised by the individual.

Examples of unreasonable demands may include, but are not limited to:

- repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale;
- insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible; or
- repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.

4.3 Unreasonable levels of persistence

It is recognised that some customers will not, or cannot, accept that the College is unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided earlier. The manner of their contact may be reasonable, the persistence of their approach is not. The actions of persistent customers are unacceptable when they take up what is a disproportionate amount of time and resources to the disadvantage of other customers.

Examples of unreasonable levels of persistence may include, but are not limited to:

- persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to their issue;
- persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what SLC can or cannot do;
- continuing to pursue their issue without presenting additional evidence-based information.

5. Managing unacceptable actions

There are few customers whose actions could be considered unacceptable. When a customer's actions adversely affect the ability to provide a service, the College will ensure that any action taken is the minimum necessary to resolve the problem, considering the needs of the individual and the seriousness of the complaint. Every situation presents its own unique set of circumstances, and the examples provided serve as guidance to manage engagement that the College deems unacceptable.

5.1 Aggressive or abusive telephone calls.

The member of staff receiving the call should:

- stay calm;
- remind the caller that they are there to help;
- inform the caller that their language/engagement is unacceptable and unhelpful;
- advise the caller that if they persist the call will be ended and that their contact with the College may be restricted;
- end the call if the action continues; and
- report the incident to the line manager, record the incident on the Unacceptable Actions or Engagement Report Form (Annex 1) and send to the Complaints Handler.

5.2 Aggressive or abusive correspondence (letter or electronic)

The member of staff receiving the correspondence should:

- remind the correspondent that they are there to help;
- inform the correspondent that their language/engagement is unacceptable and unhelpful;
- advise the correspondent that the College will not respond to their correspondence until their language/engagement is acceptable and that if they persist their contact with the College may be restricted; and

- report the incident to the line manager record the incident on the Unacceptable Actions or Engagement Report Form (Annexe 1) and send to the Complaints Handler.

5.3 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

The College will not tolerate any threat, use of violence or abuse or sexual harassment against a member of staff and any incidents may be reported to the appropriate authority. If they feel safe to do so, the member of staff should:

- stay calm;
- create a safe distance between themselves and the person and be aware of exit routes;
- reassure the person that they are there to help;
- call a colleague for support;
- inform the person that their action is unacceptable and unhelpful;
- advise the person that if they persist, they will be asked to leave the building and their contact with the College may be restricted;
- ask the person to leave the building;
- if their action continues call the police;
- report the incident to the line manager record the incident on the Unacceptable Actions or Engagement Report Form (Annex 1) and send to the Complaints Handler; and
- refer to the College grievance procedure and dignity at work policy to raise any case

5.4 Unreasonable demands

The member of staff responding to the customer should;

- stay calm;
- reassure the customer that they are here to help;
- explain why the College cannot meet their request;
- try to agree common ground to their request;
- advise that should their request continue then access to the College may be restricted; and

- report the incident to the line manager record the incident on the Unacceptable Actions or Engagement Report Form (Annex 1) and send to the Complaints Handler.

5.5 Unreasonable levels of persistence

The member of staff responding to the customer should:

- reassure the customer that they are here to help;
- explain what the College can or cannot do relating to their request;
- try to agree common ground to their request;
- advise that should their request continue then access to the College may be restricted; and
- report the incident to the line manager record the incident on the Unacceptable Actions or Engagement Report Form (Annex 1) and send to the Complaints Handler.

6. Restricting customer or supplier contact

In certain situations, it may be necessary to limit the customer's or supplier's contact with the College. The decision to restrict contact will only be made after careful consideration by the Vice Principal for Student Experience and Innovation or the Vice Principal Finance for Resources and Sustainability. Wherever possible, the customer will be given the opportunity to modify their engagement or action before a decision is made. The customer will be informed, in writing, of the reason for the decision to restrict contact and the duration of the restriction. The Head of Curriculum or relevant Curriculum and Quality Manager will also be notified of this decision.

6.1 Appealing a decision to restrict contact

A customer may appeal a decision to restrict contact. The Principal will consider the appeal and the customer will be advised of in writing that the restricted contact arrangements still apply or that a different course of action has been agreed.

6.2 Recording a decision to restrict contact

The decision to restrict contact with the customer will be recorded with the Principalship.

7. Support for staff

All SLC employees are empowered to end any interaction which they find distressing or difficult at the point of occurrence. The employee should explain to the customer that they find the situation distressing and advise the individual what needs to happen to enable the interaction to continue.

Following an incident, the member of staff involved should be encouraged to have a de-brief meeting with their line manager, and any actions agreed, documented, and monitored.

Employees affected by unacceptable actions or engagement will have access to the College's counselling service.

Employees should refer to the College Grievance Procedure and Dignity at Work Policy to raise any case.

[SLC Policies and Procedures - Search \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

8. Sharing of information

The College reserves the right to report unacceptable actions or engagement to appropriate third-party organisations. This will only be done after careful consideration by the Vice Principal for Student Experience and Innovation or the Vice Principal for Finance, Resources and Sustainability.

9. Reporting

Incidences of unacceptable actions or engagement by customers will be reported quarterly by the Complaints Handler to the People and Culture Committee.

10.Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

11. Disposal of documentation

The retention time for all documentation relating to access to the College being restricted is 5 years from the case being closed.

Annex 1 – Unacceptable Actions or Engagement Report

Employee Name: _____

Job Title _____

Curriculum area
or Department: _____

Name of the individual
If known : _____

Date and time of
the incident: _____

Names of any
witness(es) to the
incident: _____

Nature of the Incident:

What action if any did you take to resolve the incident?

Manager's Name: _____

Date: _____

De-brief Meeting

Actions arising from de-brief meeting

Manager's Name: _____

Date: _____

Actions Completed

Manager's Name: _____

Date: _____

Annex 2

College Policies which may relate to this policy

- [Student Charter.pdf](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct.pdf](#)
- [GBV Prevention & Support Policy - last updated July 2024.pdf](#)
- [Code of Conduct.pdf](#)
- [dignity-at-work-policy-2010.docx](#)
- [Equality Policy.pdf](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy Procedure May 24 Final.pdf](#)
- [SLC SQA Data Management Procedure.pdf](#)



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