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# Complaints Procedure Policy

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*Ali porta civitatis sum scientia et*

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**Reviewed and Approved  
by Academic Board  
July 2014**

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This policy available on ECHE's website  
Revised: July 2014  
Review: July 2016

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**European College for Higher Education is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, as well as vulnerable adults, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.**

**This Policy applies to all College programmes except those for which the applicable policy is that of a validating Higher Education institution or other Awarding Body.**

**We review our policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. All policies are subject to equality impact assessments. Equality Impact Assessments are carried out to see whether the policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on grounds of race, gender, disability, age, religion/belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity or sexual orientation.**

**We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to these impact assessments and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility of fairness of the policy.**

**To make suggestions or to see further information please contact:**

**Academic Committee:**

**Tel: 0208 800 1200**  
**Email: [admin@eche.co.uk](mailto:admin@eche.co.uk)**

**Equality Impact Assessed:**

## **Footnote**

**In an effort to keep costs to a minimum a conscious decision has been made not to print out this document and it would be appreciated that you refer to the copy and relevant Appendices available on our website [www.eche.co.uk](http://www.eche.co.uk).**

## **College Complaints Procedure:**

European College for Higher Education does possess a very transparent, fair and just procedure for dealing with complaints and appeals as its one of our key Indicator in the UK Quality Code of Higher Education. It is vital for ECHE to ensure fairness to all those who are party to, or named in, a complaint or an appeal. Dealing with a matter fairly and justly includes:

### **Scope**

This procedure applies to complaints made by:

1. Current Local and International students,
2. Students who left the college within the last 3 months
3. Students who has been withdrawn from the College in the last 3 months

Complaints accepted in relation to the following:

- The delivery and Assessment of an academic programme, or supervised study and any services provided by academic
- Other types of complaint such as allegations of harassment or discrimination

Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns

ECHE will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

As per to the Dfe guidance these key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the complaints coordinator will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

### **Formal procedures to deal with complaints**

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

The college wish to nominate a member of staff to have responsibility for the operation and management of the College complaints procedure. They could be termed the College's 'complaints co-ordinator'.

### **Principles**

- Complaints must be dealt with in a timely manner, and complainants should be kept informed of the progress of the investigation at every stage
- ECHE is committed to providing the best possible experience for its students in a high quality learning and supporting environment, and will do everything in its power to help students to resolve any reasonable complaint.
- Student perception about reasonable grounds for complaint, they should not be hindered in making a complaint. All parties should act without bias or

- prejudice, with the objective of establishing the true facts of the case and coming to a reasonable and just resolution, which is relevant and proportionate to the complaint.
- Any student seeking guidance on how to make a complaint should have easy access to timely and accurate advice and is provided by the Student Welfare Manager.
- The College will investigate complaints made anonymously with limited level.

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the complaints co-ordinator), makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- Clarify what the complainant feels would resolve the concerning issues;
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- Keep notes of the interview.

If the student is willing to make a formal complaint you should write a letter giving details of your allegations of harassment and, as appropriate, include details of incidents, including dates and times and the names of witnesses if any. Assistance will also be provided for students.

If the case is to proceed to a formal complaint, the CHC will appoint a Lead Investigator, chosen from a list of people deemed to be impartial and fair. Support Investigator(s) may be appointed to assist and support if the Lead Investigator wishes. The Investigator(s) should not (a) have been involved in any informal consideration of the case, or (b) be from the same department as the complainant or the alleged harasser. S/he would be available to conduct the investigation over the ensuing 6-8 weeks. In cases involving a complaint against a member of staff a Personnel Manager will be nominated for the Lead Investigator to consult over procedure, outcome and recommendations. In the case of a complaint being made against a student, the Academic Registrar will fulfil this role.

## **Stage 1: Informal Stage**

1.1 On occasions, a learner may raise a concern directly with the College without any formality. At this stage, it may be unclear whether the learner/parent/carer/learner is making a complaint, seeking information or has misunderstood a situation. In any effect, the College aims to resolve the concern at this point in a speedy and effective way. The turnaround time at this stage is 24-48 hours.

1.2 However, if the concern is not resolved within the time frame set above and is confirmed by the learner/parent/carer/learner the opportunity to discuss the matter with an appropriate member of staff will be given e.g. tutor, admin staff, etc. In the case of complaint against the Principal, this stage will always be heard directly by the Principal himself.

1.3 The member of staff will discuss the issue with the learner/parent/carer and those involved in the College, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible. The learner/parent/carer will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, the College proposes to take. This may take about 3-5 College working days.

1.4 If the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found, the learner/parent/carer will be asked by the member of staff dealing with the complaint whether they wish the complaint to be considered formally at stage two of this procedure.

1.5 If wishing to proceed with the complaint, the learner/parent/carer will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Administrator using the form attached at Appendix 1. The form should be sent to the Administrator within ten College working days. Advice on how to complete the form may be requested from ECHE Reception.

## **Stage 2: Referral to the ECHE Management for further investigation**

2.1 Where the complaint has been addressed by the Principal at Stage One, this stage will be heard by the ECHE Management Team. Where other staff members have addressed the complaint at Stage One, this stage will be heard by the Principal.

