

Customer Feedback Policy Compliments, Concerns and Complaints

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy feeds into Petroc’s mission, vision, values and strategic priorities allowing for a structured, open and transparent way for collecting and monitoring customer feedback, with the aim of continuously improving our standards and service to all our stakeholders.



2. Purpose of the Policy

- 2.1 This policy sets out Petroc’s values for supporting continuous improvement by encouraging our customers to provide feedback to help us improve the education, training and service we offer based on their direct experience.

Our customers include learners within statutory education and their parents/ carers, adult learners, apprentices, employers, learners in higher education and other stakeholders.

Customer feedback can be provided in a variety of ways, but all feedback should be considered as an opportunity to learn. All parties should communicate in a respectful way. All complaints received are recorded and monitored. With your

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help we can use this feedback to ensure Petroc continues to offer a high-quality service for our service users. It includes any information that helps us to understand where:

- We have done something well
- We have exceeded expectations
- A member of staff has gone out of their way to provide a good service
- Customers have been inconvenienced or we have done something badly or we have failed to do something we should have done
- Customers are unhappy with the manner in which they have been dealt with
- We could have done something differently to be more effective in meeting our aims.

3. General Principles/Procedures

3.1 The following principles will apply to this policy:

- It will be open, fair and transparent, actively promoting equality of opportunity throughout Petroc's activities and learning experiences
- It will reflect our current policies and procedures of operation
- It will be realistic, achievable and provide value for money
- It will identify key themes in complaints, appeals and extenuating circumstances claim
- Resolution of complaints in a fair and equitable way within agreed timescales
- Absence of victimisation once a complaint has been reported
- Continuous quality of service improvement

3.2 Petroc will seek to collect customer feedback in all curriculum, business and service planning to support effective delivery and continuous improvement in all that we do.

- Positive feedback will be monitored, shared with staff and used in curriculum, business and service planning to ensure that we listen to what our customers value the most and that we recognise staff who are delivering excellent service
- Negative feedback will be investigated either through our stage zero complaints procedure or may be referred to an appeal where it relates to the outcome
- The college will seek to address all complaints in good faith

3.3 Customer Feedback

This policy applies only to acts or omissions which take place at a time when the complainant is an enrolled learner at Petroc or one who is taking approved time out.

It does not apply to applicants prior to admission or to former learners at Petroc whose complaint refers to an act of omission which took place after their enrolment has ended. The definition of learner extends one month beyond the day of sending of final transcript or withdrawal from the programme of study.

We proactively seek feedback from our customers on the services we provide and aim to use feedback to strengthen and improve our services.

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In all cases feedback will be shared with the appropriate Senior Manager/Team Leader. The Vice Principal Quality Curriculum and Learners will have the responsibility to review all feedback and respond where required. The Quality Department will monitor progress and provide support to ensure that there is a timely and professional response to feedback in line with this policy and the customer complaints process.

3.4 **Customer Compliments**

We value customer feedback and will share positive comments and compliments with the staff, teams and contractors involved.

Where staff have gone 'above and beyond' normal expectations of customers compliments will be shared with the Executive Team and staff will be recognised through the formal 'thank you' and/or staff awards recognition scheme.

3.5 **Customer Complaints**

Negative feedback will be investigated either through a formal Customer Complaints Procedure or as an informal stage zero complaint. A stage zero complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction which can be resolved at the first point of contact, or which is outside the control, resources or remit of the college.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, requiring a response, relating to a service provided or not provided.

If we receive a complaint from a third party on behalf of a customer, we will need that customer's permission (usually in writing) before we can start investigating the complaint. Where there are known literacy, language or communication issues we will assist a customer in providing appropriate permission and be flexible to support the customer as required.

For clarification purposes a customer complaint is not:

- A request for service
- A request for information
- A report of anti-social behaviour/neighbour dispute (which should be directed to the Neighbourhood Police Officer)
- Dispute over fees or re-payment of fees
- An objection to the outcome of a decision that is based upon Petroc's policies

Complaints must be made within six months of the matter arising.

