



TITLE	REF	VERSION	
Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure	CP001	11.0	
DEPARTMENT	Group Administration and Compliance		
DATE	29 April 2025	REVIEW DATE	29 April 2027

# CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

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## 1. Procedures Statement

- 1.1. This document is to support the implementation of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and details how a compliment, comment or complaint will be handled once received. It ensures that good practice is acknowledged and celebrated, and that complaints are resolved quickly and satisfactorily to enable the group to monitor customer satisfaction and make continuous improvements.
- 1.2. A compliment, comment or complaint can be made via our website at <https://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback/> or alternatively to any Activate Learning staff member who will assist you.
- 1.3. If you require any further information about this procedure, or require this document in an alternative format, please email: [complianceteam@activatelearning.ac.uk](mailto:complianceteam@activatelearning.ac.uk)

## 2. Compliment procedure

Compliment is received	The compliment will be centrally logged and passed to the relevant Director or Group Head of Department to review with the team member or department to be celebrated.
	They may nominate a member of the team to contact the customer if applicable.

## 3. Comment procedure

Comment is received	The comment will be centrally logged and passed to the relevant Director or Group Head of Department for review.
Action	They may nominate a member of the team to contact the customer and take action if applicable.
	Actions are reported back and logged with the original comment.

## 4. Complaint procedure

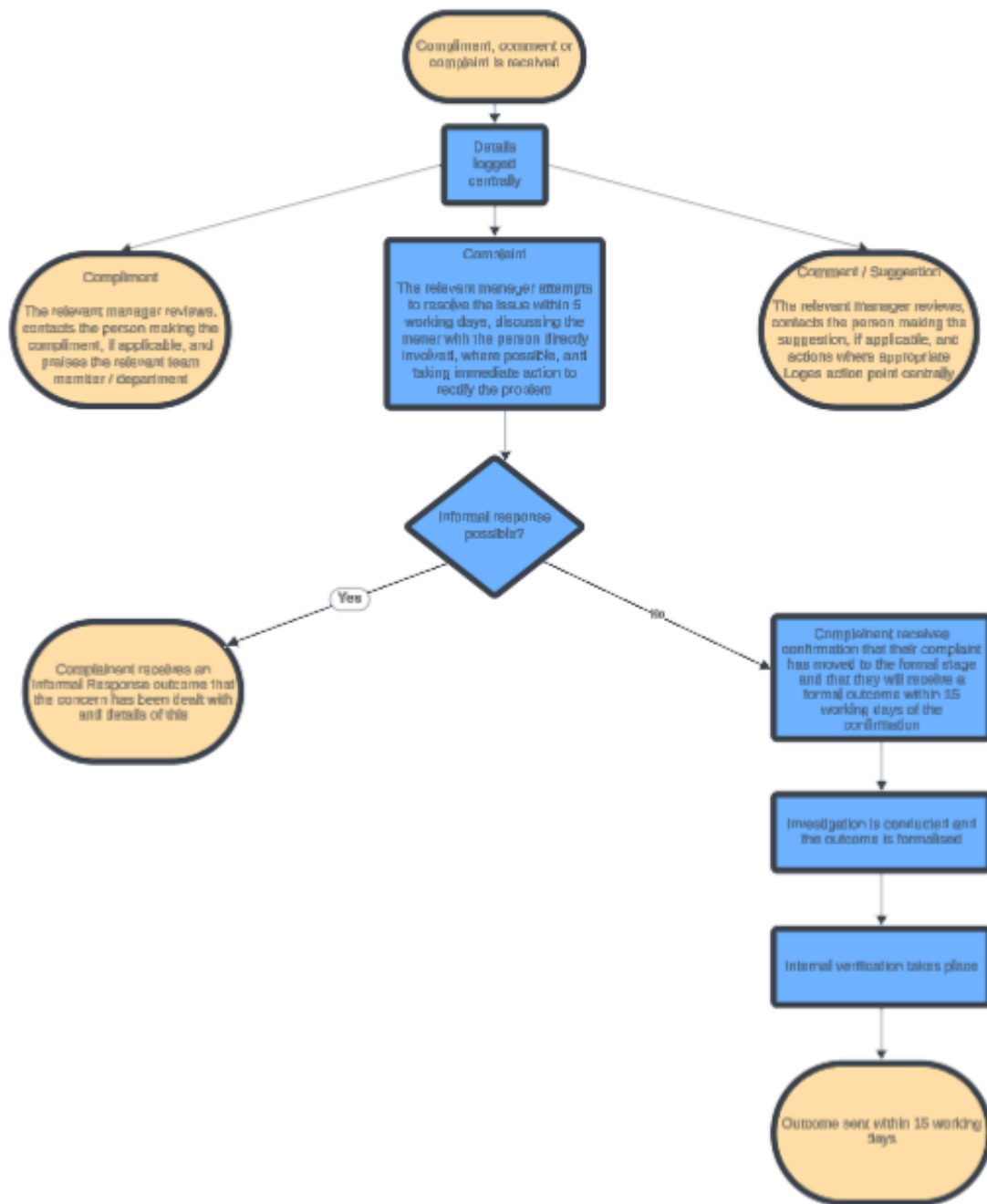
Complaint is received	<p>A complaint must be made within 3 months from the date on which the events giving rise to the complaint occurred. Complaints made after this date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and the decision will be made by the relevant director for the department in which the complaint is aimed.</p> <p>Once received, the complaint will be centrally logged by the Feedback Team and assigned to the appropriate Director or Group Head of Department for review. Where appropriate, they may delegate the handling of the complaint to a designated manager to contact the customer and provide a resolution. The Director or Group Head of Department remain responsible for ensuring that the complaint is handled in accordance with the policy and procedures.</p> <p>All complaints will initially go through the informal resolution stage. This allows for timely communication with the customer and helps gather the necessary information, evidence, and context. Many</p>
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	<p>issues can often be resolved at this stage without the need for a formal investigation.</p>
<p><b>Stage 1. Informal resolution – 5 working days</b></p>	<p>The customer will be contacted by the complaint manager to confirm and discuss the details of the complaint. The complaint manager should aim to provide an agreed verbal resolution and ensure that the customer is satisfied. Contact will be made by telephone, unless the customer has requested an alternative communication method. Please refer to Support requirements below for further information.</p>
