Complaints Policy

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Document Control

Owner	Excellence and Innovation
Audience	All Moulton College Stakeholders
Confidentiality	Not applicable

Version Control

Version	Description/Changes	By	Date
1.0	Full systemic review	Quality	July 2024
2.0	To include OfS Condition E6	Quality	July 2025
3.0	Principals office update	PO	Feb 2026
4.0	Quality Team update	Quality	Oct 2026

Approval

Approved By	Meeting Date	Next Review
Senior Leadership Team	16 July 2024	16 July 2026
TLA Committee	16 July 2024	16 July 2026
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Exec. Leadership Team	10 February 2026	10 February 2028
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Related Policies

Ref	Policy
DP-01	Data Protection Policy
DP-03	Data Retention Policy
EDI-01	Equality and Diversity Policy
QD-08	Stakeholder Feedback Policy

Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

1. At Moulton College we aim to provide a high-quality service to all our students and customers. We welcome feedback about our services from all College users: students, employers and other stakeholders and use any feedback to improve our services.

2. The College takes all complaints seriously so through this policy will ensure that every formal complaint is managed by the principal's office and investigated with the aim of a satisfactory resolution.

Scope

3. This policy considers complaints submitted to the College.

4. The complaints element of this policy is designed to deal with, but is not limited to:

    a. Complaints raised by students, parents, carers, enablers, customers or the general public in relation to college activities, staff or any service provided by the College.
    b. Complaints relating to harassment, sexual misconduct, racial, disability or any other form of discrimination.
    c. Complaints about facilities and equipment.

5. The complaints procedure does not cover the following (which are subject to separate policy):

    a. Admission decisions
    b. Decisions made in examinations and assessments
    c. Allegations of misconduct by a student
    d. Staff members who have a grievance against an individual or the College.

6. There may be occasions where the college cannot progress a complaint for GDPR reasons, such as a parent or relative making a complaint but are not the identified Next of Kin. On these occasions we may still investigate but will provide a response directly to the student themselves.

Behaviour towards college staff

7. Moulton College Staff have the right to work in a safe and secure environment. Under no circumstances will it be considered as acceptable for the staff of Moulton College be subject to abuse (written, verbal or physical) from students, their parents and/or other associates.

8. To be clear, Moulton College do not accept aggressive behaviour towards any member of staff and will consider the termination of a complaint, or appeal, due to poor behaviour.

    a. This will need to be confirmed by a college Director, or higher.
    b. The complainant must be notified that this is the conclusion of the appeal.

9. Where this is evident, the college fully supports the member of staff to remove themselves from the situation.

    a. Where this is a phone call, the member of staff will politely ask that the caller stops the verbal abuse and/or poor language being used. If this continues, the member of staff will notify the person that they are ending the call. The member of staff will make a note of this for future action.

    b. Where this is a meeting, the member of staff will politely ask that the person stops the verbal abuse and/or poor language being used. If this continues, the member of staff may cease the meeting and ask the person to leave.

Implementation

6. All students and staff at Moulton College will be informed about this policy and procedure during induction. Interested parties can view the latest policy on our website.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal

15. Individuals are encouraged to resolve issues locally before they become complaints. Concerns should be raised directly with the person, who is responsible for the problem, or with the manager of the specific area.

16. The manager of the area will respond to the informal complaint within 10 working days. The manager should consider copying the quality department into the response for recording/retention purposes.

Stage 2 – Formal

17. If a complainant remains dissatisfied that the concern has not been fully resolved at stage 1, or if the complaint is so serious that it is not appropriate to investigate informally, they can raise their concerns formally at Stage 2 of the process.

18. Complaints should be made in writing via:

    a. Website form – Complaints, Praise and Suggestions
    b. Email to complaints@moulton.ac.uk
    c. Letter addressed to: Complaints Team, Moulton College, West Street, Moulton, Northamptonshire, NN3 7RR.

19. In your correspondence you should clearly identify the nature of your complaint at Stage 1 and what has previously been done to attempt to resolve the complaint.

20. If the complainant needs support in making their complaint, this can be provided by the Student Support function.

21. The Quality Team will log and acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receipt.

22. Where a complaint relates to a member of staff, a copy will be sent to the college's Human Resources (HR) department to confirm whether the investigation, and subsequent action, will need involvement from the HR department.

23. If legal action is threatened or is as a likely consequence of the complaint the complaint handler*,* will advise the *Principal*.