We will fully investigate formal customer complaints through our publicised procedure. This provides three clear stages of progression of a complaint. If at the end of the investigation customers who are funded/part funded via the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) may use the right to appeal to the ESFA.

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3.6 **Complaints relating to Higher Education**

Students and staff should refer to Higher Education Students Complaints Policy.

The College has a Higher Education Student Complaints Policy for Higher Education students, which is aligned to the University of Plymouth's overarching Student Complaints Policy and Procedure.

This clearly states what can be considered under the Complaints Policy:

- Aspects of your learning and teaching experience
- Service issues
- Facilities.

Issues that cannot be considered under the Complaints Policy:

- Assessment and matters of Academic Judgement
- Any academic decision taken by an assessment board
- Admissions
- Student behaviour

If at the end of the investigation customers who are funded/part funded via Higher Education may use the right to appeal via the supporting University/the Office for Students (OfS).

Once a complaint is closed a letter will be sent to the student confirming a Completion of Procedure (COP). A COP Letter will be issued when:

- Petroc decides that there are no grounds for the complaint or appeal to be escalated to the next stage of its procedures which would enable the student to escalate the complaint to the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIJ) should they wish.
- A student initiates or attempts to escalate a complaint or appeal outside Petroc's time limits.
- Petroc reaches a final decision that results in the exclusion or suspension of a student under any of its procedures, including disciplinary procedures.
- When a student makes both a complaint and an appeal about the same or related issues.

The OIJ for Higher Education publishes information about each OIA member provider's record in handling complaints and appeals for the preceding calendar year, in the form of an on-line annual statement.

3.7 Complaints are regularly monitored by the Senior Management and Quality Team and an annual report is produced for the Governing Body which sets out the key features and outcomes and any changes that have been made in response to all the formal complaints that have been initiated during the previous academic year.

The report is produced by the Quality Improvement and Assurance department and appropriate action plans are instigated as necessary.

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The annual report will consider:

- The number of formal complaints lodged
- The number of those formal complaints upheld and rejected
- The number of formal complaints resolved with complainants satisfied
- The number of formal complaints closed without resolution
- The number of formal complaints divided by ratio of students to curriculum area, age, ethnic origin, gender and disability type
- Mode of attendance, programme and level of study
- Actions recommended and taken, and impact
- The number of formal concerns logged by the faculties

3.8 We will review this policy at least every three years, and related policies within our scheduled review cycle, to ensure that it continues to operate within best practice and achieve measurable results and achieve continuous service improvement.

Policies and updates to policies are reviewed by the Senior Management Team.

4. Definition and Scope

4.1 Concerns and Complaints

Any individual who thinks that they have a justified cause for concern or complaint should feel able to raise the matter without fear of subsequent victimisation, as should any individual providing supporting evidence or representation. Whether the complaint is eventually upheld or not, the learner has a right to raise it as long as they do so in good faith.

Learners should note that raising a vexatious or malicious complaint may lead to disciplinary procedures being invoked.

This policy clearly distinguishes between a concern (which is an opportunity for an individual to bring a matter that they are unhappy about directly to the individual concerned, the Faculty within which they are studying) and a complaint (which is a formal statement by an individual to the Complaints Procedure, which will be formally responded to and which the individual has the right to pursue if they are not satisfied with that response).

If a concern is raised with a member of staff, the individual's permission must be given before the issue is raised with others. The member of staff should explain to the individual that, if such permission is not given, it may not be possible to pursue the concern in any meaningful way. In particular no formal action will be taken in respect of a concern to be told the full details of the concern.

Matters raised as a formal complaint will remain confidential to those directly involved in the investigation of, and response to, the complaint (which includes any staff complained of, or who are responsible for the matters complained of).

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All staff and learners who become aware of any of the issues involved in a formal complaint are required to keep this information confidential insofar as is necessary to progress, investigate or respond to the complaint. Failure to do so may result in formal disciplinary action being taken through the Learner or Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

Complaints may be raised individually or collectively. In the case of a group complaint, each complainant must individually complete a separate form although these may refer to a common statement of the matter(s).

