

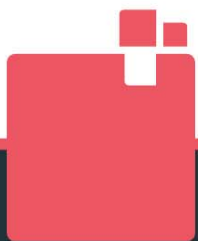


For the future you want

# 3Cs Guidelines

Compliments, Cause for Concern & Complaints

Guidelines on the  
college's 3Cs process



Quality Assurance

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 3Cs reflects Edinburgh College's commitment to valuing all feedback. It seeks to highlight positive recognition of staff, resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.

The College is committed to maintaining and improving standards and we actively encourage views and suggestions from students and other users to enable us to make improvements to our services.

The 3Cs policy has been developed by College staff in conjunction with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) guidance on a model complaints handling procedure.

This document explains what the 3Cs are and how the College's new process will work.

## **2. WHAT ARE THE 3Cs?**

### **What is a compliment?**

If you have received a good service from a member of College staff we would like to hear about it, compliments bring a positive feeling and are an important component of indicating that the effort someone has made is being noticed and praised.

Email [compliments@edinburghcollege.ac.uk](mailto:compliments@edinburghcollege.ac.uk)

### **What is a cause for concern/complaint**

We regard a cause for concern/complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more customers about the college's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by the college or on its behalf.

### **Who can give a compliment, raise a cause for concern or complaint?**

- a student during their time at college
- members of the public, where they have a complaint about matters which are the responsibility of the college
- anyone who receives requests or is affected by college services.

Sometimes a customer may be unable or reluctant to do so on their own. We will accept causes for concerns or complaints brought by third parties as long as the customer has given their personal consent by completing a 3rd party mandate form. The Complaints Handling Coordinator will issue this where appropriate.

### **What can I raise a cause for concern or complaint about?**

- a failure to provide a service
- an inadequate quality or standard of service
- the admissions process
- the disciplinary process
- a request for a service or for information which we have not actioned or answered
- our policies

- wrong information about academic programmes or our services
- the quality and availability of facilities and learning resources
- accessibility of our buildings or services
- the behaviour of a member of staff or contractor
- a student's behaviour
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor
- disagreement with a decision where you cannot use another procedure (such as an appeal) to resolve the matter
- our failure to follow the proper administrative process.

Your complaint may involve more than one college, service or be about someone working on our behalf, such as a contractor.

### **What can't I raise a concern or complaint about?**

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a disagreement with academic judgement
- a claim for compensation against the college
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal
- disagreement with a decision where a right of appeal exists, for example the academic appeals process
- a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information Acts
- an attempt to have us reopen or reconsider a complaint we have concluded or given our final decision on.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

### **How long do I have to raise a cause for concern/make a complaint?**

Normally, you must make your cause for concern or complaint:

- within six months of the event you want to complain about, or
- within six months of finding out that you have a reason to complain, as long as this is no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

### **3. THE COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS**

The college models the complaints policy on the SPSO Model complaints handling procedure (CHP).

Our complaints process provides 2 opportunities to resolve complaints internally:

1. Cause for Concern (Stage 1 in relation to SPSO CHP)
2. Stage 2 Investigation

#### **What happens when I have raised a cause for concern or complaint?**

On receipt of a cause for concern or complaint a decision will be made by the Complaints Handling Coordinator to decide the best route to follow.

#### **Cause for concern**

Deals with issues that require no or little investigation.

We will:

- acknowledge receipt of your cause for concern
- where appropriate, discuss your cause for concern with you
- provide you with a response within 5 working days.

We aim to seek early resolution and as close to the point of service as possible with little or no investigation. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem. If this will take longer than 5 days we will tell you and keep you updated on the progress.

We will escalate a cause for concern to a Stage 2 investigation if we cannot get a quick and satisfactory response from the cause for concern or if you are not happy with the outcome you can then ask to escalate your cause for concern to a stage 2 investigation.

## Stage 2 investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint:

- those that have not been resolved at cause for concern stage
- and those that are more complex from the outset and require a more detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint
- where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- appoint a nominated Head of Faculty to complete a detailed investigation
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation is going to take longer than 20 working days, we will keep you updated on progress.

## What if I am dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome?

After we have fully investigated Stage 2 and you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) or the Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) (or other awarding body) to look at it. SQA has two parts: SQA Awarding Body and SQA Accreditation.

## About SPSO

SPSO can:

- look at whether there are reasonable procedures in place
- decide whether procedures have been followed correctly
- look at issues about learning environment
- decide if correct support has been provided.

SPSO cannot:

- change your grade or final award
- assess or challenge the merits of academic decisions
- consider an appeal against an institution's decision
- assess the quality of teaching or an assessment.

