

# Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

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**Date: 2024-2027**

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## Accessibility Statement

If you have any learning difficulty, disability or health problem, that means you are unable to use the complaints procedure in the way laid out in this document, or you may require additional support to help you with the process, please contact the College Complaints Officer at: [complaintsadvice@hca.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvice@hca.ac.uk) to discuss how the process can be adjusted to support your needs. Should you require this guide in an alternative format please contact the College Complaints Office.

## Document Control

Manager responsible: Abigail Appleton, Principal

Version number: 3.0

Approved by: C&Q and Board

Approval date: July 2024

Review date: July 2027

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# Introduction

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1. Hereford College of Arts (HCA) is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience through its teaching and wide range of services and facilities. It encourages a positive environment where feedback from students is welcomed and where constructive complaints can be dealt with effectively.
2. The college aims to handle complaints in a way that:
  - Is fair and efficient
  - Facilitates early resolution
  - Encourages informal resolution nearest to the source of the complaint
  - Treats complaints with seriousness, sympathy, courtesy and confidentiality
  - Enables the college, where relevant, to address areas for improvement.
3. No student bringing a complaint under this procedure, whether successfully or otherwise, will be disadvantaged.
4. Students have the right to expect that everyone who responds to, investigates, or adjudicates upon a review will do so impartially.
5. As a student, you should note that a complaint will not always produce the outcome that you are seeking, as all points of view have to be considered. Whatever the decision, your concerns will receive serious consideration and if the college is not able to resolve the problem, it will advise you and explain the reason for its decision.
6. The college subscribes to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) which is an independent body set up to review student complaints about higher education. This policy has been developed in line with their guidance and explains that a student can appeal to the OIA after completing college procedures.

## Scope

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### **What is a complaint?**

7. A complaint is *“an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something the college has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider”*. It will normally have direct impact on the person making the complaint.
8. Academic and non-academic complaints include concerns about the following:

- Any of the services or facilities provided by the college, such as workshops and libraries or registry and finance (such being examples only)
  - The quality of teaching and or supervision
  - Misinformation about your course or any college service
  - Treatment by a staff member
  - The behaviour of any visitor or other party contracted by the college.
9. The list above is not exhaustive, and depending on the nature of a complaint made against a member of staff, the college may judge another policy to be more appropriate (for example a staff disciplinary policy, may need to be considered). Some other complaints CANNOT be made under this policy including:
- Complaints about the decisions of HE Examining Boards (see points 97 & 98 for guidance)
  - Complaints about people not employed or contracted by the college (so for example, a complaint about student residential accommodation should be directed to the landlord)
  - Appeals against a disciplinary decision which should be taken up in accordance with the college's Student Professional Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy (HE) and Student Behaviour and Professional Standards Policy (FE).
  - This policy excludes complaints made about Freedom of Information (FoI) access requests which are handled separately by the Principal, in line with the College's Freedom of Information Policy.
  - Complaints about admissions should be raised through the College Complaints Officer and would refer to the Admissions Policy.

### **General issues and feedback**

10. The college has a number of ways in which general issues may be raised including through student representatives and the student council and the Student Union. Feedback given in response to questionnaires and surveys will not be considered complaints although it may well lead to improvements in service.

### **Complaints about other students**

11. Complaints against another student should be made following the Student Professional Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy (HE); Student Behaviour and Professional Standards Policy (FE); or Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

### **How do I complain about my assessment grade or the decision of an examining board?**

12. This policy does not apply to complaints about assessment grades or decisions of an examining board. Any complaints or queries regarding assessment should always be discussed with the staff responsible for delivering and marking your assignment/project.

In this way your tutor will be able to go through the specific reasons why you achieved the grade you did.

13. If you are still dissatisfied about the assessment outcome and/or your final qualification result, you should speak with the Vice Principal FE or Vice Principal HE who will consider the concern. If the college is not able to resolve the matter to your satisfaction, you can appeal to the appropriate awarding or validating body. Contact details are available from the College Complaints Officer at: [complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk).
14. If you have a concern that a personal extenuating circumstance may have impacted on your assessment, you should bring this to the immediate attention of Registry who will advise you on what to do. This would be referred to the awarding or validating body's academic appeal policy.

