



Higher Education Student Complaints – Guidance Notes for Students 2019-20

These notes offer guidance as to what to do if you wish to complain about courses or services provided by the College or about certain other College-related matters. They tell you who to contact and how to seek further advice. Information is available separately about other specific procedures (e.g. on harassment, academic appeals).

To access the detailed description of the *Higher Education Student Complaints Policy and Procedures* and the formal *Student Complaint Application Form* please use the following links:

[https://www.colegwent.ac.uk/thecollege/compliments_and_complaints_\(2662\)](https://www.colegwent.ac.uk/thecollege/compliments_and_complaints_(2662))

It is really important that you read the HE Student Complaints Policy and Procedure as it will give you a more detailed description of what you need to do and what to expect.

Before you decide to make a formal complaint you should bear in mind:

- (1) **Informal** resolution of the complaint should always be the preferred option.
 - Matters can frequently be sorted out quickly and informally by talking directly to the person providing the service. If this is not possible or if you fail to receive a satisfactory response, then discuss the issue(s) with the person with overall responsibility for the service concerned (usually a Head of School or Head of Learner Services.)
- (2) If you decide to submit a **formal** complaint it must be submitted in writing and signed either by the person making the complaint or on their behalf by a person recognised as having a legitimate interest.
 - A frivolous, malicious, libelous or vexatious complaint can jeopardise the effective use of the procedure and may not be considered. Nor may a complaint be considered if it is in, or accompanied by, an unacceptable form of behaviour.
 - If after reading these notes you are still unsure about how to make your views known, please consult staff in Student Services, or the HE Co-ordinator for further advice.

Who can submit a complaint under these Procedures?

This policy applies to all Higher Education (HE) students who are studying a **Higher National BTEC** course at the College. The related procedures are relevant to these HE students and to the College staff administering them. Refer to:

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html>

If the course is delivered by the College but is in partnership with a university, then student complaints need to be directed to the College in the first instance, if the complaint is directly related to the College;

The contract between the University and Coleg Gwent states that:

- ❖ Partners will access the Student Complaints Regulations and Procedures where the complaint relates to academic matters; where matters are the responsibility of the partner, for example crèche facilities, learners should access Coleg Gwent's Complaints Procedures

If the complaint is directly related to the partner university then please inform your course leader that you have a complaint against the university, as they may be able to help or advise. In the first instance, speak with the Course Leader to try and resolve the matter informally;

For learners on Partners University courses, please also refer to their Policy and Procedures:

For the University of South Wales: [USW Regulations-Policies and Procedures](#)

For the University of Worcester: [UW Policies and Procedures](#)

For Aberystwyth University: [AU Complaints Policy](#)

Also refer to the Office of Independent Adjudicators for Higher Education (OIAHE): enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

If your complaint is about services provided by the College, you should complain to the College using its procedures. If your complaint is about services provided by the University, you should complain using the university's procedures.

Why should I want to make my views known?

As part of its quality assurance processes, the College is keen to ensure that the courses, information, services and facilities which it provides meet the needs of students and other interested parties, e.g. employers and members of the general public. We welcome comments and suggestions about how things can be improved.

How can I make my views known?

If you wish to comment about any general aspect of the College's activities, please make contact with the appropriate part of the College:

- By telephone (01495 333777)
- In person, with the Learner Services team initially
- By letter directly to the College (Head of HE, Coleg Gwent, Usk Campus, Usk, Monmouthshire, NP15 1XJ)
- Via: Contact Us link on the College Web-site
- If you do not know the relevant part of the College please ask for Learners Services, at reception at any campus.

How may I make a complaint?

Whilst we always welcome comments and suggestions about how things might be improved, we also recognise that students and others with a legitimate interest have a right to complain if they feel that something is wrong.

Please remember that circumstances are sometimes determined outside the College by the Government, legal provisions or other regulations – you should receive an explanation if this is the case. Similarly, there can sometimes be a problem because the resources available to the College are restricted – you should be told how these constraints relate to your comment or complaint.

Learner Services or/and the your Higher Education Progression Officer can help advise you on the procedure for making a formal complaint, including whether other procedures are more appropriate. You can also contact the National Union of Students for help and advice: <https://www.nus.org.uk/>

The College maintain a confidential record of all formal complaints, they also monitor their handling and record the outcomes. The will highlight anonymously any major issues for the College.

What happens if I formally complain?

When you make a formal complaint this is recorded and you should receive an acknowledgement within five working days and a response or report on progress every ten working days. The nominated lead will monitor its progress and can advise you on the position.

You may be asked to provide further information in person or in writing. You may also request a Complaints Panel meeting if you feel that there has been something omitted for the written complaint or you would like to clarify some issues with the panel. Unless you agree to an informal resolution of your complaint, whatever the outcome you can expect a written explanation and if your complaint is upheld a statement of what will be done to prevent a recurrence and any redress that is available to you.

Suppose that I am dissatisfied with the result?

If you feel that the complaint has not been handled properly or the decision is unreasonable or unfair, or you have further evidence to support your complaint you will have the opportunity to appeal where you can clarify any further evidence or issues you have.

You can obtain guidance and advice from Learners Services and/or the HE Progression Officers or the NUS if you wish.

- For a student completing a **franchise University** award, a written outcome of the meeting will be sent to the student within 5 working days. All written documentation related to the complaint will be sent to the relevant **Franchise University** immediately after the meeting outcome has been recorded. The relevant **University** will then respond to the student. There will be no further opportunity to pursue the complaint within the College.
- For a student completing a **Pearson BTEC award (HNC/HND)**, a written outcome of the meeting will be sent to the student within 5 working days of meeting. All written documentation related to the complaint will be sent to **Pearson BTEC** immediately

after the meeting outcome has been recorded. The letter will include a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter from the College. The Completion of Procedures letter exhausts the College's internal procedures. There will be no further opportunity to pursue the complaint within the College.

- For **Pearson BTEC**: You will also be issued with a *Completion of Procedures* letter, which will enable you to have your complaint considered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator ([OIA - HE](#)). Information about the OIA can be obtained directly from the OIA:

Direct mail address:

OIA Second Floor,
Abbey Gate
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
RG1 3AB

e-mail: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk www.oihe.org.uk

The OIA provides examples of student complaints and outcomes at:

www.oiahe.org.uk/decisions/recent.aspx

If you wish to refer your complaint to the OIA you should complete the OIA Scheme application form and send it to the OIA as soon as possible after receiving your *Completion of Procedures* letter.

If your complaint is wholly or partially justified, the OIA Reviewer may recommend that the College does something or refrains from doing something. The College may accept any recommendation or, if it does not, it will inform the OIA Reviewer, giving reasons.

For further guidance go to: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/guidance-for-students.aspx>

Am I risking my results or services by complaining?

No - Please be reassured that you will not be disadvantaged in any way. The College welcomes complaints as a positive aspect of service monitoring and improvement and as an important aspect of student welfare.

Summary Flowchart of complaints processes