	<p>The complaint manager will complete the Informal resolution form with a brief outline of the discussion with the customer and the agreed resolution. An email confirmation of the resolution will be sent to the customer by the Feedback Team.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2. Formal Investigation – 15 working days</b></p>	<p>If the complaint manager is unable to resolve the complaint during the Informal resolution stage, they will escalate to a formal investigation, and this will be confirmed to the customer via email. A formal investigation may be required if the complaint is complex, concerns multiple departments, requires interviews with staff members or students or communication with outside agencies.</p> <p>The complaint will remain assigned to the original complaint manager, allowing for a seamless and time-sensitive approach, with consistency for the customer.</p>
	<p>The investigating manager will gather further information relating to the complaint to gain a full understanding of the concerns from all parties, this may include interviews with students and staff, obtaining statements or liaising with other departments or agencies. If required, the complaint manager will contact the customer again during this stage to ensure understanding, to check details and to keep them informed of progress. The complaint manager will ensure that the investigation is comprehensive and that all of the concerns raised by the customer have been considered.</p>
	<p>A formal investigation outcome will be written, detailing all concerns raised in the complaint and the proposed resolution. This will be sent to the Regional Head of Student Experience for Internal</p>

	verification, to ensure that the outcome is fair, achievable, and in accordance with the policy and procedures. The outcome is then sent to the customer via email by the Feedback Team.
<b>Considerations</b>	
4.1 - Support requirements	If support, advice, or guidance is required to understand and take part in the complaints process, please let us know. This can be requested this when completing the complaint form, by emailing Feedback@ActivateLearning.ac.uk or by speaking to a member of staff at any of our campuses. We can provide reasonable adjustments, translation services, or alternative formats if needed. Contact during the complaints process can be made by telephone, email, Teams video call or in-person meetings. Customers are permitted to use an external advocate to support them throughout the process.
4.2 - Student representatives	Students may appoint a representative to submit a complaint on their behalf. They should request a representative at the time of submitting a complaint, providing the name and contact details of who will represent them, and giving permission for Activate Learning to discuss all matters relating to the complaint with them via our consent form, which we will provide.
4.3 - Safeguarding	Feedback which raises a concern related to safeguarding will be reported to the safeguarding team and may be dealt with, in conjunction with them.
4.4 - No contact	If the investigating manager is unable to contact the customer but can offer a resolution, this should be done. If a resolution cannot be offered, then a 'no contact' communication will be sent to the customer, and the complaint will be closed. The complaint can be reopened if the customer requests this.
4.5 - Group complaints	Complaints on behalf of more than one student will be considered as a group complaint. Members of the group must complete a consent form within five working days to be a named participant in the complaint. A member of the group should be nominated as spokesperson and all communication, including the outcome, will be sent to them and it is their responsibility to communicate forward to the rest of the group.

