Praise and Complaints Policy

1. Rationale

The purpose of Praise and Complaints Policy is intended to bring matters of good practice or concerns to the attention of the College and enable investigation of those concerns with the aim of a satisfactory resolution. The procedure is an integral part of the College's quality assurance framework.

This Policy applies to all full-time students, part-time students and apprentices. For the purposes of this Policy they will be referred to as students.

2. Policy Statement

The Policy aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved, with informal resolution an option at any point. Complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to confidentiality. Any person named in a complaint will be informed of the substance of the complaint and will have the right to reply as part of the investigation.

It is expected that, except in exceptional and fully documented circumstances, a complainant who wishes to make a complaint will invoke the Informal Stage in the first instance. In the event of a complaint not being resolved at the Informal Stage, the Formal Procedure may be used. The College will accept written statements of praise or complaint and will take appropriate action to disseminate and/or investigate the claim. Action will be taken where deemed necessary.

3. Entitlement

The Policy is for use by students, potential students, employers, clients and the general public. No complainant bringing a complaint, whether successfully or otherwise, will be treated less favourably by any member of staff than if the complaint had not been brought. If evidence to the contrary is found in this regard the member of staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings under College policy. Any student making a malicious complaint could lead to disciplinary action being taken. It should also be noted that anonymous complaints cannot be investigated.

4. Implementation

The Policy is divided into two parts, an Informal Procedure, which emphasises resolution at the local point where the complaint arose, and which may involve a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as facilitator of the procedure along with the relevant Head of Curriculum or Service Manager. The Formal Procedure is operated by a member of the SLT within timescales that will enable complaints to be resolved as quickly as possible.

Informal Procedure

It is anticipated that most complaints can be resolved through informal means. Usually, problems can be resolved by explaining the situation and discussing ways forward. Resolution should be sought from the curriculum or service area in which the complaint arose, by expressing the complaint to the most appropriate member of staff eg the Student Progress Mentor, Course Leader, Head of Curriculum or Service Manager. If assistance is needed to resolve complaints informally, a member of SLT can be called on by either party.

Complaints procedure relating to Student Accommodation
Students resident in the College accommodation who wish to complain about the student accommodation can make their complaint to the duty Accommodation Officer, any member of the Accommodation team or the Vice Principal for Human Resources & Student Services. All complaints made any student resident in the accommodation will be recorded in the complaints recording book held in the accommodation office. It is anticipated that most of these complaints can be resolved through informal means and actioned as appropriate and in a timely manner. If the member of staff who has received the complaint deems the complaint to be formal, then the College's formal procedure must be followed as noted below.

Formal Procedure
If the response to the complaint under the informal procedure is not considered by the complainant to be satisfactory, or if the complainant does not feel able to use the informal procedure, they may invoke Part I of the Formal Procedure by either completing a Formal Complaint Recording Form or alternatively submitting the complaint to Principal & Chief Executive by emailing managementsupport@grantham.ac.uk. A member of staff will be able to assist with the completion of the complaints form if required. The Complaints Administrator will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days.

Formal Procedure – Part 1
Part 1 of the Formal Procedure will comprise an initial investigation of the complaint by a nominated member of SLT within 10 working days of receipt of the notification and the outcome sent to the complainant. Where necessary, this will be followed by a full response within one calendar month.

The timescales under this section may need to be extended during College vacations or when investigations are very complex. The Complaints Administrator will keep all parties informed of progress and the reason for any delay in proceedings if applicable.

If appropriate, the complainant may be invited to attend a hearing to consider the complaint. They may be accompanied by a friend or other representative. The decision notified to the complainant will set out the steps to be taken to remedy the complaint, or the reasons why the complaint has not been upheld.

Formal Procedure – Part 2 Appeal Stage
If the response to the complaint following completion of the Part I procedure is not considered by the complainant to be satisfactory, they may invoke Part 2 (Appeal Stage) of the formal procedure by a request in writing and within 10 working days of notification of the decision under Part 1. The request should be addressed to the Principal & Chief Executive outlining why the outcome of Part 1 is not satisfactory.

Taking into account the substance of the complaint and the previous attempts at resolution, the case will then be reviewed by the Principal & Chief Executive who will provide the complainant with a decision in writing within one calendar month of receipt of the complainant's request under the Appeal Stage. The Principal & Chief Executive's decision will set out the steps to be taken to remedy the complaint or the reasons why the appeal has failed. The Principal & Chief Executive's decision will be final.

If, at the end of the Formal Procedure, the complainant does not feel that the problem has been resolved satisfactorily, they can complain to the Department of Education.

Outcomes of the Praise and Complaints Procedure

Complaints

- Should a complaint be upheld, the Principal & Chief Executive may make recommendations to the Head of Curriculum or Service Area Manager.
- If a complaint is not upheld, the complainant will be informed in writing with reasons for its rejection.
- Any conclusions and recommendations will be communicated in writing to the complainant and the Head of Curriculum or Service Area Manager.
- Complaints will be monitored and analysed so as to identify any trends or issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and reported annually to the Standards Committee.
- Head of Curriculum or Service Area Manager will communicate the outcome of a complaint with relevant staff and ensure any required training or support is put in place.

Complaints process for Higher Education student

HE students can also access the Office of the Independent Adjudicator complaints process and scheme. Details on how to make a complaint to the OIA can be found:
https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students
Full guidance on the OIA rules can be found at:
https://www.oiahe.org.uk/about-us/our-scheme/our-rules/guidance-on-the-rules

Praise

- Any correspondence relating to praise will be fed back to the staff concerned and the appropriate line manager. Details will be logged for reporting annually to the Standards Committee.
- Head of Curriculum or Service Area Manager will communicate and celebrate any praise received with the relevant staff.

5. Evaluation

All instances of praise or complaints will be taken into consideration, along with the results of investigations and any action taken, in an annual review of College services.

Quality Assurance Version Control			
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