

# Talkback Procedure

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| <b>Reviewed:</b><br>September 2023      | <b>Next review due:</b><br>September 2026                                      |
| <b>Approving Body:</b><br>ELT           | <b>ELT contact:</b><br>Executive of Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience |
| <b>Date Approved:</b><br>September 2023 | <b>Author:</b><br>Administration Support Manager                               |

\*This procedure may need to be reviewed before the review date stated, to reflect changes in government and other agencies' advice, guidance and legislation

## **1. Introduction**

City College Plymouth (the 'College') is a leading provider of vocational, professional and technical training in the South West, that strives to provide a learning environment and organisational culture that impacts positively on the health, wellbeing and sustainability of our community, to enable all our students and staff to achieve their full potential.

The term 'College Community' includes all staff, governors, students, parents/carers, volunteers and visitors.

### **Our vision:**

- To be the learning destination of choice.

### **Our core values:**

- Respect
- Ownership
- Integrity

## **2. Procedure Statement**

The Talkback Procedure is open to all stakeholders of City College Plymouth. This includes all students studying either an FE or HE course (through City College Plymouth directly or in partnership with Plymouth University), full or part time, and all collaborative partners (students/ parents / carers / employers / visitors).

The College aims to make this a straightforward process. Talkback submissions should be made as soon as possible after the event, action or issue that prompted feedback.

Please note: Separate procedures may apply in some instances – see Annex A.

The College is committed to providing a high quality service and achieving the highest standard of conduct. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of all people served by the College.

The aim of the Talkback Procedure is to ensure a speedy resolution to the issues raised and, where necessary, make service improvements which will benefit all of our customers.

## **3. Process, Concerns and Complaints**

### **Stage 1 - Informal Resolution**

Any person with a Talkback concern or complaint is invited to discuss the matter with an appropriate member of staff in the first instance. For students, this will be their Personal Tutor, Lecturer or Student Journey Team, and for all HE students, the HE Office (K106) At this point advice and guidance will be given on how to proceed towards a resolution.

The College encourages stakeholders to try to resolve any dissatisfaction through open and informal procedures in the first instance.

## **Stage Two – Formal written complaint**

If the person is not satisfied with the outcome 'of the informal resolution' or does not wish to discuss the matter first with an appropriate member of staff, they should contact the Talkback Team via one of the methods outlined below:

- Email [talkback@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:talkback@cityplym.ac.uk)
- Telephone 01752 305830
- Letter addressed to the Talkback Team at the College's address
- Talkback Form which can be found at various points throughout the College (Reception / Student Journey ) and the College website [www.cityplym.ac.uk](http://www.cityplym.ac.uk)

Acknowledgement of the receipt of a concern or complaint will normally be sent within five working days\*.

The Talkback correspondence will be copied to the relevant manager responsible for the area from which the feedback has arisen; a full investigation will be carried out.

If the complainant is a Plymouth University (PU) HE student the complaint will also be copied to the PU Complaint's Office ([complaints@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@plymouth.ac.uk)) for information.

If the complainant is in receipt of 'Learning Support', the Learning Support Manager will be informed of the complaint. This will allow additional support to be put in place to help the complainant through the Talkback process.

The Talkback team will normally reply to the complainant within 20 working days\* from the acknowledgement of their feedback. This response will outline the outcomes of the investigation. Complainants should be aware that the College might not be able to provide full details of the investigation or outcomes because of either the Data Protection Act 2018 / General Data Protection Regulation 2018 if the complaint relates to a third party. If that is the case, a limited response will be provided. If it is not possible to give a full or limited reply within this time – for instance, because a detailed enquiry is still taking place – Talkback will issue an interim response, explaining what is being done to deal with the issue, when a full or limited reply can be expected and from whom. Where a concern or complaint is not upheld, reasons will be given as to why this is so.

Some complaints may benefit from a case conference to try to manage and resolve issues more promptly. (A case conference is a meeting involving all parties to discuss the issues involved). This is particularly beneficial if the complaint / concern covers multiple issues, or the facts around the feedback are complex and need clarification. In addition, the following circumstances may apply:

- If the issue is about a member of staff and has the potential to lead to Staff Disciplinary or Capability Procedures, then the Talkback Team will discuss the issues with the Human Resources team, who may then carry out the investigation under their provisions
- If the issue is regarding Equality and Diversity then the matter may be referred to the College's Equality and Diversity Committee.

- If the issue is regarding a Safeguarding issue then the matter may be referred to the Safeguarding Coordinator. This includes any issue related to the Prevent Duty.
- If the feedback is related to any legal issues then the Director of Governance will be informed.
- If the issue is related to assessment processes or outcomes then the matter may be referred to the Appeals Procedure. This can be found in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Centre Handbook.
- In exceptional circumstances, when a case conference is deemed essential, it may not be possible to arrange a suitable meeting time for the complainant to attend, or additional information may be required from the complainant. In this instance, the Talkback process will be placed on hold pending further contact from the complainant. Complaints will be placed on hold for a maximum of 20 working days\*, giving time to arrange a convenient date and time, after which time the complaint will be closed and the assumption will be made that the complainant does not wish to pursue the matter further.

