EMBS Community College

Complaints policy

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1. Scope

This policy defines the overarching requirements for an effective, efficient, and transparent complaints-handling process across all departments, sites, services, and projects operated by EMBS Community College.

This policy applies to all external and public stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Students, adult learners, and course participants.
- Funding bodies, strategic partners, and commissioning authorities (including regional migration networks).
- Employers, local businesses, and community organizations collaborating with the College.
- Neighbours and members of the public affected by College operations.

It covers all expressions of dissatisfaction regarding our educational delivery, support services, staff/faculty conduct, or operational administration. It does not replace internal student academic appeals, staff grievances, or formal whistleblowing, which are governed by separate, dedicated institutional procedures.

2. Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document:

- **ISO 10002:2018** – Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations.
- **The Further and Higher Education Regulatory Frameworks** – Aligning with national standards for educational quality and accountability.
- **UK Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR** – Regarding the safe handling, storage, and processing of complainant data.
- **The Equality Act 2010** – Ensuring the complaints process is fully accessible to all individuals regardless of protected characteristics.

3. Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

- **Complainant:** Any individual, organization, or representative making an official complaint.
- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction made to the Community College related to our courses, campus facilities, support services, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
- **Stakeholder:** Any external entity interactive with the College, including funding partners, community networks, and local authorities.
- **Feedback:** Opinions, comments, and expressions of interest regarding College activities that do not request or require formal investigation or remedy.

4. Context of the organisation

EMBS Community College operates as a diverse, multi-functional educational hub. We serve a vast demographic, from local adult learners and vocational students to specialized cohorts funded by external partners.

The College recognizes that its stakeholders navigate varying degrees of accessibility, language fluencies, and institutional confidence. Consequently, our system is designed to audit and adapt to external factors (such as evolving regional educational needs and government funding priorities) and internal factors (such as campus accessibility, digital system updates, and inclusivity training) to remove barriers to raising a legitimate concern.

5. Leadership

The College Leadership Team, Principal, and Governing Board are fully committed to fostering an institutional culture that is transparent, fair, and welcoming of feedback. Leadership ensures that:

- The complaints policy is unified and actively implemented across all college departments and external partnerships.
- Adequate operational resources (including staff hours, translation services, and safe meeting environments) are allocated to manage complaints effectively.
- Complainants are protected from any form of academic bias, service restriction, or institutional retaliation.
- The Human Resources (HR) Department is designated to oversee the integrity of the tracking, logging, and investigation framework, acting as an impartial central authority.

6. Planning

The College plans and coordinates the rollout of its complaints-handling process to guarantee widespread visibility and systemic integrity.

- **Risk Management:** We actively monitor risks to the process, such as data leaks involving student records, or a failure to properly record informal verbal complaints made to front-line campus staff.
- **Institutional Objectives:** We set strict annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as acknowledging all incoming complaints within 3 working days and resolving them within 20 working days.
- **Accessibility Planning:** This policy is proactively designed to exist in alternative formats, including accessible digital versions on the main College portal, simplified summaries, and translated formats to accommodate diverse community cohorts.

7. Support

To keep the institutional system running smoothly, the College provides continuous structural support:

- **Human Resources & Training:** All faculty members, administrative staff, and volunteer teams undergo mandatory training on how to receive, log, and escalate a complaint professionally and empathetically.
- **Infrastructure:** The College utilizes a secure, centralized digital tracking system managed strictly by the HR Department to prevent lost data and protect GDPR-sensitive information to prevent lost data and protect GDPR-sensitive information.
- **Student & Stakeholder Advocacy:** For vulnerable learners or those with English as an additional language (EAL), the College coordinates with internal student services, translation units, or external partner organizations to provide independent advocacy support throughout the process.

8. Operation

The complaints process operates through a standardized, institution-wide five-stage lifecycle:

1. Submission ➔ 2. Acknowledgment ➔ 3. Investigation ➔ 4. Resolution ➔ 5. Appeal

- **Step 1: Submission & Receipt:** Complaints can be submitted via the online portal, by email, by letter, or verbally to any campus department head. **All entries are immediately routed to the HR Department.**
- **Step 2: Acknowledgment: The HR Department** issues a formal acknowledgment to the complainant within 3 working days...
- **Step 3: Investigation:** An impartial manager or department lead—completely disconnected from the original matter—conducts a objective review, interviewing relevant personnel and examining records.
- **Step 4: Resolution:** A formal response outlining the investigation findings, corrective adjustments, or remedies offered is issued to the complainant within **20 working days**.
- **Step 5: Appeal:** If the complainant remains unsatisfied, they have the right to request an escalation to the Vice Principal/Director of Quality within 14 days. A final executive review will be issued within an additional 15 working days.

9. Performance evaluation

The College reviews complaints systemically to track overall institutional health and educational compliance:

- **Monitoring:** The Quality Assurance Team monitors the central register monthly to identify recurring trends (e.g., repeating facility issues, specific course friction points, or spikes in communication breakdowns).
- **Auditing:** Regular internal audits are performed to ensure department leads are adhering to designated resolution timelines and privacy parameters.
- **Management Review:** A comprehensive, anonymized report on complaints and resolved issues is presented to the College Governing Board every quarter to evaluate institutional performance.

10. Improvement

The Community College treats complaints as a core engine for continuous institutional improvement.

- **Corrective Actions:** When an investigation identifies a structural flaw (such as an unclear scheduling system, confusing enrollment steps, or gaps in student support), immediate changes are rolled out to rectify the issue.
- **Preventative Action:** Trends identified in complaints are added directly to the College Risk Register to proactively alter operational procedures before wider failures occur.
- **Closing the Loop:** Anonymized summaries of feedback and resulting improvements are published annually for the student body and shared with primary delivery partners, proving our institutional commitment to accountability.