If SPSO finds that an organisation has done something wrong, it will recommend that the organisation puts things right for you. It can ask the organisation to apologise to you, take action to sort out a problem or change how it does things. SPSO also publishes reports to share learning from your complaint.

If you are unsure please contact the SPSO – it will give you advice on your individual circumstances.

### **About SQA Awarding Body**

SQA are responsible for ensuring that qualifications are delivered to the correct standard in centres. You can complain to SQA if you feel that your centre has done something wrong and you haven't been able to resolve this through the centre's own complaints procedure.

SQA can look at assessment complaints, eg:

- a test has been applied inconsistently
- you have been disadvantaged by an aspect of an assessment
- your assessor has judged your evidence wrongly
- that resources available mean you weren't able to demonstrate your competence to required standard
- disagreement with a grade (you must have already exhausted the centre's appeal process).

SQA will not look at complaints about the wider experience of being a student, eg:

- student support services
- student funding
- student facilities.



Any complaints about these issues should go directly to the SPSO once you have completed the centre's complaints process but still remain dissatisfied.

### **SQA Accreditation**

SQA Accreditation operates separately and quality assures certain qualifications offered in Scotland. It does this by approving awarding bodies and accrediting their qualifications.

If you are doing an SVQ or another SQA qualification that is accredited you may have the right to complain to SQA Accreditation or Ofqual once you have exhausted your centre's complaints procedure and/or your awarding body's procedure.

For further information on who to approach about your complaint please contact the Complaints Handling Coordinator.

**REMEMBER** the complaint must first have been considered by the college before you can approach the SPSO or SQA.

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4NS

Freepost SPSO

**Freephone:** 0800 377 7330

**Online contact:** [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

**Website:** [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

**Mobile site:** <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

The SQA's contact details are:

Customer Support  
SQA  
The Optima Building  
58 Robertson Street  
Glasgow  
G2 8DQ

**Telephone:** 0345 279 1000

**Website:** <https://www.sqa.org.uk/>

#### **4. HANDLING ANONYMOUS CAUSES FOR CONCERN/COMPLAINTS**

We value all causes for concern and complaints. This means we treat them all seriously including anonymous ones and will take action to consider them further, wherever it is proper to do so. Generally, we will consider an anonymous cause for concern or complaint if it gives enough information for us to make further enquiries. Failing this, we may decide not to pursue it.

If an anonymous complaint contains serious allegations, we will refer it to the Curriculum Manager for the area concerned to let them know it has been brought to our attention.

If we pursue an anonymous cause for concern or complaint, we will record the issues as an anonymous cause for concern or complaint on the complaints system. This will help ensure the completeness of the cause for concern/complaints data we record and allow us to take corrective action where suitable.

## 5. GETTING HELP TO RAISE YOUR CAUSE FOR CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to raise a cause for concern or complaint yourself. We accept causes for concern and complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take causes of concerns from a friend, relative, or an advocate only if you have given them your consent to complain for you. **You** must complete a Data Subject Authorisation Disclosure Form to allow us to disclose information about your cause for concern/complaint to the third party. If we do not receive the Data Subject Authorisation Disclosure Form, we will still investigate the cause for concern/complaint but the outcome will not be disclosed to either party.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

### **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**

**Tel:** 0131 260 5380

**Fax:** 0131 260 5381

**Website:** [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

We are committed to making our services easy to use for everyone. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure we make reasonable adjustments to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble making your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font or Braille, please contact the Complaints Handling Coordinator.

## 6. UNACCEPTABLE ACTIONS BY STUDENTS

We recognise that people may be angry and upset when making a complaint and that a person may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. However, we won't accept unreasonable behaviour towards staff.

The College has procedures in place to address unacceptable behaviour. Please contact the Complaints Handling Coordinator for further information.

## 7. HOW DO I MAKE A COMPLIMENT, RAISE A CAUSE FOR CONCERN OR COMPLAINT?

All Causes for Concern and Complaints must be sent to the Complaints Handling Coordinator.

You can call in person, by phone, in writing, by e-mail or complete the 3Cs on-line and email to the address given below, or download the 3Cs and send to the address given in the contact details at the bottom of this guide.

**Compliments** – [compliments@edinburghcollege.ac.uk](mailto:compliments@edinburghcollege.ac.uk)

**Cause for Concern/Complaints** – [complaints@edinburghcollege.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@edinburghcollege.ac.uk)

Complaints Handling Coordinator  
Edinburgh College  
24 Milton Road East  
Edinburgh  
EH15 2PP  
Tel: 0131 297 8662