

HE Student Complaints Policy 2026 - 2028

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 and University Centre is committed to providing the highest quality services to its Higher Education (HE) students and continually seeks ways to improve student experiences. However, the College recognises that, despite its best efforts, there will be times when things go wrong and students may want to make a complaint or tell us about a concern.
- 1.2 This policy provides details of how HE students can raise a concern, issue or complaint. For all other complaints, including those relating to Higher Level Apprenticeships, see the College's Complaints Policy (FE and Apps).
- 1.3 For the purposes of this policy the term "UCAB" will be used to refer to the University Centre Higher Education Provision and the term "the College" will be used to refer to Askham Bryan College as a whole.
- 1.4 The College and UCAB are committed to thoroughly investigating any complaints, providing a response and ensuring that any outcomes are used to inform quality improvements for its students.
- 1.5 We aim to:
 - 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;
 - Consult with its students about their experiences and thus provide opportunities for students to share their views, for example, through questionnaires and focus groups;
 - Resolve a complaint informally at the lowest possible level;
 - Provide appropriate resources and support, including training and development, to enable its staff to provide a high-quality student experience;
 - Treat all students fairly and with respect;
 - Endeavour to respond quickly and courteously when students make a complaint;
 - Treat any complaint by a student sensitively and with an appropriate level of confidentiality.

2. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1. This policy is for **students registered on higher education courses** delivered by UCAB or those who have recently left (withdrawn or completed), who wish to raise a complaint about their experience during their studies.
- 2.2. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction by a student(s) about action taken or not taken by the College/UCAB, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College/UCAB”. Please see link to further guidance regarding [what may constitute a complaint](#).
- 2.3. A course of study may be validated by the College or by a validating partner institution. The complaint process will vary for students registered on courses validated by a partner institution. See **Section 5** of this policy for further detail.
- 2.4. This policy applies across all college approved sites where higher education courses are delivered.
- 2.5. Examples of complaints may include, but are not limited to:
 - An issue with the quality of the College/UCAB facilities, learning resources or teaching;
 - Misleading or incorrect information provided by the College/UCAB about the course;
 - Poor treatment by, or attitude of, a member of staff or contractor;
 - Refusal of a reasonable adjustment request made by a disabled student, under the terms of the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.6. This policy is **not** for complaints about any of the following matters, as there are separate appeals processes for these types of complaints within those policies:
 - Academic appeals/judgments (this is dealt with via Academic Appeals Policies);
 - Matters relating to the Positive Behaviour Policy (formally Student Disciplinary Policy);
 - Refusal of admission to applicants who have not met academic entry requirements; or where there is evidence that they cannot (or are likely to be unable to) meet the academic, professional or vocational requirements
- 2.7. Some concerns raised by students, may fall outside the scope of this Complaints Policy and instead constitute a **claim** (for example, a claim for financial loss, damages, personal injury, or breach of contract). Where a submission appears to involve legal liability, financial compensation, or matters better addressed under the institution’s insurance, contractual, or legal procedures, it will be redirected accordingly. If a complaint is assessed as potentially being a claim, the matter will be referred to the appropriate internal team (e.g., Legal Services, Finance) for further consideration. The complainant will be informed of this referral and advised of the next steps. In such cases, the timescales and processes set out in this Complaints Policy may no longer apply.

3. GETTING SUPPORT OR GUIDANCE

- 3.1. Students may wish to discuss whether their complaint should be considered formal or informal, or if there are alternative ways of addressing their concerns. If a student is considering making a complaint, advice can be sought from a number of sources. These may include one or more of the following:
- Module Tutor or Course Manager;
 - The Student Union;
 - Student Course Representatives;
 - A member of Student Services or HE Learning Support;
 - An external third-party representative.
- 3.2. UCAB Academic Services (contactable via academicservices@askham-bryan.ac.uk) is able to provide guidance regarding the complaint process.
- 3.3. A student making a complaint has the right to be accompanied at any formal meetings concerning their complaint by a member of staff, parent or fellow student, who is not involved in the complaint.
- 3.4. Students must make complaints themselves, and we cannot normally accept complaints by third parties on behalf of a student. However, some students may be unable to make a complaint on their own and may need support. In these circumstances, a permitted third party (e.g. a registered student, member of the SU, an independent staff member, parent/family member, legal representative), can make the complaint on behalf of the student provided that the student has given written confirmation of the request and that this request has been approved by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education.

