

Complaints Procedure

Aims and Objectives

All Colleges and business units with EKC Group will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly, honestly and consistently. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding. We endeavour to:

- Make the procedure easily accessible and publicised
- Make the procedure simple to use and understand
- Carry out an impartial investigation
- Allow for swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- Address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary

This procedure applies to issues concerning all types of curriculum provision and service areas, but **NOT** appeals against exclusions which will be dealt with under the student disciplinary procedure, a copy of which can be obtained from EKC Group's website.

College Principals and Directors/Heads of respective business units are responsible for day to day management and operation of the procedure and for bringing the complaint to a resolution. Attached to this procedure is a flow chart highlighting the usual process to be followed by EKC Group.

1) Informal Stage

It is recognised that concerns may be raised by students, the general public, external agencies and staff. These concerns can hopefully be dealt with immediately by the appropriate member of staff concerned. EKC Group aims to resolve informal concerns quickly and to reach a satisfactory resolution. To ensure that the Group is able to deal quickly with any concerns, informal complaints must be raised within one month of the issue's occurrence.

2) Formal Complaints

STAGE 1 – submitting a formal complaint

If you feel that a concern has not been resolved appropriately through informal discussion with the appropriate staff member or it is of serious concern and you wish to have the matter formally investigated, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the relevant College Principal or business unit Director/Head. Contact details are as follows:

Site	Contact	Contact details
Broadstairs College	Kurt Salter College Principal	Ramsgate Road Broadstairs, CT10 1PN E: kurt.salter@eastkent.ac.uk T: 01843 605040
Canterbury College	Lucy McLeod College Principal	New Dover Road Canterbury, CT1 3AJ E: lucy.mcleod@eastkent.ac.uk T: 01227 812051
Dover Technical College	Nick Holbrook-Sutcliffe College Principal	Maison Dieu Road Dover, CT16 1DH E: nick.holbrook-sutcliffe@eastkent.ac.uk T: 01304 244333
Folkestone College	Victoria Copp-Crawley College Principal	Shorncliffe Road Folkestone, CT20 2TZ E: victoria.copp-crawley@eastkent.ac.uk T: 01303 858300
Sheppey College	Alan Salter College Principal	Bridge Road Sheerness, ME12 1HL E: alan.salter@eastkent.ac.uk T: 01795582501
Community and Employability programmes including Professional learning, Higher Education and Apprenticeships	Jonathan Smith Director of WorkHigher	Ramsgate Road Broadstairs CT10 1PN E: jonathan.smith2@eastkent.ac.uk T: 01843 605040

Commercial	Shane Godwin Director EKC Commercial Services	Ramsgate Road Broadstairs CT10 1PN E: shane.godwin@eastkent.ac.uk T: 01843 605040
------------	--	--

Alternatively, you may address your concerns to EKC Group's Office for Student Affairs through the contact form on the [Group's website](#) or by emailing studentaffairs@eastkent.ac.uk.

EKC Group will endeavour to assist with any special requests for additional assistance with this procedure as long as they are made aware at the outset. Formal complaints must normally be made within two months of the issue's occurrence to enable the Group to take appropriate action where required.

The written complaint should be returned, marked confidential, to the respective College or business unit for the attention of the College Principal or respective Director/Head, indicating at which stage you are making the complaint.

It would be helpful in the following information could be included in the complaint to enable us to deal with the complaint as efficiently as possible:

- Your Name
- Your Address
- Postcode
- Daytime telephone number
- Evening telephone number
- Email address for correspondence
- Details of the complaint
- What action if any, you have already taken to try and resolve your complaint (who you spoke to and what their response was)
- What action you feel might resolve the problem at this stage

The College Principal or Director/Head will contact any parties involved in the complaint and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 working days after receiving it. You will also be provided with a copy of EKC Group's Complaints Procedure.

The complaint will be investigated and a response sent to you within 21 calendar days. If it is not possible to conclude the investigation within this time frame the Group will keep you advised of progress and a revised date for a resolution.

