



Complaints Policy 2023 - 2025

Equality Impact Assessment: Askham Bryan College recognises the importance of the Equality Act 2010 and its duties under the Act. This document has been assessed to ensure that it does not adversely affect staff, students or stakeholders on the grounds of any protected characteristics.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Askham Bryan College is committed to providing a quality service to its students and continually seeks ways to improve the student experience. However, the College recognises, that despite its best efforts, there will be times when things go wrong and someone will want to make a complaint about the service or experience they have had. That includes (but is not limited to) students as well as other stakeholders, such as parents, guardians and carers, and visitors to the College.
- 1.2 Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 1.3 Minor problems that can be resolved quickly should be discussed with the most relevant person. More serious complaints should follow this policy.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Askham Bryan College is committed to thoroughly investigating any complaints, providing a response and ensuring that any outcomes are used to inform quality and service improvements.

2.2 The College aims to:

2.2.1 Set clear standards of service and promote continuous improvement

- Achieve and maintain excellence in quality and service and encourage all staff, throughout the organisation, to make a positive contribution to achieving this;

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- Consult with its stakeholders about the quality of its services and thus provide opportunities for stakeholders to give feedback on their experiences, for example, through questionnaires and focus groups;
- Resolve a complaint informally at the lowest possible level and put the matter right as soon as possible. Where it is not possible to resolve a complaint informally, then the matter should be put in writing so that it can be investigated by a more senior member of staff;
- The College will provide appropriate resources and support, including training and development, to enable both Curriculum and cross college staff to provide a high-quality service.

2.2.2 Treat all stakeholders fairly and with respect

- Endeavour to respond quickly and courteously when stakeholders make a complaint;
- Treat any complaint by a stakeholder sensitively.

2.2.3 Put things right, quickly and effectively, where we can, when things go wrong and act on helpful and constructive comments made by our stakeholders to improve services

3. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

- 3.1 Normally, complaints should be raised as soon as possible following the incident/issue of complaint emerging.
- 3.2 Stakeholders can make a complaint by contacting the Chief Executive's Office either in writing (The Chief Executive's Office, Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York, YO23 3FR), or by email enquiries@askham-bryan.ac.uk
- 3.3 So that we can investigate your complaint properly, please provide any documents you have in support of your complaint/all relevant information to us at this stage.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 shows the process and timeline for making a complaint. The typical timescale for the College to respond to a complaint is:
- Complaint is acknowledged within 2 days of receipt;
 - Complaint is investigated;
 - Investigating Officer recommends response to the Complainant within 10 working days of receipt;
 - If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, an appeal can be made against the decision to the Chief Executive Officer/Vice Principal (this must be

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done within 10 working days of the date of the communication of the initial outcome);

- Appeal response within 10 working days.
- HE complaints, where the matter is referred to a validating university/institution, may take longer and response times will be subject to the validating university/institution's timescales.

3.5 Please note that, whilst the issues raised in an anonymous complaint can still be brought to the attention of the appropriate College staff, it will not be possible to investigate and provide a formal written response to the issues raised in the normal manner.

3.6 The College will also not investigate complaints from parents/ guardians of students aged 18 or over without the written permission of the student.

Appeals against the complaint outcome

3.7 The Complainant can appeal directly to the Chief Executive Officer or Vice Principal, where they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the initial complaint.

3.8 The Chief Executive Officer or Vice Principal will recall all evidence and previous communications pertaining to the investigation into the original complaint and decide whether further action is required.

3.9 If the Chief Executive Officer or Vice Principal upholds the original decision, the Complainant will be advised of any next steps if they wish to pursue their complaint further.

3.10 In the circumstances where the Chief Executive Officer or Vice Principal over-turns the original decision, the Chief Executive Officer or Vice Principal will confirm the new decision and reasons for that to the Complainant in writing.

3.11 All appeals will be actioned within 10 working days of being lodged.

Students studying Higher Education programmes

3.12 Where students are on enrolled on an Askham Bryan College validated course, then the UCAB Academic regulations will apply (see <https://www.askham-bryan.ac.uk/publication-scheme-higher-education/>).