Collective Complaints

- 3.5. Where issues raised in a complaint affect several students, those students can submit a complaint as a 'group complaint.' Where this happens, all students must be named within the complaint, but in order to manage the administration of the complaint, the College/UCAB will normally ask the group to nominate one student to function as a group representative.

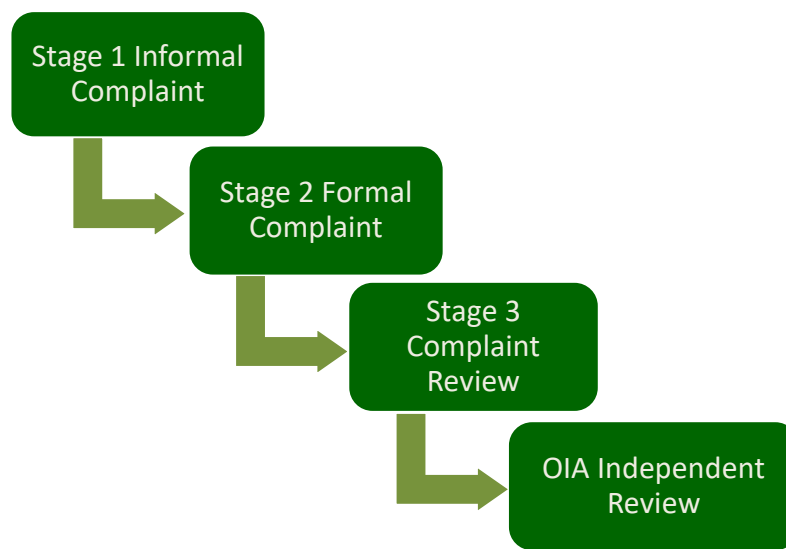
4. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Time Limits

- 4.1. 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. The College will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Procedure

- 4.2. This procedure consists of three internal stages, followed by the opportunity for students to refer their complaint externally to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) should you remain dissatisfied.
- 4.3. For students registered to courses validated by Harper Adams University (HAU) or Royal Agricultural University (RAU), Stage 3 complaints will be investigated by the relevant validating partner institution, under the internal review stage of that institution's complaints policy.



A. Stage 1 Informal Complaint

- 4.4. UCAB encourages students to raise concerns, questions, and issues promptly and responsibly. Swift expression of concerns directly with the member of staff involved will normally lead to a quick and satisfactory informal resolution of most issues.
- 4.5. In the first instance students should contact their Course Manager or Curriculum Manager/Leader via email, MS Teams or by making an appointment to see them.
- 4.6. Students should also think about whether their concern can be communicated using the College's student voice mechanisms such as Student Council, Student Representatives, Module Surveys or via their Course Manager.
- 4.7. Any informal concerns raised by an enrolled student, and actions taken will usually be recorded via Pro-Monitor, which will be available to students to access via their ProPortal account. Where suitable, or requested, a response may also be provided via email. Response to Stage 1 complaints raised by graduates will be responded to via email.
- 4.8. If a student remains dissatisfied following Stage 1, they may lodge a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this policy within one month of receiving their Stage 1 response.