### **Anonymous complaints**

15. Students are strongly advised not to make anonymous complaints. If an anonymous complaint provides compelling evidence or raises a particularly high-risk concern then the college may decide to investigate but the college is not obliged to enter into any correspondence or acknowledge receipt of the complaint, or follow this procedure. The college may not be able to investigate effectively or make improvements and the student making the anonymous complaint will not be able to appeal to the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if they are not happy with any outcome.

### **Frivolous or vexatious complaints**

16. The college may reject a complaint if, in the judgement of the Vice Principal FE or Vice Principal HE, in consultation with another member of the Senior Leadership Team, it is considered to be frivolous or vexatious.

Examples might be:

- Complaints that are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- Demands redress that lacks serious purpose or value

17. If the complaint is judged frivolous or vexatious the Vice Principal FE or Vice Principal HE will explain in writing the decision not to pursue the consideration of the complaint further, and outline the appeal process to Principal.

### **Unacceptable behaviour**

18. The college is committed to providing a fair and safe environment for both students and staff and expect both to behave with respect. It is understood students may feel angry and upset but complaints must not be pursued in an abusive and threatening way or make unreasonable demands.

Examples might be:

- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a member of staff immediately
- Continual phone calls, email or other contacts

19. If the actions of a student making a complaint are considered unacceptable, the college will explain why it considers the behaviour unacceptable and the student will usually be given a chance to modify their behaviour. The college may also refer to student disciplinary procedures.

### **Who can make a complaint?**

20. This Policy applies to all enrolled FE, and HE students at any level of study, enrolled directly (or have been enrolled in the previous three months) at Hereford College of Arts.
21. This Policy does not apply to members of the public. Members of the public who wish to make a concern known should contact the College Complaints Officer who will refer the concern to the Principal or their nominee.
22. This Policy does not apply to Short Course students, complaints should be resolved informally where possible with the individual's Short Course tutor or by contacting the short course coordinator at [shortcourses@hca.ac.uk](mailto:shortcourses@hca.ac.uk).

### **Timescales**

23. Concerns and complaints should be raised as quickly as possible to facilitate resolution. Complaints should normally be raised within 28 days of the student becoming aware of the problem. Complaints raised more than three months after the incident occurred will be deemed out of time unless there is an exceptional reason why the complaint could not be raised earlier. Former students must raise complaints within three months of leaving and must provide good reasons for not raising the complaint whilst they were enrolled with the college.

### **Collective complaints**

24. The normal expectation is that students will submit a complaint which relates to their own experiences only. However, where a service failure may have affected a number of students, they may elect to make a collective complaint. In this case they need to confirm in writing that one or two students will act on their behalf.

### **Appointment of a representative**

25. HE Students:

As independent adults who should take responsibility for their own learning, the college expects students to make their own representations within this complaints procedure. In exceptional circumstances a complaint may, with your written

authority, be submitted on your behalf by someone else. In dealing with the complaint, the college will still expect to have direct contact with you during the process of any investigation, unless there are extreme circumstances preventing such access.

**26. FE Students:**

The college expects students to make their own representations within this complaints procedure. Parents or guardians of students under 18 years of age may submit a complaint on your behalf. In dealing with the complaint, the college will still expect to have direct contact with you during the process of any investigation, unless there are extreme circumstances preventing such access.

27. All students will have the right to be accompanied by a person of their choosing at any meeting associated with the complaints process and are required to inform the college in writing in advance of any meeting or panel as to whether they intend to be accompanied. They may be accompanied, but not represented (unless agreed by both parties as above), by a parent or guardian, friend or colleague or another member of the college community, for example a member of the SU. The accompanying person shall not normally contribute to the discussions.

**College complaints officer**

28. The role of the Complaints Officer is to be the liaison between the complainant and the college and will administrate all aspects of the process. The College Complaints Officer has no input in the investigation or decision making around the complaint outcome, but will be supporting the Investigating Lead and documenting any meetings that take place. They are available to the complainant to answer any questions or concerns around the process and will be the main point of contact throughout the investigation.

**Confidentiality**

29. If I complain about another person, will they find out?

Individuals who are the subject of a complaint are entitled to know who is complaining and the nature of the complaint.