24. An appropriate Investigating Officer will be appointed (this will be based on a number of factors such as skills, knowledge, workloads, role, etc), the matter investigated, and a Complaint Investigation Form completed in full and returned to the quality department by the expected due date.

25. The Principal's Office will facilitate a response to the complainant, ideally within 15 working days of the date of acknowledgement.

26. Actions and/or recommendations will, where deemed necessary be added to the Quality Improvement Plan in the department identified and for the attention of the relevant manager.

27. Should circumstances beyond our control prevent the College keeping within the stipulated timescale e.g., staff sickness, annual leave etc. the complainant will be kept informed.

Stage 3 – Appeal

28. If the complaint is not upheld, the college will provide the complainant with details of how to make an appeal within the letter. No such option will be provided for complaints that are 'upheld' by the college.

29. If a complainant remains to be dissatisfied with the College's response, they must respond to the quality department giving reasons for their dissatisfaction within 15 working days of the date of our response.

30. The College will review the appeal and, if it meets the appeal criteria, will send an acknowledgement to the complainant within 5 working days, and aim to provide a response to the appeal within 15 working days.

31. A member of the Executive Leadership Team will be allocated to review the original complaint, and ensure the investigation was thorough and resulted in an appropriate outcome. They will also advise whether the College's decision is supported or whether the matter should be reinvestigated.

32. The outcome of this decision is final, after which the College will consider the complaints process exhausted, and the matter closed.

33. If at this stage, the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they may contact:

    a. For all FE funded provision - The Education and Skills Funding Agency https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-fundingagency

b. In the case of HE complaints a 'completion of procedure' (COP) letter will be issued to the complainant at this stage, unless the complaint relates to the award of their degree. In this case the complainant has the right to appeal to the University of Northampton under their complaints procedure. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) - http://www.oiahe.org.uk/

Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (OfS Condition E6)

34. In line with the Office for Students (OfS) Condition E6, our institution is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for all students. We do not tolerate any form of harassment or sexual misconduct, including unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, whether occurring on or off campus or online. Students who experience or witness harassment or sexual misconduct are encouraged to report their concerns through our established complaints procedures.

35. All reports will be handled sensitively, fairly, and confidentially, with appropriate support offered to those involved. We are committed to ensuring that no student is discouraged from coming forward and that no non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) will be used in relation to complaints of this nature. Our approach seeks to prevent abuse of power and to protect the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of all members of our community.

Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

Definition of Unreasonable or Vexatious Behaviour

36. The College may deem a complaint unreasonable or vexatious where a complainant's behaviour, or the nature of their contact, hinders the proper investigation or resolution of the issue.
Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Repeatedly raising issues that have already been fully addressed.
- Refusing to accept evidence-based outcomes.
- Submitting persistent or frequent communications that are excessive in volume or time demands.
- Using aggressive, abusive, or threatening language.
- Changing the basis of a complaint or introducing new issues repeatedly.
- Submitting multiple complaints about the same matter to different staff to seek a different outcome.

37. The decision to deem a complainant vexatious can be made only by the executive office, in discussion with a senior post holder.

Restrictions on Repetitive or Excessive Complaints

38. The College may decline to consider further correspondence relating to issues that have already been:

- Investigated through the formal complaints process, and
- Provided with a final written response.

39. The College reserves the right to:

- Limit communication to a single point of contact.
- Restrict communication to a particular method (e.g. email only).
- Set reasonable timescales for responses or decline to respond where communication becomes excessive.

Managing Complainant Behaviour

40. Where behaviour is considered unreasonable, the College may issue a **warning notice** explaining:

- Why the conduct is inappropriate.
- The changes expected from the complainant.
- The actions the College may take if the behaviour continues.

41. If behaviour does not improve, the College may:

- Implement contact restrictions.
- Suspend consideration of the complaint.
- Close the complaint without further investigation.

Closure of Complaints

42. The College may close a complaint where:

- All available internal stages have been completed.
- The complainant continues to pursue the matter without presenting new, relevant evidence.
- The complainant refuses to engage with the process or follow reasonable instructions designed to progress the complaint.

43. Where action is taken under this section, the complainant will be notified in writing and informed of:

- The reason for the decision.
- Any restrictions being applied.

44. Appendix A sets out a template letter notifying a complainant that their complaint has been deemed vexatious or unreasonable.

Timescales

45. Complaints should be brought to the attention of the College within six calendar months of the event occurring. Complaints brought outside of this timescale will be considered to be out of time and not be heard.

46. Whilst we endeavour to provide a swift response to all of our communications, we must point out that responses and timescales may take longer over scheduled term and summer breaks due to staff absence.