4.6 - Complaints against employees of Activate Learning	Complaints regarding a staff member will be passed on to HR to review and may be dealt with under HR procedures, if deemed more appropriate. The customer will not receive an outcome but will be informed that the complaint may be dealt with in line with our internal staff HR procedures.
4.7 - Extended timeframes	We reserve the right to extend the given timeframes when outside of the college term time or when it is deemed appropriate to ensure a robust investigation.
4.8 - Complaints addressed to the CEO, COO and Group Executive members	Any complaints sent to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or member of the Group Executive Team will be forwarded to the Feedback Team who will initiate the complaints procedure. The customer will be notified that the complaint has been received by the Feedback Team. The customer will not receive communication from the CEO or Group Executive Team.
4.9 - Complaints from applicants for Higher Education (HE) courses	Complaints from an applicant for a Higher Education course <sup>1</sup> will be investigated up to, and including, Stage 2 of the procedure only.
4.10 - Consent	Consent will be obtained from the learner if a complaint is made by someone who isn't a recorded contact on the learner's file. Consent will also be sought from the learner if they are aged 18 or over on the 31 August of that academic year and a complaint is made on their behalf by a parent or carer. If consent is not received within five working days, the complaint will be closed.
4.11 – Repeat complaints	If a complaint is received within 90 days of the outcome of the previous complaint and no new information or merit is provided, Activate Learning may choose not to reconsider the complaint and will refer the complainant to the original outcome.

<sup>1</sup> Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Foundation Degree or BA/BSc (Hons) top-up Degree



## 5. Stage 3 - Internal Review Procedure (formally Stage 1 appeal)

The Internal Review Procedure is intended for all customers.

Higher Education students from the university partners listed in the table below should check if the procedure applies to them and the next steps in the process thereafter.