4.2 **Key members of staff**

Investigatory officers are members of the College Management Team and are the primary contact for matters relating to concerns and complaints and are responsible for implementing the concerns and complaints policy and procedures. The Quality Improvement and Assurance Team will produce reports which feed into internal quality meetings with Faculties, and an annual report which reports into the Governing Body.

4.3 **Support**

Petroc is committed to providing impartial advice and support for learners wishing to register a concern or a complaint. This is provided through the Tutorial system, often directly through the Student Support team or with the support of a learner's Academic Progress Lecturer, or Petroc Student Union.

Students with additional learning or high needs may access the support of the Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to register a concern or complaint.

4.4 Petroc is unable to provide additional car parking spaces at any campus. Parking is managed by Total Parking Solutions (TPS) and any issues arising from parking tickets and/or enforcement should be raised directly with them.

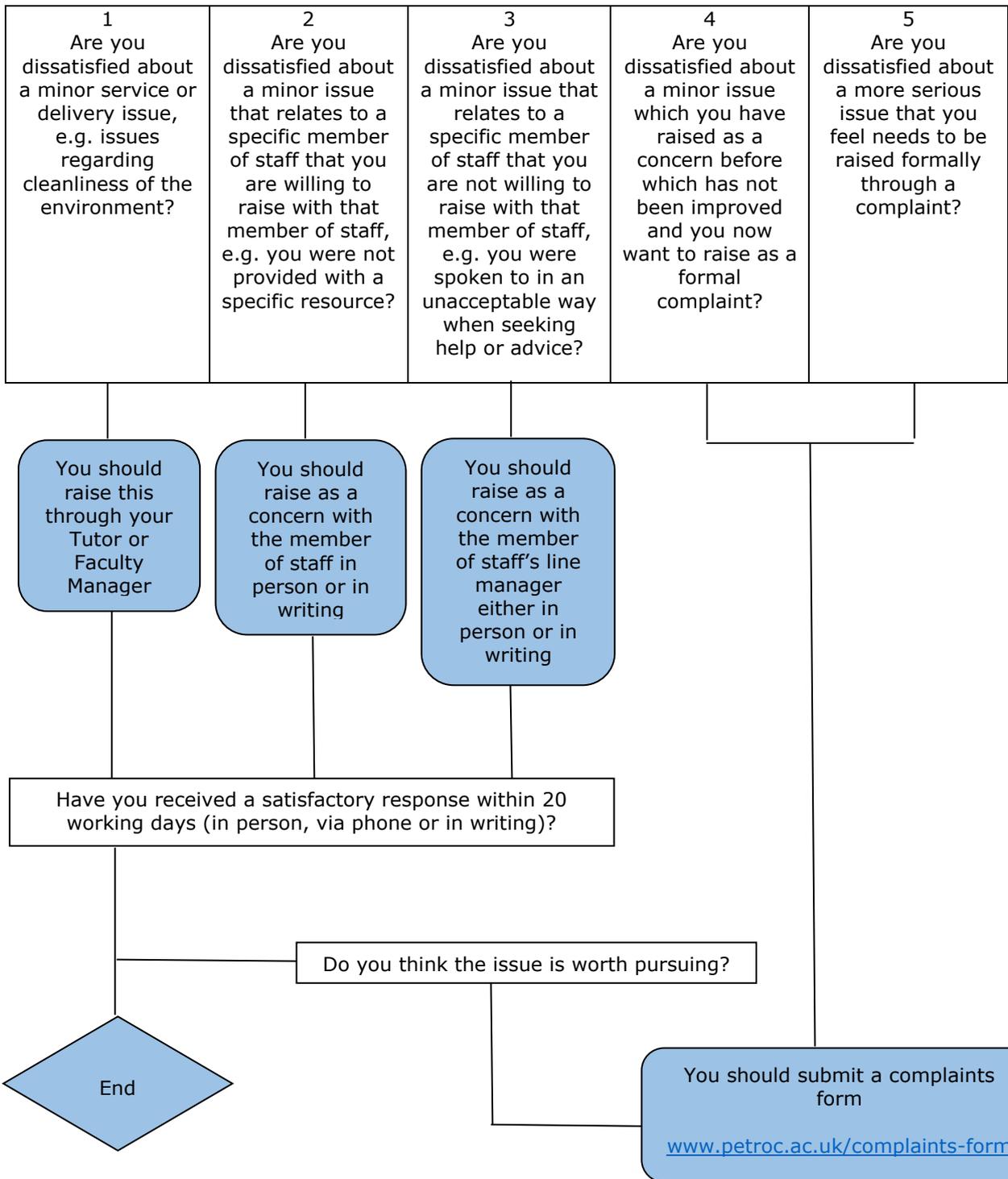
5. **Process of Raising a Complaint**

5.1 **Concern – Stage Zero**

A concern is generally recognised at a level of dissatisfaction or inconvenience felt by a learner. It is expected that where a complainant is dissatisfied with the general provision of a service, they will normally raise their concern through on procedures outlined below.

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You are dissatisfied with some aspect of the services or facilities provided by the College



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5.2 **Complaint Stage 1**

A complainant who wishes to make a formal complaint should do so through the complaints process.

A complainant wishing to raise a complaint must complete a complaint form CF1. This is available as an electronic form at www.petroc.ac.uk/complaints-form

Alternatively this can be downloaded for completion and sent to the Principal's PA, Petroc, Old Sticklepath Hill, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 2BQ. The Principal's PA will log the complaint and direct the complaint to an investigating officer.

The Principal's PA will in the first instance send the complaint to the nominated investigating officer. This will normally be the relevant Head of Faculty if the matter has not already been raised with this person. If the complaint has already been seen by the Head of Faculty, the complaint will automatically be referred to Stage 2 of the procedure. The nominated investigation officer shall respond to the complainant in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the referral from the Principal's PA.

5.3 **Complaint Stage 2**

