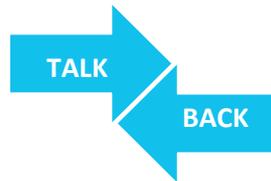


# South Bank Colleges

## Talk Back



<b>Originator</b>	Principal London South Bank Technical College (LSBTC), part of South Bank Colleges
<b>Date of last approval</b>	January 2023
<b>Approval/review bodies</b>	Senior Leadership Team
<b>Review interval (years)</b>	18 months
<b>Date of next review/approval</b>	July 2024
<b>Evaluation</b>	Annual report to Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees
<b>File location</b>	Staff intranet/website

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## Section 1: Background & Scope

South Bank Colleges are committed to providing an excellent service to its students and apprentices, their parents, employers, partners, and the local community as outlined in the College Charter. This policy and procedure were drafted by the Principal London South Bank Technical College (LSBTC), part of South Bank Colleges, and follows consultation with Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

This policy applies to all members of staff who receive complaints, whether they are written or verbal.

This policy and procedure cover all complaints except for those listed below.

This policy does NOT apply to:

- Student Disciplinary Policy
- College Admissions Policy
- Safeguarding Policy (when a young person or vulnerable adult is being abused or there is suspicion that a young or vulnerable person may suffer significant harm)
- Student Bullying/Harassment Policy
- Assessment/IV Policy
- Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Staff Grievance Procedures.

Any questions about the interpretation or application of the policy and procedure should be addressed to the Systems and Quality Coordinator [feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk).

## Section 2: Introduction

A customer complaints policy and procedure is used in support of the college's commitment to excellence. This document defines the principles supporting the policy. Full details of the procedures are contained in Appendix A. Appendix B is a flowchart for the procedure. Appendix C includes the form for customer use.

This policy outlines the principles which guide the organisation in implementing the complaints. The procedures in Appendix A, define the steps, actions and record keeping which should be followed. This ensures that all complaints will be dealt with consistently and fairly.

## Section 3: Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility, when faced with a customer complaint, to deal with it sympathetically, helpfully and constructively.

The Principal LSBTC has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy and the management of the procedure.

The Principal LSBTC is responsible for:

1. Ensuring the complaint is investigated fairly and impartially by an appropriate investigating manager.
2. Seeking a satisfactory resolution for the complainant, where the complaint can be substantiated.
3. Maintaining records and information associated with each formal complaint.

4. Monitoring complaints and their outcomes.
5. Preparing an annual report to SLT and the Governors to allow discussion on any actions for improvement in services.

**Monitoring:**

The monitoring and recording of all formal complaints are the responsibility of the Quality and Systems Officer.

All information relating to a formal complaint is filed and recorded.  
All such information is treated as confidential.

Reports on complaints are presented termly to the Senior Leadership team to identify and discuss actions for improvements. An annual report on customer service complaints will be presented to the Board of Trustees.

**Section 4: Principles and provisions**

All complaints, whether formal or informal, must be recognised and dealt with sympathetically and constructively.

Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

No complainant will be disadvantaged, discriminated against or victimised as a result of making a complaint.

Complaints will be investigated at a local level by a relevant manager.

All written complaints, and if possible, verbal complaints, will be recorded and logged.

Complainants will receive an acknowledgement of their written complaint within five working days of its receipt by the Quality Office.

The investigating manager will make initial contact with the complainant within five working days of receipt of their complaint. The complainant will be kept informed about the progress of their complaint regularly. An outcome of the investigation and any resolution to the complaint should be sent in writing to the complainant within ten working days of receipt of the original written complaint - and the Principal LSBTC must be copied in to all correspondence.

**Possible outcomes:**

<b>Serious failing</b>	Fundamental failure of service delivery with a serious detrimental effect to complainant. Complaint can be resolved to satisfaction of complainant and will include written apology from senior manager. Case brought to attention of SLT and review of performance at and where appropriate included in relevant QIP.
<b>Medium failing</b>	Systems are being applied, but service delivery is uninformed, careless or fails to meet college expectations. Complaint can be resolved amicably and written apology to complainant by investigating manager. Relevant section includes review of performance at monthly meetings.
<b>Minor failing</b>	Concerns and issues which cause irritation and frustration to the complainant. Normally resolved amicably and accompanied by a written apology and a note to the relevant section to improve service.
<b>Unfounded</b>	No valid reason for complaint or beyond College control. Letter from investigating manager to complainant outlines reason for judgement and includes reference to appeals procedure.