30. If, in exceptional circumstances (and for justifiable documented reasons), a complainant wishes to remain anonymous the college may consider this as appropriate.
31. The college is mindful of its obligations under relevant data protection regulations and the Equality Act 2010 in relation to information shared. Information associated with the case will be disclosed to as few people as possible. In submitting a complaint, however, students must accept that limited disclosure of all or part of their submission will be required to enable investigation of their case to proceed.

32. Where a student submits information about other people they should limit any personal information to the essentials, as there may be a requirement under data protection to notify third parties of any circumstances in which their data is being processed.
33. Where a complaint has been raised against a student or member of staff and has been upheld the student raising the complaint will be informed of the outcome of the complaint. However, it would not usually be appropriate to share specific details of all actions taken affecting specific students or staff members with the complainant, particularly where disciplinary action is being taken.

#### **What if more than one policy applies to my complaint?**

34. There are a number of other policies and procedures that may be relevant in consideration of a complaint. For example, a complaint might concern bullying or support for study which are covered in separate policies.
35. As part of the initial assessment of a complaint, the college will consider which policy/policies are most appropriate. The college will inform students which policy is being applied or, when more than one policy is being applied, which one is the lead policy.

#### **Can I withdraw my complaint?**

36. You can withdraw a complaint at any time during the stage of investigation by giving notice in writing to the College Complaints Officer. Once you have withdrawn your complaint the matter is closed unless the college decides to pursue the matter under other procedures.

## **Complaints Procedure**

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37. The complaints procedure is intended to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process with a strong focus on early resolution.

The procedure involves up to three stages:

- Stage 1 Early complaints resolution seeks to resolve straightforward complaints swiftly and effectively at the point at which the complaint is made to those responsible for the service under consideration, or as close to that point as possible.
- Stage 2 A formal complaint is appropriate where a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of early resolution or where early resolution is not possible or appropriate due to the complexity or seriousness of the case.
- Stage 3 Complaints Review enables a student who remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint investigation to request a review of the



decision by the Principal or their nominee. If a student remains dissatisfied at the completion of internal procedures, HE students are able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and FE students to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

38. Only exceptionally, and where there are reasonable grounds for such, would the procedure be varied at the discretion of the Principal or their nominee.

### **Stage One: Early Complaints Resolution**

39. Any student who has a complaint is encouraged to raise it initially at the point of becoming aware of the concern and raise it with the head of the team or service in which the issue arose. The student should make it clear that they are making an informal stage one complaint as opposed to making an observation, asking a question or providing feedback. If the student has any doubt as to whom to make the complaint, they may seek advice from their course team or contact the College Complaints Officer ([complaintsAdvice@hca.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsAdvice@hca.ac.uk)) to discuss the complaint. The aim at this stage is to resolve the problem directly, informally and as quickly as possible.

40. Complaints at this stage may be made face-to-face, by phone/video call or in writing. Students should ensure they include the following information however the concern is raised:

- They are making an informal stage one complaint within the terms of the procedure so that the staff member can respond accordingly
- The specific concern and impact on the student
- The area of the college or staff the student believes involved
- The outcome they are hoping for.

41. The staff member will discuss the matter with you and consider some key questions

- Is this a complaint or does it need to be referred to another procedure?
- What is the nature of the complaint?
- Who is involved?
- Can the complaint be resolved on the spot with an apology, explanation or solution?
- Can another member of staff help in seeking an early resolution?
- Can I help convene a conversation between the student and another member of staff?
- What assistance can be provided in taking this forward within the first stage procedure?
- Is the complaint factually accurate? Do facts need to be checked?

42. Students will be told if the member of staff feels that they need to be referred to another member of staff or if the complaint needs to be dealt with immediately through

the stage two formal process. If the staff member feels another member of staff needs to handle the concern they will liaise and make necessary introductions for the student.

43. Resolution may be achieved by providing explanation of why an issue occurred and/or apology (on-the-spot or after enquiry), a proposal to remedy the matter for the student and/or outline where possible what will be done to avoid this concern happening again in the future.
44. An apology does not amount to an admission of liability in the legal sense but enables the college to take responsibility for improving arrangements and reassure the student the complaint has been taken seriously.
45. The member of staff handling the complaint, will alert the College Complaints Officer that they are handling a stage one complaint and they will normally advise the student of the outcome within 10 working days from the date on which the complaint was received.
46. If more time is needed for consideration of the complaint (e.g. in the absence of a key person) then the member of staff handling the complaint will inform the College Complaints Officer who will advise you in writing and set another date for completion.