47. Scheduled holiday dates, bank holidays, and weekends are not considered to be ‘working days’.

Data Retention

33. Complaints, Praise and Suggestions received by the College will be retained for a total period of seven years. The information retained will include:

    a. All correspondence relating to the praise/suggestion/complaint
    b. All evidence relating to each stage of the process

Monitoring and Review

34. This policy has been approved by ELT and is to be reviewed on a bi-annual basis.

35. The implementation and monitoring of this policy will be the responsibility of the Quality Team with full support from the Executive Leadership Team.

36. Complaint, Compliment and Suggestion numbers, along with category are regularly provided to Executive Leadership Team via their ELT meetings.

37. An annual report will be completed each year in order to report on, and analyse, key feedback metrics. A resultant action plan will ensure that the outcomes of our investigations remain a key driver of Quality Improvement.

Appendix

Appendix 1	Acknowledgement of a complaint
Appendix 2	Notification of outcome letter
Appendix 3	The Complaint Investigation Form
Appendix 4	Example letters to vexations complainants

Appendix 1 Example acknowledgement of a complaint (Generally via email)

< Date >

< Addressee >

Dear < Name >

Complaint: ID-XXXX; <Complaint Title Here>

Thank you for your recent <email, Web Form>, I am sorry to hear of the issues that you have raised.

I have formally recorded your complaint as reference number ID-XXXX and can assure you that your complaint will be dealt with in accordance with our complaint procedure which can be found on our website here: XXXX.

My name is XXXXXX and I work within the Quality department at the college and part of my role is to facilitate the complaints process. I would like to assure you that we are taking your complaint seriously and the college has now initiated an internal investigation in order to provide you with a timely response.

If there is anything else that I can help with in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us via our dedicated email at complaints@moulton.ac.uk

Regards

XXXX
Quality Department

Appendix 2 Example notification of Outcome (Generally via email)

< Date >

< Addressee >

Dear < Name >

Complaint: ID-XXXX; <Complaint Title Here>

I am writing to advise you of the outcome of your complaint dated < Date >. In the complaint you outlined < short identification of complaint >.

In line with our policy, a full investigation has been completed and the following was identified;

-

In this instance, we have <identify if the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld and justify the reasoning>

I would like to thank you for taking the time to raise the issues that you did. We are an organisation that is willing to take on board constructive criticism and ensure that lessons are learned and acted upon to improve our service to all of our stakeholders.

If you wish to appeal against the decision, please respond to us within 10 working days of the date of this letter outlining the reason for your dissatisfaction. The quickest way to do this is via our dedicated email at complaints@moulton.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

< Name >
< Quality Deparment >

Appendix 3 - The Complaint Investigation Form

Investigating Officer Report

- Please complete and return this form within 15 working days to the quality department via complaints@moulton.ac.uk.
- Please also include any evidence when returning this form. **A complaint cannot be closed without receipt of this completed form.**
- A fully completed **action plan** is required where a complaint is upheld.

WAL Reference ID:	**ID-**	**Complainant Name:**	
Investigating Officer:		**Date of Complaint:**	

Complaint:

Investigation notes and evidence section:

Outcome of Complaint: (This section must be written as a response to the complainant)	
Upheld ☐ (Please complete action plan below)	Not Upheld ☐

Dear <Name>

Complaint ID-<Number>; <title>

Thank you for taking time to raise your concerns with the college. The points that you raised were that <briefly detail the points made>

As a result of your contact, and as per the college's complaints policy, we initiated a full investigation into your concerns and are now able to provide you with a response to your complaint.

<Add the response here>

Our complaints policy allows you to appeal this decision within 15 working days by emailing us at complaints@moulton.ac.uk and explaining why you are unhappy with our response.

Kind regards

Date closed:		**No. of people hours taken:**	

Important:

Where the complaint is considered to be upheld, you must identify what actions will be taken to ensure that future recurrence of the identified issues are prevented.

Recommendations/Action Required	Person Responsible	Due Date

Appendix 4 Example letters to vexations complainants

4.1: Vexatious Complainant Written Warning Notice

Dear [Name],

I am writing to issue a formal written warning regarding the manner of your communications, in line with the College's *Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints* section of the Complaints Policy.

Why you are receiving this warning
Your recent communication has shown behaviours that approach the policy definition of unreasonable or vexatious, including:

- Re-raising issues that have already been addressed.
- Not accepting an evidence-based outcome already provided.
- Sending frequent or excessive communications that place unreasonable demands on staff.
- Changing or adding new issues repeatedly.
- Contacting multiple staff members about the same matter.

