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1. Purpose

To describe the method used by the College for dealing with customer complaints.

GCNS will ensure that any complaint regarding any of its courses, staff or services will be treated in a fair and sensitive manner and dealt with quickly, effectively and objectively.

GCNS is an equal opportunities College therefore all complaints are administered in compliance with the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act. Complaints are also vetted for Equal Opportunities issues and any complaint made should therefore clearly state when there is an allegation of unfair treatment on any of the Equality issues.

2. Scope

This procedure covers complaints from any customer (individual student or corporate client) regarding the general service and operation of the College.

Issues related to student discipline are out of scope and are addressed in accordance with the Student Disciplinary Policy (Policy 37). Issues related to student dissatisfaction over the outcomes of internal assessments are out of scope and are addressed in accordance with QMS Procedure 'Assessment' (Section7: Appeals).

3. Responsibility

Customer / Client

The Customer / Client is responsible for raising formal complaints in writing (preferably using the Complaint Form) with the appropriate Member of Staff or directly with Quality Manager and for clearly stating, if applicable, any unfair treatment on the grounds of Equality issues. The Customer/Client is also responsible, if applicable, for lodging any appeal against the College's response within 10 working days of receipt of that response. For the purposes of this process the term Complainant will be used for Customer / Client.

Members of Staff (MoS)

MoS will respond in a helpful manner to any verbal complaints that they receive and deal with them as quickly as possible and as far as they are able. If applicable, MoS will escalate any unresolved informal complaint to the Quality Manager

Quality Manager

Will receive customer complaints recorded on the customer complaint form and ensure that all customer complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and consistently and in accordance with this procedure. QM will review the identified customer complaints, the actions taken and any changes to the quality or other system that are needed to prevent further complaints.

Complaint Administrator

The Complaint Administrator is responsible for logging and tracking the progress of the complaints and maintaining the Complaint file.

Assistant Principals/Heads of School/Department Managers

They are responsible for resolving complaints within their area of responsibility.

Head of Equalities, Inclusion and Learner Services

Will deal with complaints relating to Equal Opportunities issues and ensure implementation of the College's statutory duties and legal requirements.

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Responsible for monitoring complaints about discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Principal / Appeal Panel

Responsible for chairing appeal panel or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation

4. Procedure

4.1 Informal Complaint / Suggestion

Informal Complaint:

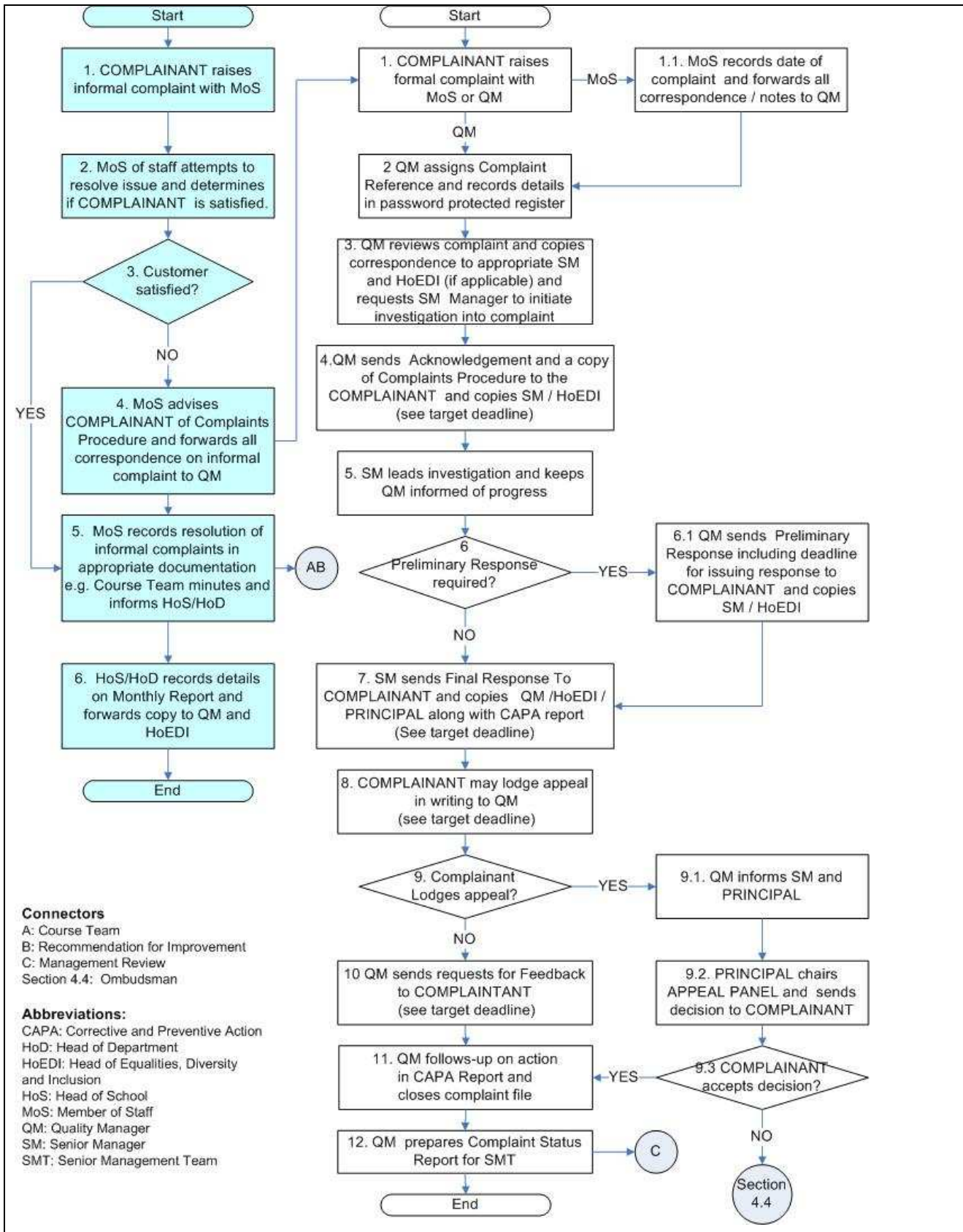
- No named person (s) have been identified
- Complaint is made and, at the request of the Complainant, remains anonymous
- Can be resolved by the person receiving the complaint
- Those received through the suggestion email account or suggestion boxes

Step No.	Procedure Step	← Input → Output
1.	Complainant raises concern / issues with Member of Staff	← verbal, e-mail, etc.
2.	Member of staff attempts to resolve matters as quickly and directly as possible and checks with Complainant of the issue has been resolved to their satisfaction (Note: the MoS may direct the Complainant to another Member of Staff better placed to resolve the issue)	→ Notes
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Complainant is satisfied then go to Step 5 • If the Complainant is not satisfied then go to Step 4 	
4	MoS advises Complainant of the Customer Complaint procedure and requests Complainant to raise formal complaint in writing with the Quality Manager (QM) using Complaint Form. MoS forwards details of informal complaint to the QM.	← Customer Complaint procedure ← Complaint Form
5	Member of Staff records resolution of informal complaint (including any escalated to formal status) in appropriate documentation (e.g. Course Team Meetings) and may raise (A) Non-Conformity or (B) Recommendation for Improvement and informs HoS/ HoD	→ CT minutes → A → B
6	The Head of School / Head of Department records details of informal complaints on Complaint Report and forwards copy to QM.	→ Report