Anonymous complaints will be recorded, but not investigated unless they are considered “high-risk” complaints.

If the complaint is concerning a disability-related issue, the investigating manager may refer the matter to an external consultancy to ascertain the reasonableness of the complaint. This may extend the duration of the investigation. The complaint must be thoroughly and objectively investigated within the shortest period to determine if the complaint is well-founded and, if so, to work towards a mutually acceptable resolution.

Anyone receiving what they consider to be a **vexatious** complaint should refer this to the Principal LSBTC, who will decide whether the complaint is genuine. If this decision is made, the complainant will be informed, and the complaint will not proceed under the complaints procedure. The complainant may appeal against this decision to the Executive Principal.

If the complaint is found to be vexatious, this may lead to disciplinary proceedings under student or staff procedures.

**High risk complaints** must be reported immediately to the Principal LSBTC. The investigation of such complaints will be conducted by an appropriate member of SLT or if against the Principal, by the Clerk to the Board of Trustees.

## Section 5: Appeals

In the event that a complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant based on non-compliance with the procedure or based on significant (and substantiated) failings of the investigation itself, the matter should be referred back to the Principal LSBTC who will then pursue the investigation with the original investigating manager to attempt to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

If such a conclusion cannot be reached, the Principal LSBTC will identify a more senior manager and request that she/he pursues the matter. Copies of all documentation are then sent to the appointed senior manager and the complainant informed of developments.

Copies of documentation relating to the complaint must be kept on file for 5 years.

## Section 6: Definitions

A **complaint** is defined as the formal expression of dissatisfaction by anyone who uses or is affected by any of the College's services and facilities.

An **informal complaint** is one that is received by a member of staff and is resolved with the agreement of the complainant at the time at a local level.

A **formal complaint** is one that cannot be resolved immediately at the local level and/or is directed to the Principal LSBTC (usually in writing) to the following, regularly monitored, email address: [feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk).

A **vexatious complaint** is one which is:

- Primarily intended to annoy or distress other parties in a malicious way.
- Part of a series of complaints by the same complainant where other complaints have been investigated and resolved.
- A complaint promoted by an employee with the intention of bypassing or subverting the normal organisational procedures.

NB. Complaints which are recorded as vexatious will not be subject to the college's Complaints and Suggestions Policy.

**A high risk complaint** is one which involves:

- Allegations of corruption against a college employee.
- A claim of personal injury.
- A claim of dereliction of duty by a college employee.
- A claim that a law has been broken.
- A claim of discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual, marital status, orientation, disability or age.

NB. A high risk complaint will be escalated by the Quality and Systems Officer to the Principal LSBTC SBC - Quality and will be reviewed as soon as possible.

### Stage 1A: Receipt of informal complaints

On receipt of an informal complaint, the member of staff must determine whether it can be classified as a complaint to be dealt with under this policy. If in doubt, the member of staff should consult their line manager.

If the complaint can be resolved immediately with the complainant's agreement it is deemed to be informal and no further action is required.

However, it is the responsibility of the member of staff receiving the complaint to ensure the suggested solution is implemented and every action is taken to ensure the situation that caused the original complaint does not reoccur. A record of the nature of the complaint and its resolution should be kept.

If the issue cannot be resolved, the member of staff should write down details of the complaint, preferably on a complaint form and send it to the Quality and Systems Officer, within five working days. The complaint should be informed in writing of the action taken within five days. It will now be dealt with as a formal complaint.

All "high risk" complaints must be referred to the Quality and Systems Officer who will refer it to the Principal LSBTC.

Any complaint raised by a young person is to be copied to the manager with responsibility for safeguarding who will help determine if it is a safeguarding issue.

