



“Enabling Students to Accomplish their Academic Goal”

Complaint and Appeal Policy and Procedure

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1 Introduction

Bellmont College's students are mature students that fit into the Widening Participation profile. They are mostly migrants from ethnic minorities who have been out of education for a while due to a variety of reasons such as: to work, caring responsibilities, or other personal circumstances. The Student Complaints Policy covers all students directly registered with and enrolled on the Belmont College's programmes.

Bellmont College endeavours to achieve and maintain high quality interaction with students from initial contact and all the way through their student journey to achievement. Inevitably, however, there may be times when students feel they have followed the necessary stages but have not received the quality of service/s they have a right for and therefore rightly so, wish to escalate their complaint/s.

Bellmont College believes that students should be able to make their concerns known without fear of reprisal and that arrangements for handling complaints are in line with the UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Student Concerns, Complaints and Appeal, reflecting the principles of natural justice, being transparent and as open as confidentiality permits and including in unresolved cases an element of external, independent scrutiny.

Bellmont College thoroughly investigates all complaints, whether formal or informal, relating to the day-to-day operation of the College and the standards of service provided.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1** As a result of various activities Belmont College is involved with, students, customers, clients, businesses and organisations from time to time send compliments about the service provided. These are deemed as an expression of satisfaction and are logged formally and reported annually.
- 2.2** As a result of various activities performed by Belmont College, complaints do arise from time to time from the students, customers, clients, parents, guardians and the large number of businesses and organisations involved.
- 2.3** In this context, complaints are deemed to involve an expression of dissatisfaction, grievance or fault finding related to Belmont College's educational services and covers all above categories and students directly registered with and enrolled on the College's programmes of study.
- 2.4** All issues are logged, whether dealt with as a formal or informal complaint, to ensure fairness and to mitigate any further complaint.

3 Application and Scope

- 3.1** Belmont College will thoroughly investigate any complaint, whether formal or informal, relating to the day-to-day operation of Belmont College and the standards of service we provide.
- 3.2** Areas excluded from the policy are:
 - i.** Curriculum content or examination results where other forms of redress are more appropriate, such as the examining body or the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and, in these cases, complainants should be referred to the appropriate body.

- ii. Employment issues which are covered by staff Grievance Procedures.
- iii. Any matter that is the subject to legal action.
- iv. Any complaint which is deemed to be vexatious or malicious following investigation.

4 Complaint Categories and Procedures

There are three main areas of the Complaints Policy and Procedures;

- (i) Informal Complaints
- (ii) Formal Complaints
- (iii) Appeals

4.1 Informal Complaints

- 4.1.1** There can be instances when a complainant may wish to remain anonymous or request that the issue be dealt with informally. Such individuals should be directed to the person who is directly concerned or best suited to resolve that issue. The details can be emailed to the relevant person if preferred. For students, this is likely to be the Personal Tutor, or Programme Leader. In circumstances where these individuals are the source of the complaint the Head of Administration and Student Services should be contacted. Details should be logged as 'informal' on the Complaints Log.
- 4.1.2** When individuals are unsure who to contact, in the first instance they should contact the Reception desk of Belmont College administrative office where a designated member of staff will direct them to the relevant academic management team or the Head of Administration and Student Services to deal with the issue.
- 4.1.3** In most instances informal complaints will not receive a formal written response, but nevertheless must be dealt with promptly.
- 4.1.4** Responsibility for the prompt follow up of informal complaints will lie with the relevant manager. The manager should endeavour to resolve the complaint but should refer it, if it is evident that a resolution is not likely to be met. This should be done to prevent it becoming a more serious matter.

4.2 Formal Complaints

- 4.2.1** Formal complaints should be submitted in writing, addressed and titled with respect to type of Complaint(s) and emailed to:
complaints@bellmontcollege.co.uk
- 4.2.2** Any other member of staff receiving a formal letter of complaint must forward a copy of the complaint to the Complaints Administrative staff, using the email address, on the day of receipt, together with any additional information they may hold with regards to the incident. This may help to speed up the response time.