3.13 Students studying on Higher Education programmes which are validated by other universities will also be subject to regulations and policies belonging to that validating university. These will vary according to the validating university. As at the time of publication, these are:

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- <https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/apply/applicants/key-info.cfm> (Harper Adams University)
- <https://www.rau.ac.uk/about/organisation/public-information/academicinformation/academic-policies-and-procedures> (Royal Agricultural University)

- 3.14 Only complaints relating to quality (of provision and delivery) and standards will be referred to the validating universities to investigate and respond to as part of their complaints procedure, following which the College will issue a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter.
- 3.15 Complaints relating to the quality and standards of UCAB courses will be handled internally.
- 3.16 Academic appeals are to be handled by UCAB in accordance with the HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Escalating the complaint to external organisations

- 3.17 Stakeholders have the right to escalate their complaint to external agencies as appropriate (for example, those studying on Higher Education programmes would refer to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), whilst those on FE programmes may refer to an Awarding Body for example).
- 3.18 However, the right to escalate only exists where all internal procedures have been exhausted: this includes those of the College and of any validating university/institution and only after a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter has been issued. Completion of Procedures letters will be issued on the conclusion of all complaints from FE and HE students. For Higher Education students, specific information on progressing complaints to the OIA can be accessed at: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 **The Head of Quality will** ultimately be responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy and associated procedure.
- 4.2 **All College staff will:**
- Conduct themselves appropriately and professionally when dealing with the College's stakeholders;
 - Undertake regular training and development;

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- Report any complaints to the PA to the Principal and Chief Executive so a record can be kept and any complaints logged and or raised with the College's insurers, if necessary.

5. UNREASONABLE AND VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

5.1 Askham Bryan College staff are entitled to:

- a workplace free from bullying, intimidation, harassment or victimisation;
- be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy;
- experience no form of unlawful discrimination;
- be valued for their skills and abilities.

and should not have to tolerate inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour when responding to a complaint. This extends also to how staff are treated by parents/guardians/carers, visitors to the College and members of the public. Inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour will not be tolerated.

5.2 Askham Bryan College defines 'inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour' as:

- refusing to articulate the complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introducing trivial or irrelevant information which is expected to be taken into account and commented on;
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are fully answered, often immediately and to timescales other than the timescales set out in this policy and associated procedure;
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seek to have staff replaced;
- changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly making the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refusing to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the College's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- seeking an unrealistic outcome;
- making excessive demands on College time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the while the complaint is being dealt with;
- using bad language or swearing at College staff;
- any physical violence or threat of physical violence;

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- verbal abuse;
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating;
- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine;
- use of foul or abusive language;
- harassment;
- persistent or unrealistic demands that cause stress to staff (requests will be met wherever possible and explanations given when they cannot);
- knowingly providing falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

- 5.3 The College can, at its discretion, refuse to correspond with a Complainant and or investigate a complaint(s) where it is felt that this is either unreasonable and or vexatious.
- 5.4 Complainants should therefore try to limit their communication with the College to just that that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as this could delay the outcome of the complaint.
- 5.5 Please see the College's Zero Tolerance Policy for further details which is available at <https://www.askham-bryan.ac.uk/zero-tolerance/>

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 6.1 The Head of Quality will maintain oversight of the effectiveness of these arrangements. This policy and the implementation arrangements which underpin it will be reviewed every 2 years by the Head of Quality.

7. SUPPORTING/RELATED DOCUMENTS

UCAB Academic Regulations

Validating University Regulations (for Higher Education students studying on validated programmes only) - see Section 3 of this Policy.