#### Closing the complaint at the early resolution stage

47. The outcome will be communicated to the student orally or in writing. If the outcome is given orally it will be summarised in an email which will be sent to the student and also to the Complaints Officer who will keep a record for monitoring.
48. The email should include the following information (a template for guidance is available from the College Complaints Officer)
  - The date the concern was raised
  - A brief summary including the outcome the student was hoping for
  - The outcome the complaints handler determined including for example an explanation and/or apology, and any steps to improve a service in the future or referral to college management for further consideration
  - Advice to the student that this closes the early resolution complaint and information on the availability of a second stage if they remain dissatisfied.
49. If following feedback, the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, or, if owing to the nature of the complaint it is not appropriate to deal with it informally, the complaint may be dealt with at a more formal level at Stage Two. This should be received within no more than 28 days after the informal procedure has ended (where appropriate) or after the student became aware of the issue.

## **Stage Two: Formal**

50. The formal complaint should usually only be considered if attempts to resolve the matter informally have been unsuccessful.
51. A complaint may be moved straight to the formal stage exceptionally if the issues are complex and will require detailed investigation or the issues are serious and represent major service failure or possible harm to the student's immediate wellbeing.
52. If a student requests the complaint is moved straight to the formal stage this will be considered by the Vice Principal FE or Vice Principal HE.
53. A formal complaint must be made in writing to the College Complaints Officer at [complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk). The student must provide as much information as possible, indicating what reasonable steps they would like to see taken to resolve the matter.
54. Formal complaints must be received no more than 28 days after the informal procedure has ended (where appropriate) or after the student became aware of the issue.
55. Formal complaints received after these deadlines will be deemed to be out of time and will not be considered unless there are compelling reasons as to why the formal complaint was not raised in a timely manner.
56. Where a complaint is deemed out of time, the college will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter, noting the reason why the complaint was not considered and advising the student that they may be able to take their complaint to the OIA for HE or the ESFA for FE.
57. The College Complaints Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days.
58. The complaint will be reviewed by the Vice Principal FE or HE or their nominee.
59. The student may be referred back to the informal process or asked for further information.
60. Within 10 working days (and earlier if possible) the College Complaints Officer will inform the student if it has been accepted for stage two and who will investigate it. The Complaints Officer will also ensure the student has a copy of this policy.
61. The manager appointed to Investigating Lead, in liaison with the College Complaints Officer, should provide an indication of the timescale likely to be required to investigate, reach a resolution on the complaint and report back to the student making the

complaint.

62. The purpose of conducting an investigation is to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to provide a full, objective and proportionate response to the student that reflects the college's considered opinion.
63. The investigation should be completed as quickly as possible, and in any event, within 15 working days of the complaint's acceptance at stage two and appointment of the Investigating lead. The student should be notified in the event of any delay in the process during the investigation.
64. The Investigating Lead may need to arrange a meeting(s) with the student who has made the complaint and other students or staff within the college to discuss the matter.
65. If the complaint is about another individual the Investigating Lead may involve that person in a meeting with the student who has made the complaint or conduct separate meetings.
66. The meeting(s) may seek for example to:
  - Clarify statements made in the formal complaint
  - Establish facts
  - Confirm the details of the complainant's stated desired outcome
  - Share the main points in the Investigating Lead's initial report.
  - Share the wider context
67. These meetings will normally be held in person, if for reasons of distance or other good reason, physical attendance is not possible, the complainant shall be invited to communicate via video call if necessary.
68. At these meetings, staff and students will be entitled to be accompanied, but not represented (unless agreed by both parties in exceptional circumstances), by a parent or guardian, friend or colleague, or another member of the college community, for example a member of the SU or a Union Rep. A legal representative will not normally be appropriate and would only be considered if requested in advance and judged by the college to be acceptable in the circumstances. The accompanying person will not normally contribute to the discussions.
69. Another member of staff may be invited to attend these meetings, for example the Wellbeing Development Lead. In this case the student or member of staff being interviewed will be informed in advance who is attending and their role in the meeting.
70. Meetings will not be recorded in accordance with data protection legislation, unless there are exceptional circumstances and all participants give permission before the recording starts. The college does not allow for any meetings to be recorded covertly.