What we require going forward
To allow us to manage your contact appropriately, we ask that you:

- Communicate respectfully and within reasonable frequency.
- Allow staff adequate time to respond within standard timescales.
- Refrain from re-opening issues that have already been concluded.
- Follow the complaints process and instructions provided.

If there is no improvement, the College may take further action, including:

- Limiting you to a single point of contact.
- Restricting communication to a specific method (e.g. email only).
- Setting response times or declining to respond to excessive communication.
- Pausing or closing the complaint without further investigation.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Kind regards,
[Name]
Quality Department

4.2: Designated Vexatious Complainant Notice

Dear [Name],
Following a review carried out by the Executive Office in discussion with a senior post holder, I am writing to inform you that your recent conduct in pursuing your complaint has been assessed in line with the College's Complaints Policy. As a result, your complaint has been **designated as vexatious/unreasonable**.

Your contact with the College has met the policy criteria for vexatious or unreasonable behaviour, including:

- Hindering the proper investigation or resolution of the complaint.
- Repeatedly raising issues that have already been fully addressed.
- Refusing to accept an evidence-based outcome already provided.
- Submitting communication that is excessive in volume and time demands.
- Introducing new issues repeatedly, altering the basis of the complaint.
- Contacting multiple staff members about the same matter to seek a different outcome.

These behaviours fall within the definitions set out in section *"Definition of Unreasonable or Vexatious Behaviour"* of the College's policy.

Accordingly, the following restrictions will now apply:

- The College will not consider further correspondence on matters that have already been formally investigated and responded to.
- Communication will be limited to a single point of contact:
    - [Name/Executive Assistant] will be your designated contact.
- Communication must be via [eg. email/letter only].
- The College may decline to respond to communication that is repetitive, excessive, or does not present new and relevant information.
- The complaint is now closed, as no new evidence has been provided that would allow the matter to progress.

Thank you for following these communication instructions and restrictions set out above.

Yours sincerely,
[Name]
Quality Department

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Please complete both sides of this Equality Impact Assessment and ensure that the latest copy of this is recorded as part of the appendices of the specific policy.

Policy Reference and Name	Complaints Policy
Assessment date	26 October 2026
Completed by	Quality Team
What are the aims of the policy?	To provide a clear and consistent complaint process
Who does the policy affect?	All college stakeholders
Who is involved in implementing the policy?	The quality team facilitate the process, although all staff and students should implement the process
What information is currently available about the impact of this policy and its associated procedures?	This policy has been in place since 2019 and visible to all stakeholders on site, and via the website. There are internal records of outcomes, which are shared with ELT and Governors regularly.
Do you need more information to help you make an assessment about the impact of this policy and its associated procedures?	No.
Do you have any examples that show how this policy will have a positive impact on any of the equality characteristics listed in the table below?	
What consultation has taken place in the development of this policy?	Students are regularly consulted. The policy is regularly reviewed and updated based on feedback after complaints received.

Use the table below to assess the impact of this policy on each of the listed characteristics. Your decision must be evidence based. Sources of evidence might include success rates, achievement gaps, application and enrolment data, student voice, consultation outcomes, recruitment and employment data, customer feedback or complaints, meeting minutes.

Characteristic (These characteristics are protected under the Equality Act 2010)	Negative impact? Y / N	Evidence to support your impact assessment decision	Requires further action? Y/N
Age	N		N
Disability	N		N
Race	N		N
Gender, inc. re-assignment	N		N
Sexual orientation	N		N
Religion / belief	N		N
Pregnancy / maternity	N		N
Marriage / civil partnership	N		N
Socio-economic	N		N

Overall EIA judgement

Select	
✓	***No change required*** - The assessment is that the policy is/will be robust. There is no evidence of potentially unlawful discrimination and all reasonable opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations have been taken, subject to continuing monitoring and review
	Adjust the policy or practice **-** This involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations. This may involve removing or changing the aspect of the policy that creates any negative or unwanted impact. It may also involve introducing additional measures to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impact
	Continue the policy **-** This means adopting/continuing with the policy despite the potential for adverse impact. Set out the rationale for this decision, including how the decision is compatible with our legal obligation. Where there is discrimination, but it is considered not to be unlawful – the objective justification must be recorded
	Stop the policy **-** If there would otherwise be unlawful discrimination or adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be prevented/mitigated