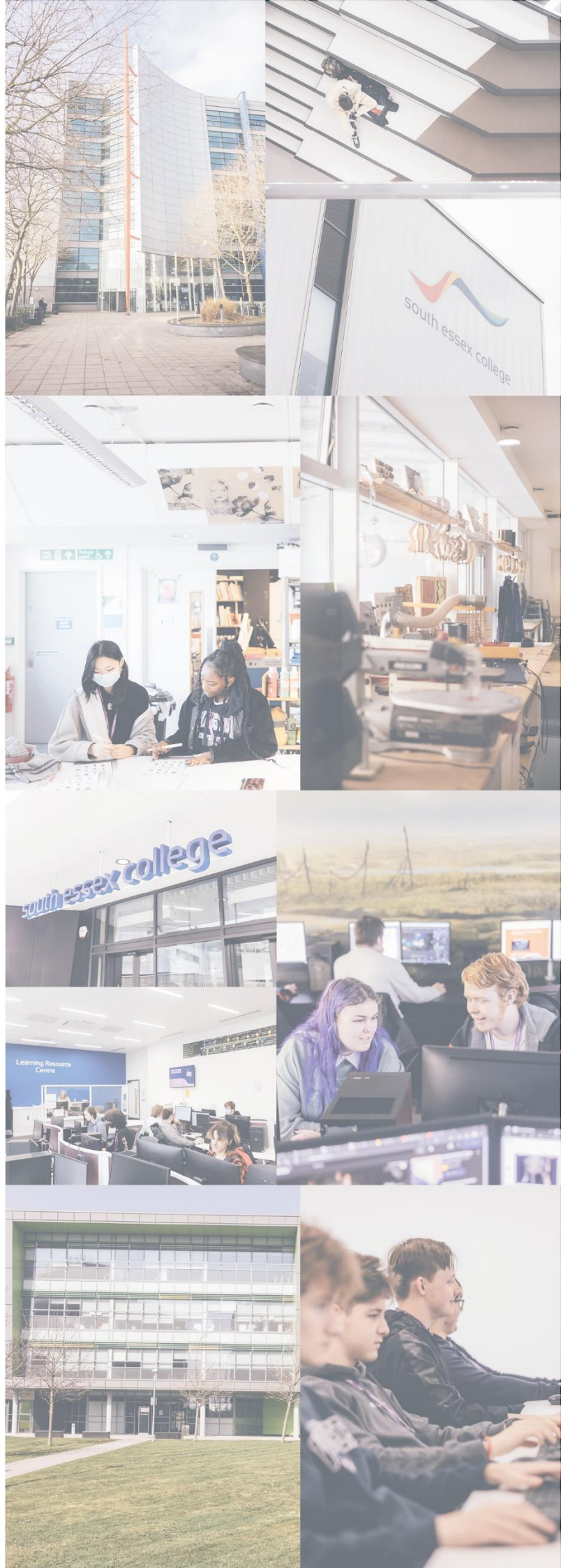




# Higher Education Compliments and Complaints Policy

September 2023



## SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOLLOWING REVIEW

PAGE NUMBER OR HEADING NAME	DETAILS OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE	CHANGES MADE BY
Page 4	Procedure for logging a complaint updated	SB
Page 5	Contact timescales updated	SB
Page 7	Monitoring and Evaluation updated identifying that information may be shared with validating partners	SB

## Equality Impact Assessment



*It is proposed that this form be included in all college policy template from hereon before the contents page..*

The aim of an equality impact assessment (EIA) is to consider the equality implications of any new or amended policy, procedure, practice, project, function on different groups of staff, students and visitors to the college. This EIA tool provides a simple framework that helps evaluate whether the change may inadvertently disadvantage protected characteristics and identify ways to proactively advance and promote equality.

You will need to consider each of the equations and provide information as to consideration and any changes made in relation to Equality, diversity and inclusion.

Date EIA completed.	07/09/2023
Name of person responsible for completing the EIA	Steve Bright
Role of person responsible for completing the EIA	Director of HE Operations
Who is affected by the policy / decision / change	Nobody is affected
What's the reason for the new policy / change in policy, practice, process etc.	Annual update of policy

You will need to consider whether its possible that the proposed new policy / change in policy /procedure/practice etc could discriminate or unfairly discriminate or disadvantage people. You should consider:

Who gets to participate	Who does not, or who now does not due to the changes proposed / made.
Who is at an advantage	Who is at a disadvantage, and again has this changed?
Who will benefit	Who will not benefit (or who did and now doesn't due to the changes proposed in policy
Who can access the policy	Who cannot, or now cannot.

## HE Compliments and Complaints Policy

Protected Characteristic	What degree of impact does the change have (score 1-5 with 1 the lowest and 5 the highest)	What is a potential positive, neutral or negative impact? Include what you have considered. Are there any barriers?	What action will be taken to address any negative impact or remove any potential barriers identified? Note if we are not able to resolve anything identified.	Date by when and whom will this action be taken.
Age	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Disability	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Gender (Sex)	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Gender Reassignment	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Marriage or Civil Partnership	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy / Maternity	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Race	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Religion or Religious Belief	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Sexual Orientation	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A
Any other element that needs to be considered.	1	No barriers	N/A	N/A

### Note:

1. The terms stated under protected characteristics are the terminology used in the Equality Act 2010.
2. As part of the policy approval process Executive Board will consider the EIA assessment and any potential barriers which we may not be able to overcome and whether the action proposed will mitigate sufficiently within legislation or whether we decide to not implement the new policy if the risk are significant. If the policy is approved the EIA is also approved.