Notes will be taken for each meeting held within a formal investigation and sent to the attendee/s to confirm they are a true representation of the meeting discussion.

71. The college will ensure that all written records related to the case are clear, accurate, and appropriate and will be stored in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

### Mediation

72. Some complaints, such as complex complaints where for example the complainant or other involved parties have become entrenched in their position, may benefit from a different approach to resolving the complaint. Using mediation may help both parties to understand what is driving a complaint and may be more likely to result in a mutually satisfactory conclusion being reached. Where the college and student agree to mediation, revised timescales should be agreed.

### Closing the complaint at the formal, second stage

73. When the Investigating Lead has concluded their report, they will make recommendations to be reviewed and agreed by the Head of HE or FE if they have not led the investigation themselves (and in consultation with another member of the senior leadership team when they have).
74. The outcome of the formal stage will be communicated to the student in writing including the following information:
- The student's name, course and year of study
  - Date of receipt of stage two complaint
  - Outcomes the student was hoping for
  - Summary of the investigation and any documents/other evidence reviewed
  - The conclusions drawn by the Investigating Lead with reasons.
75. The outcomes available are as follows:
- Complaint not upheld
  - Complaint upheld in whole or in part
  - In the event of a complaint being upheld in whole or in part, the written outcome should include an indication of how and when any remedy will be implemented.
76. Where a complaint has been made against an individual(s), the Investigating Lead will communicate the outcome(s) as appropriate.
77. The written outcome should also include information about the student's right to take the complaint to the third stage including timescales and relevant procedure.

78. If the complaint has been upheld against a staff member and they feel the outcome is unjustified or remedial action is disproportionate the staff member may also request review of the complaint in which case this will follow the same procedure outlined below:

### **Stage Three: Internal Review of Complaint**

79. A request for an appeal against a Stage Two decision must be made in writing to the College Complaints Officer at [complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk) within 10 working days of receipt of the decision communicated at Stage Two.

80. A simple verbal expression of a desire to request a review by the student within the above deadline shall not be deemed to constitute a formal request for review and shall not be accepted.

81. A request for review received after the above deadline will be deemed to be out of time and will not be considered unless there is independent evidence to show compelling reasons as to why the request for review was not submitted in a timely manner.

82. Where a request for review is deemed out of time, the college will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter, noting the reason why the request for review was not considered and advising the student that they may be able to take their complaint to the OIA for HE and ESFA for FE.

83. If no request for review is received within 10 working days, the college will assume that the student does not wish to request a review. The college will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter, noting that the student did not engage with the request for review procedures in a timely manner and advising the student that they may be able to take their complaint to the OIA for HE and ESFA for FE.

84. The written request for a review of the outcome must include information about how the complaint has been dealt with to date and the basis upon which the request is made. A request for a review should include your reasons for a review which might include the following:

- New information or evidence has come to light
- Available information or evidence was not considered during the Stage Two complaints process
- A procedural irregularity
- The complaint outcome was not reasonable given the circumstances of the case.

85. The College Complaints Officer will bring the request for review to the attention of the Principal and will acknowledge receipt of the request within three working days and

provide a clear indication of the timescale likely to be required to investigate the complaint further.