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- 4.9. A log of the number and nature of Stage 1 informal complaints will be reported to, and monitored by, the UCAB Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

B. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- 4.10. Students should submit their formal complaint in writing using the **Formal Complaint Form** (Appendix 1 of this policy) and send it to the Principal and Chief Executive Officer either via post (The Principal and Chief Executive's Office, Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York, YO23 3FR) or by emailing enquiries@askham-bryan.ac.uk.
- 4.11. Stage 2 complaints will be acknowledged within two (2) working days of receipt.
- 4.12. An Investigating Officer will be allocated to investigate the issue, either personally or with appropriate manager(s) and/or other colleagues.
- 4.13. It may be necessary for the complainant to be contacted to gather further information or to better understand the context of the complaint. A meeting may be arranged with the student, if necessary.
- 4.14. The complainant should normally expect a full written response from the Investigating Officer within 10 working days of receipt. However, there may be periods when this timeframe is not possible such as during holiday periods, due to staff availability or the complexity of the complaint. If this is the case, the College will inform the student of the expected timeframe.

C. Stage 3: Complaint Review

- 4.15. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may request a review of the Stage 2 investigation, which must be based on one (or more) of the following grounds:
- There is new evidence that would have significantly affected the Stage 2 outcome, and which could not have been made available when the Stage 2 complaint was submitted;
 - The College/UCAB did not properly follow its own procedures in dealing with the complaint and this demonstrably affected the outcome of the complaint (material procedural irregularity);
 - That the decision taken at Stage 2 was unreasonable.
- 4.16. **Note: The process for Stage 3 complaint review will differ depending on the Awarding Body/Validating Institution for the course which the student is/was registered on. Please see below.**

Making a request to review a Stage 2 response

- 4.17. The student should write to the Principal and Chief Executive's Office either via post (The Principal and Chief Executive's Office, Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York, YO23 3FR) or by emailing enquiries@askham-bryan.ac.uk within 10 working days of the date of the Stage 2 outcome letter, setting out the grounds (See point **5.15**)

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for challenging the Stage 2 outcome. The student should set out any new evidence, with an explanation for why this evidence was not available at the time of the original complaint.

- 4.18. Stage 3 complaint review requests will be acknowledged within two (2) working days of receipt.
- 4.19. The College will, in discussion with the relevant validating partner institution, determine if the complaint needs to be reviewed internally or if it needs to be reviewed by the validating partner institution. For example, complaints related to services or facilities would be investigated internally, whereas complaints about quality and standards would be referred to the validating partner.
- 4.20. If the complaint is suitable to be reviewed internally, then the Vice Principal for HE or nominee will review the handling of the complaint in the light of the student's review request.
- 4.21. If the complaint needs to be referred to an external validating partner, details of this would be made available to the student following submission of their request to review. In those cases, the relevant validating partner institution's Complaint Policy and timescales would apply.
 - HAU - [Key Information | Harper Adams University \(harper-adams.ac.uk\)](https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk)
 - RAU - [Student handbook, policies and procedures | Royal Agricultural University \(rau.ac.uk\)](https://www.rau.ac.uk)
- 4.22. For all internally reviewed cases, The Assistant Principal HE (or nominee) will notify the student in writing of the review outcome within 10 working days of receipt. If grounds have not been established or the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, then a Completion of Procedures letter (referred to as a CoP Letter) will be issued (See **Appendix 2**). The Completion of Procedures letter demonstrates that the College has exhausted its internal procedures. At this point the student will be informed that they may be eligible to refer their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) [See **Section 6**].
- 4.23. For externally reviewed cases, issuing of the CoP letter will be via the validating partner institution directly.

Data protection complaints

- 4.24. If your complaint is because you feel your rights under data protection legislation have been breached or have not been respected, please submit your complaint to enquiries@askham-bryan.ac.uk using the Stage 2 complaint form.

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Student guidance on which stage should be used for lodging a complaint.

