Complaints Policy and Procedures

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1. Introduction

AA London College is committed to providing a transparent and fair process for students to raise concerns, issues, or complaints and to receive a timely response from the College. This policy has been developed in line with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Chapter B9: Complaints and Appeals, ensuring that students' views are integral to monitoring and enhancing all aspects of College operations.

Students are encouraged to provide feedback or raise complaints on any aspect of their experience at the College.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined as:

"The expression of a specific concern regarding the provision of a course, module, programme of study, or a related academic or administrative service."

AA London College has a separate Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure for reviewing decisions made by academic bodies concerning student progression, assessment, or awards. This procedure is detailed in the Academic Assessment and Internal Verification Policy and the relevant Programme/Student Handbook.

Communicating Our Complaints Policy
Information regarding this Complaints Policy is available through:

- The College website: https://londoncollege.co.uk
- Student Portal
- Student and Programme Handbook
- Staff Handbook

Students and staff are informed of the Complaints Policy during:

- Staff induction and at the start of the academic year
- Student induction to their course

Senior staff are regularly reminded of their responsibility to manage complaints effectively through staff review processes.

2. Scope of the Complaints Policy

This Complaints Policy and Procedure can be used by:

- Current students
- Individuals applying to the College
- Students who have completed or left their course within the previous three months

The procedure covers complaints regarding:

- The conduct of a member of staff towards the student
- Delivery of a programme or module that cannot be resolved informally
- Services provided by the College that cannot be resolved informally
- Review of decisions concerning admission or assessment outcomes (where applicable)

The procedure does not cover:

- Appeals against the decisions of Assessment Boards (see Academic Appeals Policy)
- Appeals under disciplinary procedures (see Disciplinary Policy)
- Complaints regarding the behaviour of other students
- Matters of academic judgment

3. General Principles

AA London College is committed to resolving complaints fairly, effectively, and in a timely manner. All parties are expected to act reasonably and respectfully throughout the process. Key principles include:

- Maintaining fair, effective, and timely procedures, ensuring confidentiality unless disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint
- Oversight and review of complaints by senior staff
- Encouraging students to provide feedback without risk of disadvantage
- Ensuring procedures are publicly accessible and clearly explained to students and staff
- Compliance with applicable law
- Taking appropriate action in response to complaints
- Providing support and guidance for students throughout the process, including the option to be accompanied during formal hearings
- Monitoring and reviewing complaints outcomes to improve processes and prevent recurrence
- Offering briefing and support for staff and students involved in handling complaints

4. Complaints Process and Timeframe

Before submitting a complaint, students should consider whether the matter constitutes feedback or a formal complaint. Students are encouraged to raise issues informally wherever possible, for example through:

- Discussion with the Course Tutor or Programme Leader
- Contacting the Student Support Officer
- Completing course feedback surveys

The College addresses complaints proportionately, encouraging informal resolution in the first instance.

Stage One – Informal Complaints

Informal complaints may be raised via discussion with:

- Course Tutor
- Programme Leader
- Student Support Officer

The College seeks student feedback through:

- One-to-one discussions with teaching and administrative staff
- Mid-course and end-of-course feedback forms
- Ongoing informal feedback channels

Staff investigating informal complaints will:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint and unresolved issues
- Meet with the student or contact them for further information
- Identify what resolution the student seeks
- Interview those involved, allowing them to be accompanied if desired
- Maintain detailed notes of all meetings

Possible resolutions may include:

- An apology or explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently
- Assurance that the matter will not recur
- Review of College policies or practices in light of the complaint

The outcome of informal complaints is communicated to the student in writing and monitored as part of the College's quality assurance process.

Stage Two – Formal Complaints

If an informal complaint cannot be resolved, the student may submit a formal complaint using the College's Complaint Form, available from the Student Welfare Officer or online via the College website.

Process:

1. The completed form is submitted to the Head of Administration or Head of Academics.
2. If a staff member is named in the complaint, they are notified and invited to respond.
3. Students may be accompanied by a friend or support person at formal meetings. Legal representation may only attend with prior agreement from the College.
4. The College aims to provide a written response within two weeks of receiving the formal complaint.

Formal complaints are handled with: Confidentiality Accessibility of information

Clear procedures and response times

Resolution at local level wherever possible

- Protection against victimisation

Stage Three – Complaints Panel

If the formal complaint is not resolved satisfactorily, a Complaints Panel will be convened, consisting of:

- Head of Administration
- Head of Academics
- College Principal (independent chair)

A member of the Board of Directors may also be involved if required.

The student is invited to attend the panel to discuss the complaint. The outcome is communicated in writing within one week.

If no resolution is achieved, the student will be advised that the College procedure has been exhausted, and they may contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE): www.oiahe.org.uk

5. Timeframes

- Informal complaints: Ideally raised immediately or within two weeks of the incident. Response provided within two weeks.
- Formal complaints: Submitted no later than one calendar month after the initial issue. Response provided within two weeks.
- Complaints Panel: Convened within two weeks of the formal response if unresolved. Panel decision communicated within one week.

Students are advised to keep records of discussions, emails, and relevant documents throughout the process.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

AA London College continuously monitors and evaluates complaints to improve quality and student experience. The Student Welfare Officer collates information on complaints and reviews outcomes, considering factors such as:

- Year of study of the complainant
- Programme of study
- Gender, ethnicity, and disability status
- Age profile
- Status as international, EU, or UK student

Summary reports are reviewed by senior management and incorporated into the College's annual quality review process. Information from complaints is shared with staff and students to enhance transparency, confidence, and continuous improvement.