If the nature of the complaint is of a serious nature and could constitute gross misconduct by a member of staff, the matter will be referred to the Head of HR for investigation. Examples may include theft, inappropriate behaviour, bullying/harassment, discrimination, fraud, breach of safeguarding, breach of legislation or college procedures etc.

In order to ensure that a thorough investigation of a complaint is made, we expect to be able to collect appropriate information from all the parties involved. Where a complaint is made anonymously this is not possible and therefore, no action will normally be taken in the event of an anonymous complaint being raised, although it would be sent to the relevant manager for noting.

A complainant may be invited to discuss the complaint, or attend a meeting to establish further details regarding the cause of dissatisfaction or explore the solution being sought. At any meetings held as part of the investigation the complainant will have the right to be accompanied by one person (for example a friend, relative or Students' Union representative), who also has the right to speak on behalf of the complainant. However, this person is in addition to the complainant, not a substitute. The complainant must also be present, unless there is a good reason why this is not possible.

A group of students may use this procedure to make a collective complaint, but the group must nominate one person to be the main contact for purposes of communication and the spokesperson for the group, representing the group in all matters relating to the complaint.

All information received as a result of a complaint investigation will remain confidential to those involved in the process. However, it should be noted that all parties involved in the complaint have the right to know the full details of the complaint, including its source.

Potential complainants may want to obtain advice regarding the procedure prior to submitting a complaint, the Student Union will be able to provide guidance.

STAGE 2 - Appeals

If the concern/complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved under Stage 1, you have the option to request an appeal. This must be submitted in writing to:

Head of Student and Community Affairs
East Kent College
Ramsgate Road
Broadstairs
CT10 1PN
alison.gray@eastkent.ac.uk

Appeals must be submitted within 14 calendar days of receipt of the outcome letter, clearly stating the grounds on which the appeal is being made. If appropriate, the Head of Student and Community Affairs will appoint a senior manager who has not been involved in the original complaint to investigate the matter. A response will normally be within 21 calendar days and you will be informed about the actions which will be taken to investigate your complaint.

The Office for Student Affairs oversees the complaints procedure and ensures that it is applied fairly and consistently. It also acts as the ultimate arbiter for parents and guardians of High Needs students, ensuring that they receive the most appropriate provision. If you have any concerns about the manner in which your complaint or concern has been handled either at the informal or formal stages, please contact studentaffairs@eastkent.ac.uk

3) STAGE 3 - Post appeal

3.1 Further Education programmes

Following the action taken at Stage 2, if you still feel that the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction and having exhausted EKC Group's procedure, you may wish to refer your complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Send your complaint in writing, by email or post to the complaints team and the Complaints Adjudicator will deal with it.

Complaints Adjudicator
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT

complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

The ESFA will not investigate complaints relating to exam results, curriculum content, employment issues, contractual disputes, cancellation or reimbursement of fees/loans, matters subject to legal action or allegations of fraud, financial irregularity or whistleblowing.

3.2 Higher Education programmes

3.2.1

If you wish to make a complaint about an HE Programme delivered by EKC Group and validated by Pearson, you should follow stage 1 of this procedure, progressing the complaint to stage 2 if necessary.

When the complaints procedure has been exhausted, you will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter (COP) from EKC Group within 28 days of the internal procedure being completed.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, you may refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within 12 months of the date of the COP letter.

The OIA can be contacted at:

Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57 – 75 Kings Road
READING
RG1 3AB

3.2.2

If you wish to make a complaint about an HE programme delivered by EKC Group and validated by the University of Kent, you should follow stage 1 of this procedure, progressing the complaint to stage 2 if necessary.

If you are still not satisfied, you should progress your complaint in accordance with the [University of Kent's](#) procedure.

When the procedure for dealing with the complaint has been exhausted you will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter (COP) from the University/College within 28 days of the internal procedure being completed. The responsibility for issuing the COP will be dependent on the nature of the complaint; the University and the College therefore have a duty to liaise and agree whose responsibility it is to issue the COP.

If you are still not satisfied with the response to their complaint, you may refer it to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) as detailed in section 3.2.1 of this procedure.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body monitors the Complaints Procedure on an annual basis, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. They review all formal complaints received by EKC Group, scrutinise how they were resolved and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.