### Stage 1B: Receipt of formal written complaints

On receipt of a formal (usually written) complaint, the Quality and Systems Officer will confirm the complaint has been received and will send a copy of the complaint to the appointed investigating manager together with a request to:

1. Investigate, keeping relevant notes pursuant to the complaint.
2. Refer to internal or external agencies for guidance and support, as necessary. Especially with complaints related to equality and diversity, disability issues.
3. Ensure that the Quality and Systems Officer and the complainant is informed of any potential delay reaching a resolution, providing a reason for the delay.
4. Resolve the matter and inform the Quality and Systems Officer and the complainant of the outcomes of the investigation within ten working days of the start of the original written complaint being received by investigating manager.
5. The Quality and Systems Officer will confirm the outcomes to the complainant within fifteen days of the acknowledgement letter.

If the complaint relates to a member of staff, and it is "high risk" and there may be a case to answer, then the Investigating Manager should contact the HR Department immediately for advice before undertaking an investigation under the Employee Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

### Stage 2: Handling formal written complaints

If no resolution or copies of correspondence is received from the investigation manager after ten working days from the date when the written formal complaint was first received, the Quality and Systems Officer, or a nominated person will enquire further about the situation and progress being made. This process is repeated until a satisfactory resolution is reached or the complaint has been declared, with reasons, to be unjustified.

Any meetings with the complainant, records of conversations or other parties involved should be recorded in writing by the investigating manager. A copy of all correspondence and details pertaining to the complaint must be sent to the Quality and Systems Officer.

Outcomes of complaints and any resolution must be notified to the complainant in writing within ten working days.

If the complaint is unfounded, this must be relayed to the complainant by the investigating manager with suitable explanations.

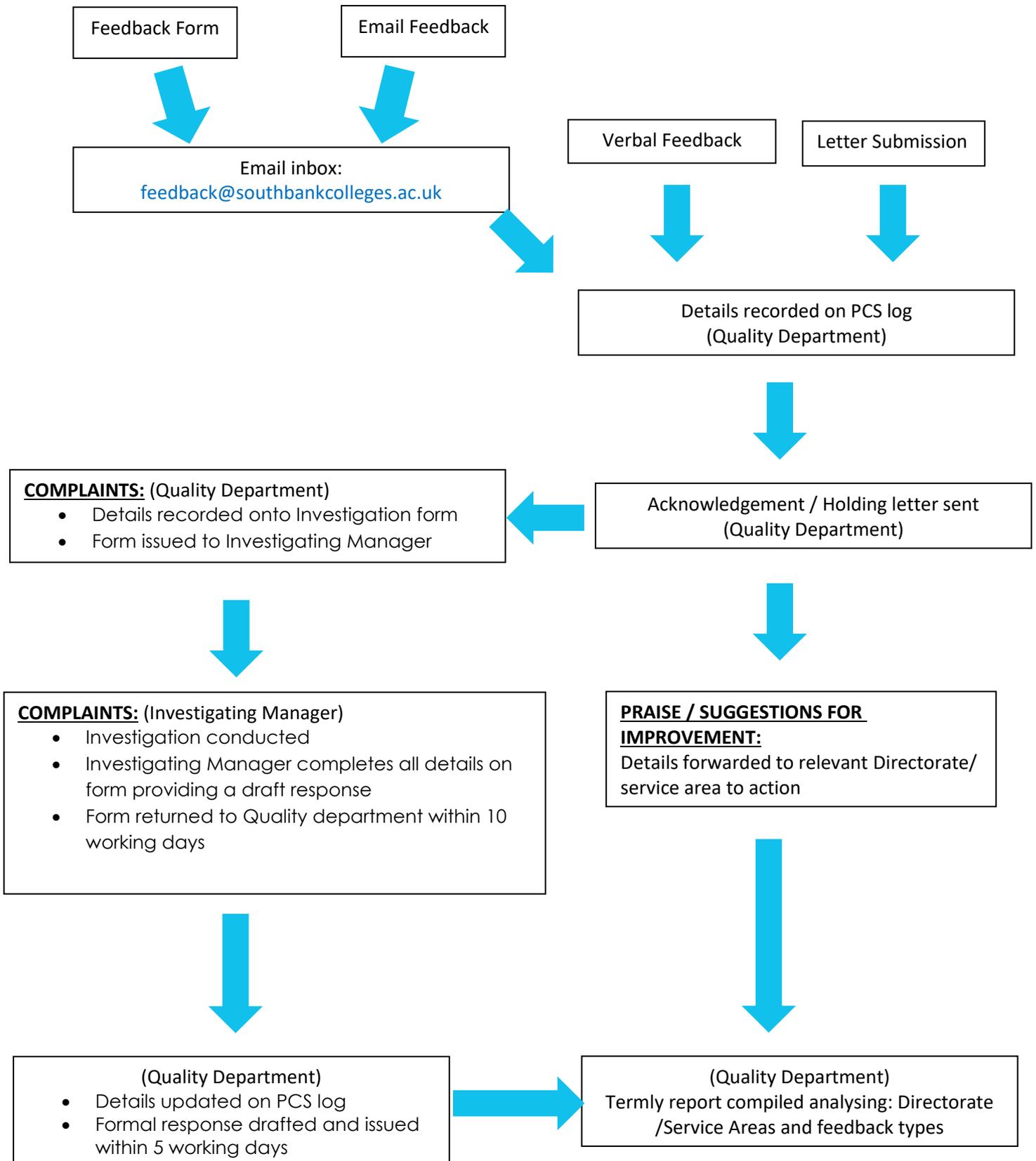
If a mutually agreed resolution of the complaint cannot be reached, the matter can be referred for Appeal. Any letters of correspondence should refer to an appeal procedure to the Principal, LSBTC.

