COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY

Responsible for Implementation: Head of Compliance
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About Us

Access Further Education Ltd ('The College') has subsidiary companies, trading names and trading partnerships through which it operates. The trading names and partnerships might have their own names or brands, but the legal entity for the purpose of this policy is Access Further Education Ltd. Trading subsidiaries, trading names and trading partnerships include Access Creative College ('ACC'), Access Industry ('AI') and Access Sport College ('AS'). The dBs Institute (DBS Music UK Holdings and its subsidiaries), whilst a separate legal entity, shares common Directorships with the College.

Introduction

At **Access Further Education (AFE)** including **Access Creative College (ACC)**, **Access Industry**, and **Access Sport College**—we are committed to providing the best possible experience for all our learners and apprentices.

We know that sometimes things don't go as planned. When that happens, we want to hear from you so we can fix the issue quickly, make things right, and improve for the future.

Quick & Local Resolution (Step 1)

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly without needing a formal process. Before escalating, we encourage you to raise any issues locally first:

1. **Speak with your Tutor or Assessor:** They know you best and can often resolve day-to-day concerns immediately.
2. **Contact your Centre Team:** If you need further help, speak with your local **Head of Centre** or **Area Manager**.

Our local site teams will document your concerns and work hard to fix the problem right where it happens.

Making a Formal Complaint (Step 2)

If your issue cannot be resolved at your local centre, or if the matter is severe, you can submit a formal complaint.

How to Submit

Submit your feedback using our online form:

> **Online Form:** Submit a Formal Complaint / Feedback via Google Form *(Use this official College feedback link)*

Note: If you email a staff member or senior manager directly, your complaint will still be entered into this central system to ensure it is logged, tracked, and handled fairly.

What Happens Next?

Immediate Acknowledgment: As soon as you submit the form, our central system automatically logs your complaint and sends a confirmation email to let you know we have received it.

1. **Investigation Assignment:** Your complaint is assigned to the appropriate Lead Complaint Handler (Head of Centre/Area Manager) and supported by the relevant Head of Department depending on the issue:
   - **Safeguarding & Student Behaviour:** Head of Safeguarding
   - **Support & Accommodations (ALS/EHCP):** Head of Learner Support
   - **Bursaries & Free School Meals:** Head of MIS
   - **Admissions & Enrolment:** Head of Admissions
   - **Grades, Exams & Teaching:** Curriculum & Compliance Team
   - **Careers & Next Steps:** Head of Careers
2. **Investigation & Communication:** The investigating manager will contact you via email or phone to outline the investigation timeline. They will gather evidence, speak to relevant staff or learners, and work on a solution.

3. **Independent Quality Check:** Before any final decision is sent, the **Head of Compliance** acts as an independent arbiter to check that the investigation was fair, thorough, and compliant with college policies.
4. **Final Response (Within 15 Working Days):** You will receive a full formal response email within 15 working days explaining the findings and actions taken. *(If an investigation requires extra time—such as during college holidays or staff sickness—we will send you an interim update with a new completion date).*

How to Appeal

If you receive your final response and feel the matter was not properly handled or resolved, you have the right to request an appeal.

1. **Submit Your Appeal:** within **15 working days** of receiving your final outcome email guidance will be given at the point of appeal of how to do this.
2. **State Your Reasons:** You must clearly explain why you disagree with the outcome and provide any **new evidence** supporting your appeal.
3. **Panel Review:** The Head of Compliance and a panel from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will review the original investigation files to ensure the process was fair, objective, and complete. (This is a documentation review and does not typically involve an in-person meeting unless key information was originally missed).
4. **Final Decision (Within 15 Working Days):** You will receive the Appeals Panel's final, binding decision within 15 working days. This concludes the College's internal complaints process.

Higher Education (HE) Students

If you are studying a Higher Education course validated by **Nottingham Trent University (NTU)** or **Falmouth University**, and your complaint remains unresolved after completing AFE's internal process, you may escalate your complaint directly to your validating university under their official procedures.

Privacy, Information & Data Requests

- **Confidentiality:** All formal investigations involving personal or sensitive data are handled strictly under Data Protection Act and GDPR guidelines. Information is shared only with staff members directly involved in resolving the issue.
- **Data Subject Access Requests (DSAR):** If you wish to make a formal request for personal data or records, these are handled separately from complaints. Please email your request directly to **dataprotection@accesstomusic.ac.uk**.

Sharing Compliments & Positive Feedback

We love hearing about what's working well! If a tutor, staff member, or team has gone above and beyond, please let us know:

- **Email:** Send your compliments to **ccc.admin@accesstomusic.ac.uk**.

- We log all positive feedback and share it directly with the staff members involved and their managers to celebrate great work across our campuses.