## **Introduction**

The University Centre South Essex is committed to providing excellent customer satisfaction and welcomes compliments, suggestions and complaints and will deal with them in a friendly, fair and efficient way. The College will respond to all complaints promptly and within the published deadlines.

## **Implementation**

This policy will be published on the College website and communicated to all staff.

## **General Roles and Responsibilities**

- All College staff have a responsibility for receiving compliments, suggestions and complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the policy.
- The Director of HE Operations is responsible for resolving complaints on behalf of University Centre South Essex. He may appoint a Manager to investigate and respond on their behalf but will maintain overall responsibility.
- The Customer Services Officer coordinates the Compliments and Complaints process. They also provide support and guidance on all matters relating to this Policy.

## **Procedure for logging a complaint**

- The Executive Assistant to the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality is responsible for logging all complaints
- A complaint can be made by email (Yoursay@southessex.ac.uk) or by formal letter.
- on the SECG website via the compliments and complaints form.
- Students studying on University of East Anglia Programmes at UCSE should also complete the UEA complaints form for each stage of their complaint and may wish to seek guidance from HE support in the completion of this. Form available from the University Centre, UEA area of the SECG website.

## **Complaints Procedure**

If there is concern about an aspect of a course, or any of the College's services, the staff member most directly involved or someone already known should be contacted. Where there is uncertainty over who to contact, or a student does not want to approach the person most directly involved, then the Programme Leader, Personal Tutor, or Manager as appropriate should be contacted. If other students share the concerns then the student course representative should be approached.

If the issue cannot be resolved within the Department/Team a complaint can be made following the procedure for logging a complaint, as above.

The Executive Assistant DPCQ will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 2 working days and will inform the investigating manager.

The Director of HE Operations or a Programme Partnership Manager will contact the complainant within 2 working days to introduce themselves and offer a meeting to resolve the issue. Initial contact and the proposed meeting may include:

- Gaining information about the concern or complaint
- Providing information or context to a complainant
- Suggesting various solutions including arranging a facilitated discussion
- Giving an apology where it seems appropriate to do so, although advice must always be sought before issuing an apology to allay any concerns with regards to legal liability
- Confirming resolution or next steps

### **Appealing the outcome of a complaint decision**

If a complaint is not resolved using the complaints policy there is the right to appeal.

In order to appeal:

### **For students enrolled on the College's Higher Education programmes**

*UAL (University of the Arts London)*

Once the college appeal stage has been completed students can request a final Stage Review with UAL by emailing [complaints@arts.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@arts.ac.uk).

*UEA (University of East Anglia)*

Academic Complaints (aspects of a student's academic experience).

Once the college complaint stage has been completed students can file a formal complaint with UEA. Students must first request a 'Completion of Stage' letter from the College and complete the Academic Complaint Form Stage Two (Review Stage) Partner Institutions, a copy will be provided with the 'Completion of Stage' letter. This should be sent to [academic.partnerships@uea.ac.uk](mailto:academic.partnerships@uea.ac.uk).

For Non Academic complaints: Once the college appeal stage has been completed students can petition the UEA for a procedural review of the handling of the complaint. This UEA will not overturn the decision but will act in an advisory capacity to the College. Students can do this by emailing [academic.partnerships@uea.ac.uk](mailto:academic.partnerships@uea.ac.uk).



### *OU (Open University)*

There is a final right of appeal to The Open University against a decision of a Board of Examiners only if the appeal is against a decision related to either: (a) progression from one stage to another of the programme to the next; or (b) a final award; and both of the following criteria are met: (a) all appropriate internal procedures at the College have been exhausted; (b) there are reasonable grounds to believe that the College's internal procedures and regulations for dealing with appeals were not implemented correctly or fairly.

The procedure for appealing to The Open University is set out in The Open University Handbook for Validated Awards, which can be located on the College Website

### **All Higher Education students**

Once the appeal/review against complaint outcome stages have been completed, you are entitled to ask the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#), the independent ombudsman service of last resort, to look at your complaint. All applications to the OIA must be made within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter issued by the College or University to the student. The OIA considers complaints from people who remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of the complaints procedure. The OIA looks at issues such as whether the College followed its policy, and whether the final decision was reasonable in all the circumstances. The OIA cannot normally look at complaints:

- where the student has not progressed through all stages of the complaints process
- where the complaint refers to matters more than three years old
- where the Completion of Procedures letter is received outside the twelve month time limit
- Where matters have been or are being considered in court. Full details of the scheme are available at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The College will keep a log of all compliments and complaints. In order to secure ongoing improvement, the overall process will be monitored for consistency, quality of response and compliance with policy.

Information with regards to the number of complaints received/resolved/not resolved may be shared with our validating partners for reporting and monitoring purposes.

Personal data will be handled according to the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. For further information in regards to Data Privacy and GDPR, please see our website on the following link: <https://www.southessex.ac.uk/gdpr>.



<b>Senior Leadership Responsibility</b>	Adam Fahey
<b>Policy Author</b>	Steve Bright
<b>Roles Responsible for Reviewing</b>	Director, HE Operations
<b>Issue date of current version</b>	September 2023
<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	September 2024
<b>Type of Policy</b>	Public / Internal