### **Stage 3: Appeal**

In the event that a complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and with sufficient evidence that the procedure or investigation was flawed, the matter should be referred back to the Quality and Systems Officer for referral to the Principal, LSBTC. The appeal will review all documentation relating to the complaint and may also involve discussions with the complainant or others involved in the case before arising at a decision. If the original finding is upheld, this decision is final on behalf of the college and no further appeals will be permitted.

If a complainant wishes to pursue the matter further, they can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

**APPENDIX B Student/ Apprentice / Stakeholder Feedback**



# Praise Complaints Suggestions

South Bank Colleges are committed to providing an excellent service to its students, apprentices, their parents, employers, partners, and the local community.

We welcome all feedback on our services, including praise, complaints and suggestions. We would like to hear from you:

## If you have praise to give:



If you have had a positive experience at the college, we would like to hear about it!

Complete the back of this leaflet and let us know.

## If you have a suggestion:



What can we do to improve your experience at South Bank Colleges?

## If you have a complaint:



- First talk to a member of staff informally; the matter may be swiftly resolved.
- If you are not satisfied with the outcome, please complete the form on page 2 and 3 of this leaflet with as much detail as possible.
- Hand in the completed form at Reception or Student Services at any of the College centres.
- We undertake to give you a formal response within fifteen working days of receipt of your original written complaint.

**For a quicker processing - please complete this form electronically and email to:**

[feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk)

PRAISE / COMPLAINT / SUGGESTION FORM

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# Praise Complaints Suggestions

Name:

Student Number:

Date:  Time:

Email address:

Address:

Telephone number:

Your comments for praise / compliment as relevant:

Please indicate your feedback: (tick box)	
PRAISE	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMPLAINT	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUGGESTION	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Complaint

If you are making a complaint, please provide details below and send it to:

[feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk)

<b>Nature of issue</b>			
<b>Date issue occurred</b>			
<b>Action taken to resolve the complaint informally</b> in the first instance			
<b>Name of who you tried to resolve the issue with informally</b> in the first instance			
<b>Details of why you wish to make this a formal complaint following unsuccessful resolution informally</b> in the first instance			
<b>Signature:</b>	First name, last name	<b>Date:</b> Provide today's date	

## Appeal

If you are making an appeal, please provide details below and send it to:

[feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@southbankcolleges.ac.uk)

<b>Complaint reference:</b>			
<b>I believe there was non-compliance with the complaints procedure</b>	Please provide your reasons below:		
<b>I believe there were significant and substantiated failings with the investigation</b>	Please provide your reasons below:		
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

PRAISE / COMPLAINT / SUGGESTION FORM

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