The Principal's PA shall acknowledge the complaint in writing within 10 days of its receipt. A referral will then be made to the relevant Assistant Principal who will respond within 20 days of the Stage 2 complaint being made.

Where a complaint is against an Assistant Principal the complaint will be referred to a member of the Executive Management Team.

Following completion of Stage 2 if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response, they should write to the Principal's PA stating the reasons. At this point where institutional procedures have been completed, the person complaining should expect Petroc to provide a clear written statement, confirming that its internal procedures have reached completion and outcome that has been reached.

5.4 **Final Stage Complaint**

Higher Education

For Higher Education a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter which is a requirement of the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education will be generated. Learners are then able to appeal to the QIA regarding their complaint.

Further Education

If parents/carers or employers of apprentices seek to invoke Stage Two failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with a decision in respect of their formal complaint the parents/carers may, in writing address the appeal to the Principal and CEO who will respond; this may result in a referral to a meeting with the relevant member of the Senior Management or Executive Management Team for a final response.

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A complainant who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the decision following exhaustion of all the Complaints Regulations may be entitled to complain to the ESFA. They can be contacted at The Complaints Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT or via email: complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

5.5 **Appeals**

Where the feedback that is received relates to dissatisfaction with an outcome that is driven by Petroc policy then it will be referred to in the appeals process and not progressed through the complaints process.

5.6 **Application of Policy**

The Executive Management Team are responsible for the application of this policy and delegate responsibility within the college management team for investigation and response, and to the Quality department for ensuring that any quality improvement processes required are actioned and inform other college policies and procedures with the intent of improving our service to our customers.

5.7 **Quality Improvement**

The outcomes of complaints arising from the Faculties will be raised at their Quality Review meetings, and lessons learned and resulting quality improvement actions will be recorded and monitored in curriculum Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) and included under recommendations within the Annual Report to the Full Governing Body.

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