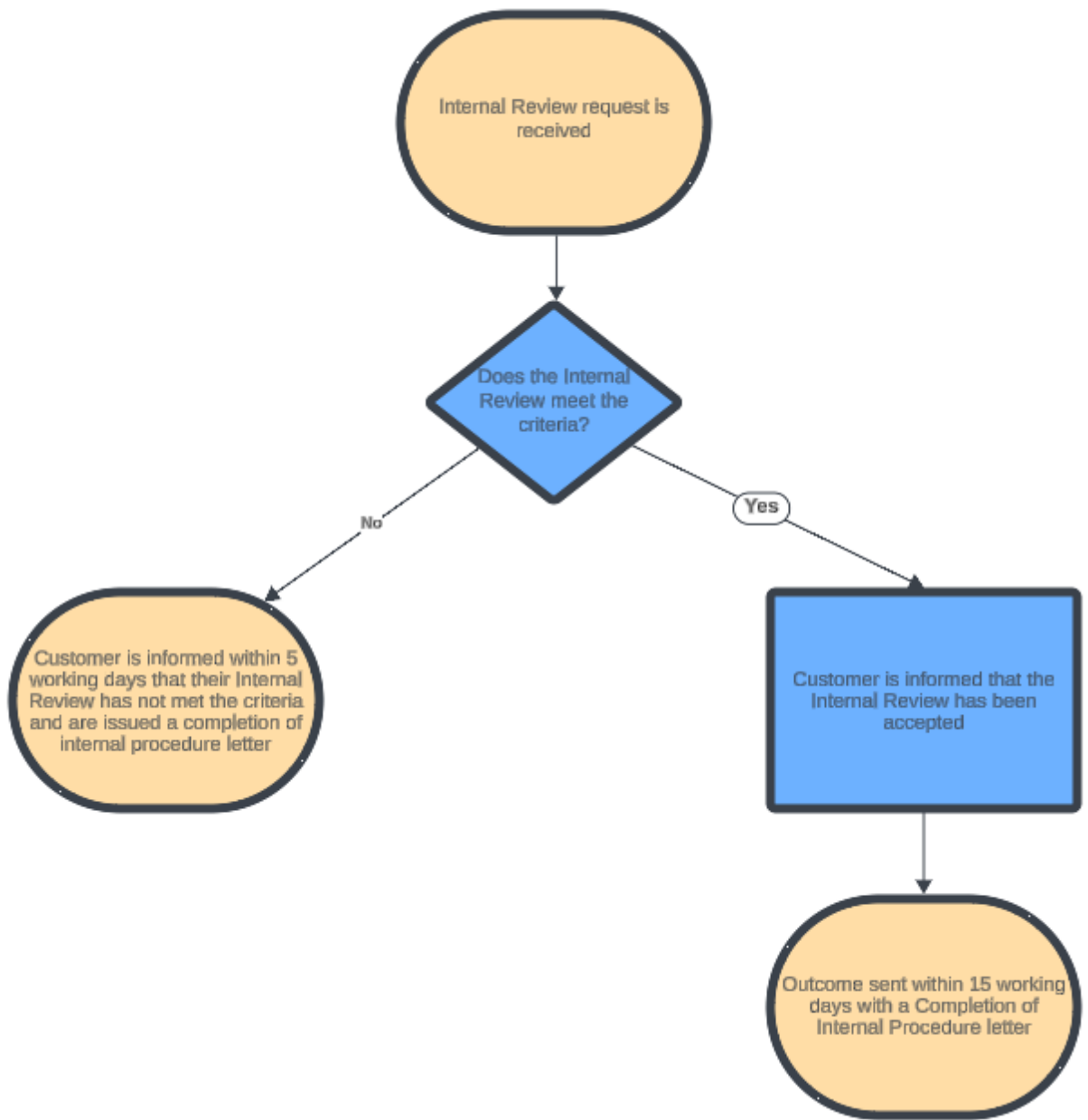
<b>Higher Education partner</b>	<b>Internal Review Procedure</b>	<b>Next steps</b>
University of Reading	Yes - after this procedure Activate Learning will issue a Completion of Internal Procedure letter.	University of Reading Student Complaints Procedure  The University will issue a final Completion of Procedure letter If the customer remains unsatisfied, the complaint can be progressed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for review.
Oxford Brookes University	Yes - after this procedure Activate Learning will issue a Completion of Internal Procedure letter.	Oxford Brookes University Student Complaints Procedures  The University will issue a final Completion of Procedure letter If the customer remains unsatisfied, the complaint can be progressed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for review.
Middlesex University	Yes - after this procedure Activate Learning will issue a Completion of Internal Procedure letter.	Middlesex University Student Complaints and Grievance Procedures – Appendix A  The University will issue a final Completion of Procedure letter If the customer remains unsatisfied, the complaint can be progressed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for review.
Kingston University	Yes - after this procedure Activate Learning will issue a Completion of Internal Procedure letter.	Kingston University Complaints Procedure  The University will issue a final Completion of Procedure letter If the customer remains unsatisfied, the complaint can be

		progressed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for review.
The Open University	Yes - after this procedure Activate Learning will issue a Completion of Internal Procedure letter.	<p>The Open University Student Complaints and Appeals Procedures - OU students may submit a request for OU Review within 28 calendar days of receiving the Internal Review outcome, if their complaint relates to academic standards only.</p> <p>The University will issue a final Completion of Procedure letter. If the customer remains unsatisfied, the complaint can be progressed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for review.</p>