	Stage 1 Informal Complaint	Stage 2 Formal Complaint	Stage 3 Complaint Review
What stage does my complaint fit into?	For raising a straightforward complaint about an issue.	For complaints which have not been resolved to your satisfaction at Stage 1 or for high-risk/complex complaints.	For complaints which have not been resolved to your satisfaction at Stage 2.
When should I raise the complaint?	As close as possible to the issue arising (and within 3 calendar months).	Usually 1 month of receiving a response to your informal Stage 1 complaint.	Within 10 working days of receiving response to your Stage 2 complaint.
How do I raise the complaint?	By email, phone or in person to the member of staff who has responsibility for the e.g. Course Manager, CTL or CAM, Head of Department.	By completing a Formal Complaint Form (Appendix 1) and sending it to the Principal and CEO's office by post or email.	Request to be submitted in writing to the Principal and CEO's Office.
Who will deal with my complaint?	Management staff within the curriculum department usually CTL or CAM.	An Investigating Officer, usually a senior member of College/UCAB staff.	For ABC validated courses any review will be dealt with by the VP for HE or nominee. If a course is validated by a partner institution then the case may be managed by their complaints team.
How will my complaint be processed?	This would normally involve a conversation to discuss the issues raised and include some limited investigation.	Your complaint would be acknowledged within 2 working days. The Investigating officer may request a meeting with you and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised.	For complaints reviewed internally - Your review will be acknowledged within 2 working days. The Stage 3 Investigator will carry out a review of the investigation carried at Stage 2. For complaints reviewed by validating partner this will fall under the relevant policy for that institution. See Point 5.19
What might my outcome be?	Action taken to resolve the issue promptly (e.g. an explanation, apology, reasonable adjustment) with a written response provided within 28 calendar days.	You will be provided with a full written response which includes reasons for any decisions taken and any further actions. Normally within 10 working days of receipt of your complaint form.	For complaints reviewed internally - You will be provided with a full written response and Completion of Procedures letter normally within 10 working days of receipt of your review request. Note that the Stage 3 Investigator cannot overturn the outcome, but can refer the matter back to stage 2 for reconsideration. Note that timescales will differ for reviews processed by validating partner institutions. See Point 5.19
What are the next steps?	If you are still dissatisfied you can escalate your complaint to stage 2, within 1 month of your Stage 1 complaint response.	If you are still dissatisfied you can escalate your complaint to Stage 3 within 10 working days of receiving the written response to your Stage 2 complaint.	If you are still dissatisfied you can refer your complaint to the OIA within 12 months of receiving your Completion of Procedures letter.

5. THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HE (OIA)

- 5.1. The College is a member of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.
- 5.2. If a student remains dissatisfied after completing all stages of the complaints process, they are entitled to ask the OIA, an independent ombudsman service, to review their complaint. For more information please visit: www.oiahe.org.uk
- 5.3. The OIA will only consider complaints from students who remain dissatisfied once all internal complaint stages have been exhausted and a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter has been issued (either by the College or by the relevant validating partner institution) [See Section 5].

6. UNREASONABLE AND/OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. Staff should not have to tolerate inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour when responding to a complaint. This extends also to how staff are treated by a student's friends, family members, guardians or carers. Inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour will not be tolerated.
- 6.3. Askham Bryan College defines 'inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour' to include (but is not an exhaustive list):
 - 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 complaint investigation process;
 - refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint procedure;
 - insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint 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;
 - 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);
 - seeking an unrealistic outcome;
 - making excessive demands on college time by frequent, lengthy and complicated

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contact with staff regarding the while the complaint is being dealt with;

- using inappropriate or foul language at college staff;
- any physical violence or threat of physical violence;
- verbal abuse;
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating;
- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine;
- 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.

6.4. 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.

6.5. Complainants should therefore try to limit their communication with the College to just that which 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.

6.6. Please see the College's Zero Tolerance Policy for further details which is available at: <https://www.askham-bryan.ac.uk/zero-tolerance>

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1. Different members of College and UCAB staff or from validating institutions will be involved in complaint investigations depending on the stage of that complaint. Please see the table in Section 5 for further details.

7.2. The Assistant Principal HE and Academic Registrar will have overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy. The Assistant Principal HE and Academic Registrar will be assisted by Head of HE Academic Services and Quality Assurance and Curriculum Leaders to ensure compliance with this policy.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

8.1. Assistant Principal for HE will maintain oversight of the effectiveness of these arrangements. This policy and the implementation arrangements which underpin it will be reviewed biennially by the Assistant Principal HE and Academic Registrar.