2.2 The ECHE Management Team and the Principal will acknowledge the written complaint within five College working days of receipt and provide an opportunity to meet the learner/parent/carer/learner to discuss the complaint.

2.3 The Principal will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within ten College working days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

2.4 The written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached by the Principal or Management Team and what action, if any, the College proposes to take to resolve the matter.

2.5 If the learner/parent/carer still remains dissatisfied, they will be advised that, in order to progress the complaint further at stage 3, they must notify the Administrator in writing within ten College days, copying the original complaint form.

5.6 The Administrator will then ensure that the learner/parent/carer is offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to ECHE's Complaints Panel at Stage 3 of this Procedure.

### **Stage 3: Review by the Complaints Panel**

3.1 Complaints only rarely reach this level. However, when the need arises, the Complaints Panel (established according to the suggested composition detailed in Appendix 2 attached) will consider complaints at this stage.

3.2 A written acknowledgement of the complaint and the request for it to be heard at Stage 3 of the Procedure will be sent to the learner/parent/carer by the Administrator to the Management Team within five College working days.

3.3 The letter will inform the parent/care/learner that the complaint will be heard by the Complaints Panel (CP) within twenty College working days of receiving the complaint. It will also inform the learner/parent/carer of the right to submit any further documents other than the complaint form and that these must be made available to the Administrator to the Management Team within five College working days of receipt of the acknowledgement letter. The right to call witnesses to meeting, subject to the approval of the Chair of the CP, and the right of the learner/parent/carer/learner to be accompanied by a companion of her/his choice, will also be explained in the letter.

3.4 The Administrator will send a copy of the letter of acknowledgement of the complaint to the Chair of the Panel and/or Principal and request a written report in response to the complaint to the CP within five College working days of receipt of the letter. The right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the Chair, will also be explained.

3.5 The Administrator will then convene a CP meeting, having consulted with all parties on convenient times. The date, time and venue for the meeting and then be confirmed at least **five** College working days in advance.

3.6 The names of all parties and witnesses (if any) to attend the meeting and all relevant documents to be referred to at the meeting will also be provided by the Chair of the CP to: the learner/parent/carer; the Management Team and/or Principal; and each panel member. This will be provided as soon as possible and, in any event, at least five College working days prior to the meeting.

3.7 A written decision will be sent to learner and the Management Team and/or Principal by the Chair of the CP within ten College working days of the hearing.

### Complaints against Harassment Advisers

If your complaint is against the Harassment Adviser either about harassment from them or about an unhelpful response to a concern raised with them about harassment from someone else, you are advised to bring the matter to the attention of the Director or an appropriate senior staff member.

## Cases of Physical Assault

If you have been attacked, seek help immediately. Any staff member will direct you to the Admin office, for support and help in explaining the range of options available to you, including sources of other support.

For your own protection and for the protection of others it is important that the offender is stopped from causing further harm. Cases of physical assault will almost certainly mean you have suffered a crime and accordingly you are advised to report the matter to the police as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of the assault you may wish to be accompanied by a Harassment Adviser or someone of your choice when you contact the police.

Details of useful contacts which provide confidential advice are included in underneath of this policy.

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Form to notify formal College Complaint (stage 2 and/or Stage3)**

Learner's name to whom issue relates.....

Programme/Year.....

Parent/Guardian/Carer .....

Contact details (including Mobile) .....

Telephone no. (If applicable) .....

Details of Complaint: (Please be as specific as possible e.g. giving dates, who was involved and where etc.) Please attach continuation sheet/additional information if you wish .....

What would you like to see done to resolve your complaint and bring the matter to an acceptable closure for yourself and the College?

Signed.....Date .....

(Learner)

Please return the completed form to the **Administrator** at the College

### **Appendix 2**

#### **Composition of the Complaints Panel**

The Complaints Panel (CP) should consist of three members of the ECHE Board and an individual who is not related to the College Management System. This could be someone from an external regulator or a parent who wishes to be involved. A Chair of the CP should also be appointed. The College may decide to appoint the members annually, together with reserves, designated in the order in which they would be called upon to stand in order to ensure that three governors will be available within the timescales.

The College may wish to consider the advantages of having a learner/parent/carer and/or Committee member as a member of the panel.

No member of the CP should have had prior involvement with the complaint. As the Principal may be involved at an earlier stage in the procedure (particularly where the complaint is about a teacher/lecturer) it may be wise not to include them as a member of the CP to avoid any possible reference to the Chair being “tainted”. Thus it is not considered appropriate for the Principal to be a member of the CP.



<b>STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY</b>	
Policy Ref: ECHE 2014	
Version Number	3.0
Version Date	July 2014
Name of Developer/Reviewer	Raza Shah
Policy Owner (College/Centre/Unit)	Academic Committee, Directors of the College.
Person responsible for implementation (postholder)	Directors of College
Approving Committee/Board	Quality Assurance Committee
Date approved	July 2014
Effective from	July 2014
Dissemination method (e.g. website)	College website
Review Frequency	2 years
Reviewing Committee	Academic Committee, Directors of the College
Consultation History (individuals/groups consulted with dates)	Drafts of the policy have been considered by: Directors of college Academic Committee Quality Assurance Committee