4.2 Formal Complaint

Step No.	Procedure Step	← Input → Output
1.	Complainant raises formal complaint in writing with a Member of Staff (MoS) or directly with the Quality Manager (QM). - If MoS then go to Step 1.1; If QM then go to Step 2	← Complaint Form, letter, e-mail
1.1	Member of Staff records date of complaint and forwards all correspondence / notes to the Quality Manager	→ Notes
2	The QM and Complaint Administrator open complaint file and assign Complaint Reference No. to the complaint.	→ Complaint file
3	The QM reviews complaint and copies correspondence to appropriate Senior Manager and if applicable to Head of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (HoEDI) and requests Senior Manager to initiate complaint investigation.	→ Complaint file
4	Within <u>5 working days</u> of receipt of complaint the QM sends Acknowledgement to Complainant (and if necessary a copy of the Customer Complaints procedure) and copies Senior Manager / HoEDI.	→ Acknowledgement → register / report
5	Senior Manager leads investigations into the complaint with appropriate member of Staff and keeps the QM.	← evidence → findings
6	The QM and Senior Manager determine if a Preliminary Response is required e.g. to request further time for investigation, request more information etc. (Note: A Preliminary Response will be issued within 15 working days of receipt of complaint if the investigation is on-going) If Preliminary Response required then got to Step 6.1, if not go to Step 7.	
6.1	The QM or Senior Manager prepares a Preliminary Response, including expected deadline for completion of investigation and sends to Complainant with copy to QM.	→ Preliminary Response → Complaint file
7	Within <u>15 working days of receipt of complaint</u> (or deadline in Prelim. Response) the Senior Manager sends Final Response to Complainant, detailing outcome of the complaint investigation including any corrective and preventive action and giving the Complainant the right to appeal and copies the Quality Manager.	→ Final Response → Complaint File
8	Within 10 working days of receipt of Final Response complainant may appeal decision in writing to the QM.	← Appeal → Complaint File
9	If Complainant appeals go to Step 9.1 ; If not go to Step 10	
9.1	The QM informs the Senior Manager and the Principal of receipt of appeal and the Principal convenes Appeal Panel.	
9.2	The Principal chairs Appeal Panel and sends final decision to Complainant with copy to the Senior Manager and the Quality Manager	→ Appeal Decision
9.3	If Complainant accepts decision then go Step 11; If not Complainant may refer to Scottish Public Services Ombudsman	→ Section 4.5 Ombudsman
10.	<u>About 25 working days</u> after the issue of Final Response the Quality Manager sends request for feedback to Complainant and assesses and files any reply.	→ Request ← reply → Complaint File
11	The QM and the Senior Manager assess the effectiveness of any corrective and preventive actions and closes out the complaint.	→ Complaint File → Complaint File
12.	The QM prepares Complaint Status Report for Senior Management Team and for (C) Management Review	→ C

4.3 Flowchart : Informal and Formal Complaints



4.4 Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Should the Complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation into the complaint following both the initial response and the follow up contact; the Complainant has a right to refer the matter to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman where, as an aggrieved person, he/she believes he/she has sustained injustice or hardship as a result of maladministration or service failure.

The Ombudsman may consider, in exceptional circumstances only, any complaint made more than 12 months after the date on which you found out about the matter.

Contact may be made with the Ombudsman as follows:

The Scottish Public Service Ombudsman
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

(Using a Freepost address means you will not have to pay for postage)

Telephone: 0800 377 7330

Text: 0790 049 4372

Fax: 0800 377 7331

E-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk

A complaints form is available on the Ombudsman's web site: www.spsso.org.uk

4.5 Monitoring and Measuring

Complaint Administrator maintains Complaint Register and monitors the issuing of Complaint correspondence against stated deadlines.

Correspondence	Deadline
Complaint Acknowledgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within 5 working days of receipt of Complaint in writing.
Preliminary Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within 15 working days of receipt of Complaint in writing if Final Response cannot be issued
Final Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within 15 working days of receipt of Complaint in writing or within deadline stated in Preliminary Response where applicable
Complaint Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within 10 working days of receipt of Final Response
Customer Feedback Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Within 25 days of issuing Final Response

4.6 Records

Record	Record Format	Record Holder	Retention Period
Complaint Register	Spreadsheet	Complaint Administrator	Current +5 years
Complaint	Form, Letter, e-mail	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement
Complaint Acknowledgement	Letter , e-mail	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement
Preliminary Response	Letter, e-mail	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement
Final Response	Letter	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement
Customer Complaint Corrective and Preventive Action Report	Form	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement
Complaint Appeal	Letter, e-mail	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement
Customer Feedback Request	Letter, e-mail	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement
Customer Feedback	Letter, e-mail	Quality Manager	6 years from date of settlement

5. Reference

QMS Form: Customer Complaint, Corrective and Preventive Action Report
 QMS Form: Customer Complaint Corrective and Preventive Action Register
 QMS Procedure: Course Team Meeting
 QMS / EMS Procedure: Recommendation for Improvement
 QMS/EMS Procedure: Management Review
 QMS Procedure: Assessment
 Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
 Student Disciplinary Policy (Policy 37)

6. Revision Log

Revision Details		
Date	Section	Description
12-OCT-09	Procedure	Role of Complaint Administrator in monitoring deadlines introduced. Flow chart introduced
12-OCT-09	Form	Page 2 of Customer Complaint Form (for office use only) removed and incorporated into new Customer Complaint Corrective and Preventive Action Form.