86. The Principal (or their nominee) will consider the complaint in full and will refer to all the information submitted and outcomes communicated in relation to stages one and two of the student complaints procedure.
87. In considering the complaint, the Principal may wish to set up a Complaints Panel chaired by the Principal (or their nominee), which will usually include staff who have not previously been involved in the investigation and/or members of the college board.
88. The panel will receive and consider the documentation generated by the complaint and may decide that it would be beneficial to hear other evidence at a formal hearing. Such a hearing may assist the panel in giving fresh consideration to the merits of the original complaint, considering the way in which the complaint has been handled at previous stages, and providing an opportunity to reconsider the appropriateness of the decisions made at previous stages of the procedure.
89. The hearing will not be conducted as an alternative to any part of staff disciplinary or grievance procedures where these may be deemed appropriate.
90. The student who has raised the complaint will be invited to the meeting(s) and shall have access to the documentation that the panel received about the complaint. They may be accompanied, but not represented (unless agreed in advance by the college in exceptional circumstances) by a parent or guardian, friend or colleague or another member of the college community, for example a member of the SU. The accompanying person will not normally contribute to the discussions.
91. Any person accompanying the student who has raised a complaint shall be asked by the Chair to identify themselves at the beginning of the proceedings and may be invited by the panel during the hearing to speak in support of the case. Another person may not be sent to a hearing in place of the complainant.
92. In the event that the complaint is lodged against the Principal, the Chair or Deputy Chair of Governors will arrange for the Complaints Panel to be set up and will Chair and convene necessary meetings or a formal hearing. It will be the responsibility of the Chair or Deputy Chair of Governors to report the outcomes.
93. The Principal will issue and forward to all relevant parties, a written decision within 15 working days of receiving the request for the review of the complaint in writing. In the event that the Principal is unable to fully complete the necessary review within this timescale, they will write to the complainant notifying them of the delay and giving due reason why.
94. The outcomes available are as follows:

- Complaint not upheld
- Complaint upheld in whole or in part
- In the event of a complaint being upheld in whole or in part, recommendations should be made in respect of remedial action required and reported directly to the complainant and any other parties involved.

95. If the decision is made that any action should be taken as a consequence of the complaint, the Principal (or their nominee) will ensure that appropriate action is taken and will monitor the process.

96. If the decision is made that no action should be taken as a consequence of the complaint, the complainant, if still dissatisfied with the outcome and who having exhausted all the appropriate internal complaints procedures at the college, can submit the complaint to the relevant awarding or validating body.

### **Continuing the complaint beyond the college**

97. Details of how to access the Complaints Policy and Procedures for the relevant Awarding Bodies and how to make a complaint about a Further Education college can be obtained from the College Complaints Officer at [complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvise@hca.ac.uk) or accessed via the following hyperlinks:

- University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) complaints procedures are found here: <http://www.uwtسد.ac.uk/academic-office/procedures-for-academic-appeals-complaints-and-other-student-cases/>
- University of the Arts London (UAL) Student Complaints Procedures are found here: <https://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/academic-regulations/complaints-and-appeals>
- AQA complaints procedures are found here: <https://www.aqa.org.uk/contact-us/complaints>
- Pearson Edexcel complaints procedures are found here: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html>

98. If a complaint cannot be adequately resolved at either college (HCA) or awarding or validating body level, HE students may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/> and FE students can complain to the ESFA <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>.

- It must be noted that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's and/or the awarding body's internal procedures
- The OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the receipt of the Completion of Procedures letter issued either by HCA or UWTSD



- Information on making a complaint to the OIA can be found on the OIA website at and <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/> where a complaint form can be completed online or downloaded. Alternatively, the OIA can be contacted by telephone or in writing to request a form.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

99. The nature, incidence and outcomes of complaints will be regularly monitored by the College Complaints Officer presenting to the Senior Leadership Team. These will be presented to the Curriculum and Quality Committee in an annual report.
100. Equality and Diversity are an integral part of life at Hereford College of Arts (HCA). At HCA we value social and cultural diversity. We work hard to promote equality of opportunity for all of our students and staff, as well as everyone else we come into contact with. The college is committed to ensuring everyone is given equal access to opportunities and is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of:
- Age
  - Disability
  - Gender identity (a personal sense of one's own gender. This can correspond to or differ from the sex we are assigned at birth)
  - Marriage or civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity (whether or not you are pregnant or have given birth recently)
  - Race (includes: race, colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins)
  - Religion or belief including philosophical belief and a lack of belief
  - Sex and sexual orientation.

101. Records of complaints and Pro-monitor records will be retained for a period of 3.5 years after the student has completed their studies, or 18 months from the issue date of a Completion of Procedures letter, whichever is the longer, for the purpose of addressing any complaints or reviews. This allows the college to align itself with the OIA, and all awarding bodies complaints processes.

### **Communication**

102. The college will ensure relevant staff and all students are aware of this policy through course/cross course handbooks and staff and student rep training, refreshed at least annually.
103. HCA People will be responsible for ensuring staff awareness and Vice Principal HE and Vice Principal FE will ensure students are informed appropriately and proportionate training is given to student reps.