- 4.2.3 A written acknowledgement will be sent by the Complaints Administrator within three working days and the details logged on the Complaints Log for checking and reporting purposes. All correspondence will be filed securely.
- 4.2.4 Any letter submitted should clearly set out the circumstances of the complaint, any individuals or witnesses involved, and any relevant dates or times.
- 4.2.5 Where possible, and to provide the greatest opportunity for the complaint to be actioned, complaints should be submitted in a timely fashion in order to facilitate a resolution.
- 4.2.6 Complaints will be investigated fairly and quickly by the Programme Manager or relevant manager and a copy will be sent to the relevant Head of Administration and Student Services with the intention of satisfactorily resolving the matter, identifying the causes and symptoms and upholding or rejecting the complaint for the benefit of all involved.
- 4.2.7 A considered Bellmont College view on the complaint will be made by the Head of School, Head of Administration and Student Services or relevant member of the Senior Management Team. They will ensure that a detailed response with evidence is sent to the Complaints Administrative staff within the prescribed timescale where appropriate.
- 4.2.8 A member of the Senior Management Team will respond in writing within fifteen working days from the date of the receipt of the complaint, detailing the outcome of the investigation. If the investigation is likely to take more than fifteen working days, the Complaints Administrative staff will send a further holding letter. Where complaints are received within fifteen working days of a holiday period, or during a holiday period, it is expected that the complaint response will take longer than fifteen working days due to the absence of appropriate staff to investigate. This will be confirmed in writing.
- 4.2.9 Following the resolution of the complaint, where required, the Head of department, Head of Registry and Student Services or relevant member of the Senior Management Team must complete the **Action Plan** in **Appendix 1** to address the issues raised.

In all cases, students must endeavour to resolve a complaint informally before commencing with the Formal Complaints Procedure. This initial informal stage would normally involve a discussion directly with the relevant member(s) of staff or with the Course Tutor or the Programme Leader. In all cases Bellmont College will email the Student Complaint Policy and guidance to the student accordingly.

5 Appeals

- 5.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, aggrieved or in disagreement with the decision made or reasons given, they may appeal against the decision. A complainant has ten working days in which to submit an appeal. The reason for the appeal should be clearly stated in writing and sent to The Appeal Panel via the Complaints Administrative at the address below.
- 5.1.2 A written acknowledgement will be sent by the Complaints Administrative staff within three working days.

- 5.1.3** The Appeal Panel will consist of at least two members of the Senior Management Team who were not involved in dealing with the original complaint. They will consider all the documentation available relating to the issues raised. The Appeal Panel will respond within fifteen working days from the date of the receipt of the appeal. If the review of the complaint is going to take more than fifteen working days, the Complaints Administrative staff will send a further holding letter. The decision at the end of this stage is final and will be communicated in writing.
- 5.1.4** If Bellmont College cannot settle the complaint to the satisfaction of the student involved, then a complaint may be referred to the following, depending on the nature of complaint:
- Awarding body.
 - QAA if complaint relates to services related to Higher Education.
 - The Office of the Independent Adjudicator if the complaint relates to Higher Education:
 - [Office of the Independent Adjudicator - OIA Homepage](#)
 - Or direct to the appropriate Secretary of State. If the complaint is justified, the Secretary of State can insist that things are put right.

6 Complaints Responsibility and Reporting

The Student Complaints Policy is ultimately the responsibility of the Complaints Committee which include the Head of Administration and Student Services, the Head of Admissions and Recruitment and the Programme Managers. Please see the chart below which outlines Bellmont College's Committee Structure and which can also be found in the **Bellmont College Committee Structure and Terms of Reference**.

The Head of Academic Administration and Student Services will produce a report for the Senior Management Team at the end of each academic year giving a summary of any complaints regarding any administration or student services complaints.

The Head of Admissions and recruitment will produce a report for the Senior Management Team at the end of each academic year giving a summary of any complaints regarding the admissions and recruitment stage.

The Programme Manager will produce a report for the Senior Management Team at the end of each academic year giving a summary of any complaints regarding learning and teaching and pastoral support.

All reports will be compiled by the Head of Administration and student services into one full report and any structural or strategic issues raised by this report will be discussed and, if necessary, incorporated in the appropriate/relevant department's Quality Improvement Action Plan. This report will also inform Bellmont College's appropriate/relevant Report.

7 Addresses for Correspondence

complain@bellmontcollege.co.uk	
Complaints Administrative Office	The Appeal Panel

Bellmont College Complaint and Appeal Policy and Procedure					
Version	Date	Author(s)	Amendments	Approved by	Next review
1	March 2023	EWW	New document	Advisory Board	October 2024
2	February 2024	EWW	Revised no updates or changes made	Advisory Board	October 2024

Document Context	
This document relates to:	
Document/Policy	Date/version
Bellmont College Quality Assurance Handbook	February 2024 v2
Bellmont College Student Handbook	February 2024 v2
Bellmont College Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy	February 2024 v2
Bellmont College Academic Appeal Policy	February 2024 v3
Bellmont College Whistleblowing and Public Concern	February 2024 v2
Bellmont College Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	February 2024 v2
Bellmont College Public Information Policy	February 2024 v2
QAA: Quality Code for Higher Education	2019
OFS: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/ofs-and-students/complaints/	2021