Complaints may be dealt with under other College policies including, but not limited to:

- Positive Behaviour Policy and associated procedures
- Policy against Peer on Peer Abuse (Students)
- Policy for dealing with Bullying and Harassment (Staff)
- Zero Tolerance Policy

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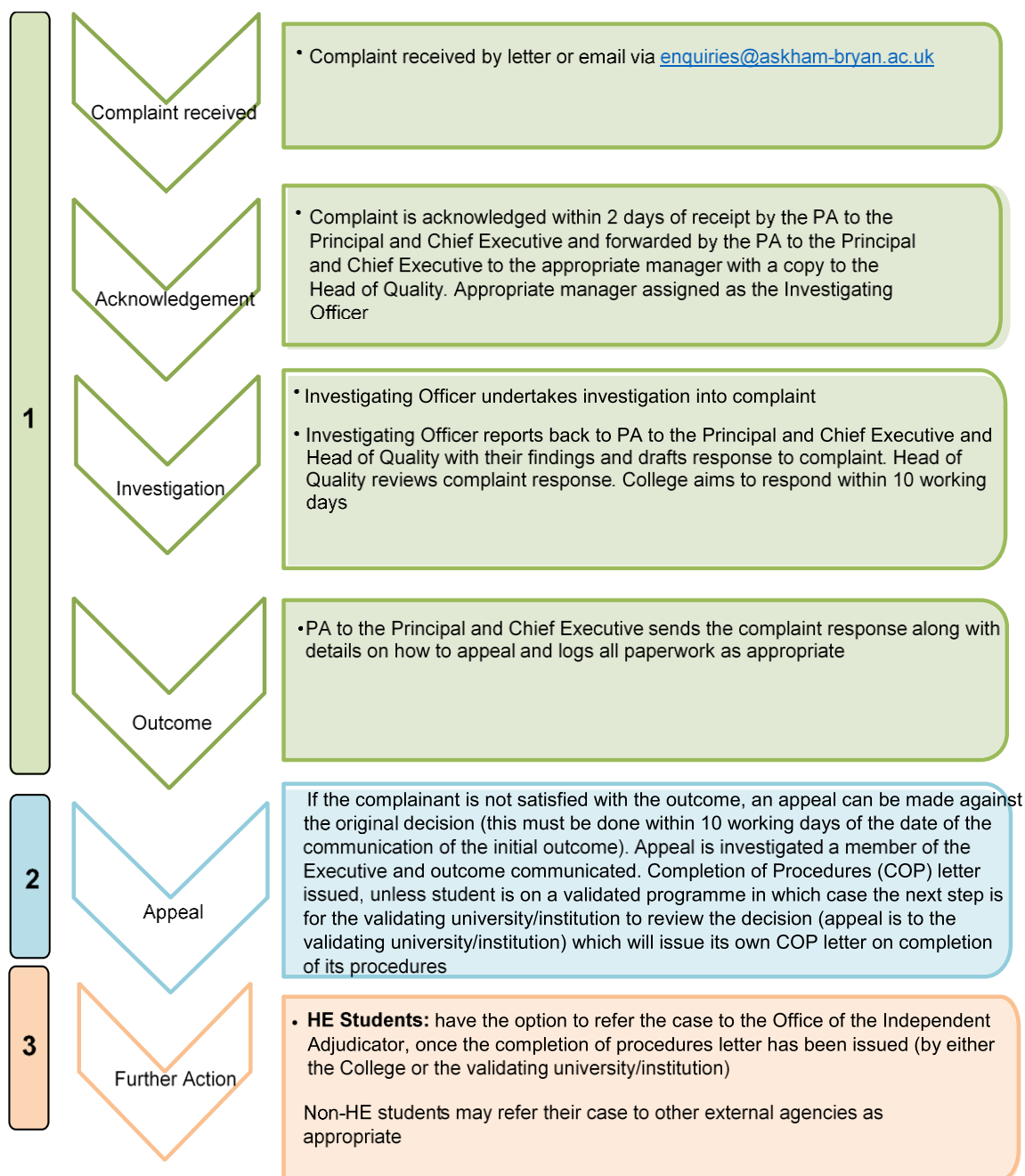
8. REGULATIONS

8.1 In all aspects of this process the College will comply with the following regulations:

- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)
- Equality Act 2010
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

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APPENDIX 1 – Complaints process



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