Usually the subject of a complaint has the right to know what is being claimed and who is making the complaint. There are on occasions exceptions to this rule (e.g., where there are valid concerns about personal safety).

Where feedback is put in writing a copy will be supplied to the person who is the subject of the concern.

All staff are under an obligation not to allow feedback by a 'complainant' to have any impact on the way that a student or member of staff is treated, marked or assessed.

### **Bribery and Anti-corruption**

The College recognises the importance of maintaining its reputation and the confidence in the people served by the College and is committed to the prevention of bribery and all forms of corruption. The College operates a zero tolerance approach to Bribery and any allegations of bribery or other forms of corruption by a member of staff will be taken seriously. Such complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Anti- Fraud Policy, which may result in the College's Staff Disciplinary Procedures being invoked and the matter reported to the relevant authorities as appropriate.

### **Complaints about the Principal or the Governors**

Where a complaint regards the Principal, the complainant should first directly approach the Principal in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome, they should notify the Clerk to Governors ([info@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:info@cityplym.ac.uk)). The Stage Two process will then commence, but with the Chair of Governors as the individual responsible for the investigation.

Where a complaint is about a Governor, the same process applies as for the Principal. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the individual should contact the Director of

Governance . Informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the Vice Chair of Governors will mediate any proceedings.

### **Stage Three – Referral for Formal Review**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome noted in the response letter they should write to the Director of Quality Improvement, within 10 working days\* from the date of the letter received indicating why they are dissatisfied with the response. Closure will not be reversed if we do not receive a response after this time.

Referrals can be made in writing via:

- Email: [Talkback@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:Talkback@cityplym.ac.uk)
- Post: FAO Director of Quality Improvement, City College Plymouth, Kings Road, Devonport, Plymouth, PL1 5QG
- Talkback Form

Receipt of a referral will be sent by the Talkback Team within five working days\*. The Director of Quality Improvement will carry out their own investigation and will respond within 10 working days\* from acknowledgement.

If the complainant is a Plymouth University HE student they should refer directly to the PU Complaint's Office ([complaints@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@plymouth.ac.uk)) who will set up a Complaint Review Panel. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome noted in the response letter from the Director of Quality Improvement; they should appeal the decision in writing to the Principal, within 10 working days\*, from the date of receipt of the letter. Closure will not be reversed if the College does not receive a response after this time.

NB. If the issue relates to one of the people outlined in this process it will be dealt with by another person of equal or greater status assigned by their direct Line Manager.

### **Stage 4 – Referral to External Organisations**

If the complainant would like independent information, advice or support from a member of the Student Union at any time during the Talkback process, they are able to contact a representative on 01752 305848 or [studentliaison@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:studentliaison@cityplym.ac.uk). HE students studying in partnership with the University of Plymouth can contact the University of Plymouth Students Union (UPSU) on 01752 588388 or [info@upsu.com](mailto:info@upsu.com)

Where a complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant after all internal College stages have been followed they should contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Higher Education students should contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. Students also have the right to take their complaint to the relevant awarding organisation within 20 days. The Talkback Team can support this or the complainant may contact the awarding organisation directly.

| Referral for FE / other students (not HE)  | Referral for HE students   |
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| Education and Skills Funding Agency<br>Cheylesmore House<br>Quinton Road<br>Coventry<br>CV1 2WT<br>Email: <a href="mailto:complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk">complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk</a> | Office of the Independent Adjudicator<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Kings Reach<br>38-50 Kings Road<br>Reading, RG1 3AA<br>Tel 01189 599813<br>Email: <a href="mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk">enquiries@oiahe.org.uk</a> |

#### 4. Information Sharing and Reporting

Anonymised summary information and data about complaints is monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and the Corporation.

All Equality and Diversity data collected from complainants is optional. This is used for College monitoring purposes only, to ensure that the College is upholding its commitment to:

*'...create an environment where people treat each other with mutual respect regardless of age, disability, colour, ethnic origin, family responsibility, gender, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, nationality, race, caste, religion and philosophical beliefs, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background.'*

#### 5. Process- Compliments and Comments

The College would also like to hear about things that are going well and suggestions on how things could be improved. Please let us know your thoughts by:

- Email [talkback@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:talkback@cityplym.ac.uk)
- Telephone 01752 305830

An acknowledgement of the receipt of your feedback will be sent within five working days\*, and the compliment / comment will be passed on to the relevant people

\*Working Days refers to usual college working days Monday – Friday, excluding Public Holidays, College Closure days and Study Review Weeks