



South  
Lanarkshire  
College  

---

---

East Kilbride

# MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE COLLEGE

## Making a complaint to the college

Our aim is to get things right first time, so we value our students' comments and suggestions. We've a range of customer consultation and feedback mechanisms to help us improve our levels of service. However, because we recognise that sometimes our service may fall short of expectations, we value any complaints that we receive.

The most effective way to resolve an issue is to deal with it straight away so we ask that, in most cases, you speak directly to a member of staff.

Requests for services or changes to services, comments and suggestions on service improvement and assessment/bursary/disciplinary appeals aren't considered complaints and don't fall within this procedure.

We value all complaints, including anonymous ones, and treat them seriously. We'll take action to consider them further wherever it's proper to do so. Generally we'll consider an anonymous 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'll refer it to a senior manager immediately. If we pursue an anonymous complaint, we'll record the issue as anonymous on the complaints system. This makes sure that the complaints data we record is as complete as possible. Where it's appropriate, we'll take further action.

### What can you complain about?

- failure to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of service
- the admissions process
- the disciplinary process
- a request for a service or for information which hasn't been actioned or answered
- our policies
- wrong information about academic programmes or 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 can't 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 you complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- 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 from 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 or the bursary appeals process
- a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information Acts
- a grievance by a member of staff
- an attempt to have us reopen or reconsider a complaint we have concluded or given our final decision on.

If we're aware of other procedures or rights of appeal which can help you resolve your concerns, we'll let you know.

### Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who's dissatisfied with our service as long as the individual complainant has given their consent. Please also read the section on 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

### How do you complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, in writing, by email, or by using our complaints form available from our Student Advice Centre.

It's easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the College service concerned. So, please talk to a member of our staff in the department you're complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what's gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

### How long do you have to make a complaint?

Normally, you'll need to make your 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 shouldn't apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## What happens when you've complained?

We'll always tell you who's dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages:

### Stage one – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We'll give you our decision at Stage one in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances. All attempts to resolve the complaint at this stage will take no longer than ten working days from the date we receive the complaint.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we'll explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage two. You may choose to do this immediately or shortly after you get our initial decision.

### Stage two – investigation

Stage two deals with two types of complaint: those that haven't been resolved at Stage one and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

If an investigation is to be undertaken, you'll be asked to make a formal written record of your complaint. You can do this by email or letter or by completing the complaint form available at reception and on our website:

[www.slc.ac.uk/policies/complaints](http://www.slc.ac.uk/policies/complaints)

If you'd like to complete the form, a member of our Student Services team will be happy to assist you.

An investigator will be appointed who'll provide you with their name and contact details as a single point of contact as soon as possible after a decision to investigate has been made.

The investigator will give due regard to information that may be confidential, sensitive, restricted or covered by data protection legislation and will obtain consent to access / share information where appropriate.

When using Stage two we'll:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you're looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we'll tell you. We'll agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

The investigator will provide a full, objective and proportionate response, endorsed by the College Principal or other member of the Senior Management Team, that represents the College's definitive position and outlines any action that'll be taken and when.

## 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. We record all incidents of unacceptable actions by complainants.

The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards staff is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact with the College and incidents may be reported to the police, particularly if physical violence is used or threatened.

Any appeal regarding restricted contact with the College will be heard by a senior member of staff who wasn't involved in the decision to restrict contact.

## What if you're still dissatisfied?

After we've fully investigated, if you're 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 Authority (SQA) (or other awarding body) to look at it. For qualifications that are regulated, if you remain dissatisfied with the way the awarding body has handled your complaint then you can complain to the qualifications regulator, SQA Accreditation.

The SPSO doesn't have the power to revise course awards. Only the SQA and other awarding bodies have the power to do this. If, following completion of the College's complaint procedure, you wish to have your course award revised, you should approach the SQA (or other awarding body) through the relevant procedure.

The SPSO considers complaints about quality of service and maladministration, which may include issues surrounding course delivery.

Further information on who to approach about your complaint is available from the College.

## In all cases, the complaint must first have been considered by the college.

The SPSO can't normally look at:

- a complaint that hasn't completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO:

In Person:

**Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4NS**

By Post:

**Freepost SPSO**

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**

Fax: **0800 377 7331**

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

Online Form:

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

## Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who's dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you've given them your consent to complain for you.

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

Tel: **0131 524 1975**

Fax: **0131 550 9819**

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

We're committed to making our services easy to use for everyone. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we'll always ensure we make reasonable adjustments to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font or Braille, please tell us in person.

## Quick guide to our complaints procedure

### Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing. We have a two-stage complaints procedure. We'll always try to deal with your complaint quickly, but if it's clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we'll tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

### Stage one: frontline resolution

We'll always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within five working days if we can.

If you're dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage two.

### Stage two: investigation

We'll look at your complaint at this stage if you're dissatisfied with our response at Stage one. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it's clear that they're complex or need detailed investigation.

We'll acknowledge your complaint within three working days. We'll give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than 20 days.

### The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we've handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it. We'll tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.