8.2. UCAB will review the number and outcome of complaints assurance with a view to improving our students' experience and our services, these will be reported as part of our internal committee structures. Any monitoring reports will not contain any personally identifiable information.

8.3. This procedure is regularly monitored to address any new circumstances encountered. Unforeseen issues handled outside this procedure should be reported to the Assistant Principal HE and HE Academic Registrar for potential inclusion in future revisions.

9. SUPPORTING/RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Askham Bryan College High Education Academic Regulations;
- Validating University Regulations (for Higher Education students studying on externally validated courses only);
- Complaints may be dealt with under other College policies including, but not limited to:
 - Positive Behaviour Policy and associated procedures;
 - Peer on Peer Abuse (Students);
 - Policy for dealing with Bullying and Harassment (Staff);
 - Zero Tolerance Policy

10. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

10.1 In all aspects of this policy the College will comply with the following legislation:

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

11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date of Issue: 29th May 2026

Approved on: HEAB on 6th May 2026 and Policies Group on 20th May 2026

Next review: July 2028

Owner: Assistant Principal HE and Academic Registrar

Author: Assistant Principal HE and Academic Registrar

Publication requirements: PUBLIC

Appendix 1 – Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form (UCAB)



University Centre Askham Bryan

Stage 2 Formal Complaints Form

Prior to completing this form, you should report your concern informally to your Module Tutor, Course Manager or Curriculum Leaders/Heads of Department. This form is designed for use at the Formal Stage of the HE Student Complaints Policy. Please ensure that you have read and understood the process before completing this form.

A copy of the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form should be sent to the Principal and Chief Executive's Office either:

- By email: enquiries@askham-bryan.ac.uk
- Or Post: The Principal and Chief Executive's Office, Askham Bryan College, Askham Bryan, York, YO23 3FR

Please complete each part of this form in full and provide any supporting information at the point of submission.

Part 1: Complainant Details

Forename	
Surname	
Email address for response	
Phone Number	
Course of Study	

If the complaint is a collective complaint on behalf of several students, please complete the above information for each complainant on an additional sheet as appropriate. Additional sheets should be submitted together and a cross placed in the box to indicate the presence of additional sheets.

Part 2: Details of the Complaint

Please set out clearly and concisely the main points of your complaint and why you are complaining. You should also include details of dates, locations, and any witnesses.

Part 3: Outcome Sought

Please indicate a reasonable outcome or future action you are wanting in resolution to your complaint.

Please suggest any future action that can be taken by the College/UCAB to prevent this issue recurring.

Part 4: Previous Resolution Sought

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Before a complaint is raised formally all reasonable steps must have been completed to raise the complaint informally. If you have tried to resolve your complaint informally, please say what steps you have taken and who you raised the matter with.

What was the outcome and why are you still dissatisfied?

Part 4: Declaration by Complainant(s)

I (we), the undersigned, submit this form in relation to Stage 2 of the HE Students Complaint Policy. I agree under the Data Protection Act 2018 that any information given on this form may be shared with appropriate parties in the active resolution of my complaint including, where necessary, anyone I have complained about. I also give explicit consent that records relating to my studies or other associated matters (including those relating to assessment and/or requests made by me for mitigating circumstances and other records held) may be accessed, as necessary, in order to investigate my complaint. I further declare that this complaint is submitted in good faith and is not frivolous, malicious, nor vexatious.

Signed (Complainant):

Date:

For collective complaints this must be signed by all complainants.

Appendix 2 - Example Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter produced by ABC.

[Complainant Address]
[Date]

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear [Name of complainant],

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal stages of Askham Bryan College and University Centre Askham Bryan in relation to your complaint regarding [please describe] have been completed. The issues that you raised in your complaint were [details]. The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your complaint were: [brief summary of the complaint].

The final decision of the College is [detail] because [reasons].

The College subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may be able to apply for a review of your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules. Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA on or before [insert date - e.g., if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 7 January 2026, this date should be 7 January 2027].

Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA can also be found on the OIA's website <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us> . Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through all internal procedures within the HE Students Complaints Policy.

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]