<b>Internal Review</b>	<p>If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they can request an internal review, which must be made within 10 working days of the complaint outcome date, via the online form <a href="#">here</a>. Internal review requests made after this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and these must be detailed by the customer when the internal review request is made.</p> <p>An internal review will only be considered on one the following grounds and the customer should detail which of the grounds they are using on the Internal review request form. The customer should explain clearly why they are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and give an indication of the remedy they were anticipating. Requests for an internal review will be rejected if the complainant does not provide sufficient detail at this stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The outcome did not address all the complaint points raised.</i></li> <li>• <i>New evidence has been made available that was not available at the time the complaint was submitted.</i></li> <li>• <i>The investigation was not conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in the procedure for dealing with a</i></li> </ul>
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	<p><i>complaint.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We have not implemented the resolution detailed in the outcome.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Internal review request received – 5 working days</b>	The Internal review request is escalated to the relevant member of the Group Executive Team by the Feedback Team to review, alongside the original complaint and complaint outcome and decide whether it meets one of the grounds, as detailed above. The decision is communicated to the customer by the Feedback Team.
Internal review request – criteria not met	If the Internal review request does not meet the criteria set out above, the customer will be notified by email by the Feedback Team with an explanation of the decision and issued with a completion of internal procedure letter. There is no further option to request a review, and the matter is considered closed.
Internal review request - criteria met	If the Internal review request meets the criteria set out above, the Group Executive Team member will assigned the internal review to an independent director, who has not already been involved in the complaint process, and this will be confirmed to the customer via email by the Feedback Team.
<b>Internal review Investigation – 15 working days</b>	The investigating director will contact the customer to fully understand the decision to request a review and discuss any new evidence that may be available. Contact will be made by telephone, unless the customer has requested an alternative communication method, please refer to section 4.6 Support requirements above for further information.
	The investigating director will review the original complaint, evidence, notes and complaint outcome and will consider the integrity of the complaint investigation and if the points raised in the complaint were considered and answered fully. The investigating director will not fully reinvestigate.
	A formal outcome will be written by the investigating director, detailing the outcome of their investigation and whether the internal review request has been upheld, partially upheld or rejected. The outcome will be sent to the Group Executive Director who accepted the review, for internal verification to ensure fairness and

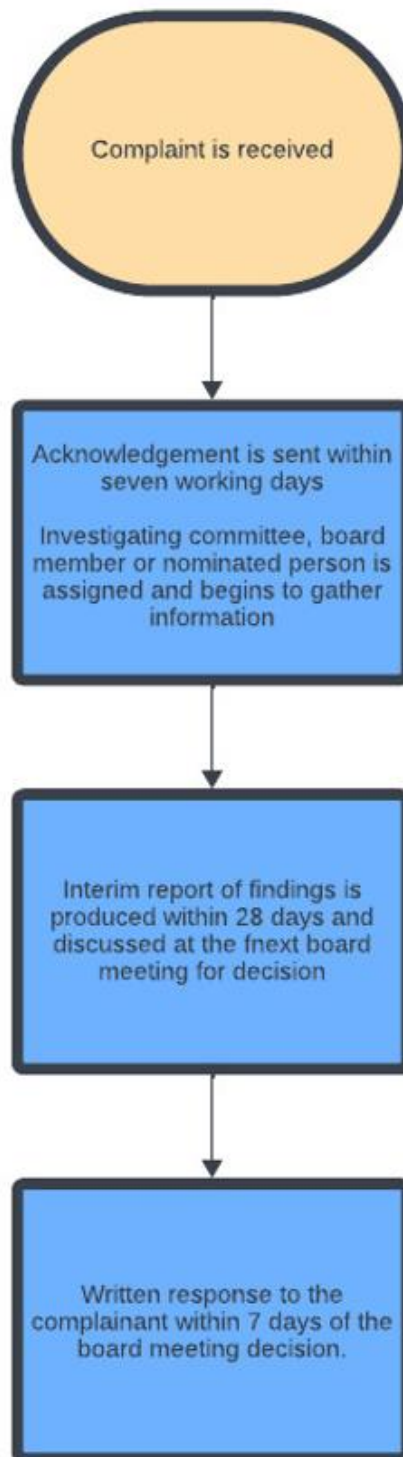
	<p>consistency, before being sent to the customer via email by the Feedback Team. This is the end of the complaints procedure for Activate Learning and the file will be closed.</p>
<b>Considerations</b>	
<p>Completion of Internal Procedure Letters for HE students</p>	<p>If a student is studying a higher education course through one of the partner universities above, a Completion of Internal Procedure (CoIP) letter will be issued at the end of our Internal Review Procedure. If a student wishes to request a CoIP letter outside of this process they can do so through <a href="mailto:Feedback@ActivateLearning.ac.uk">Feedback@ActivateLearning.ac.uk</a></p>



## 6. Complaints against Corporation Board Members and Head of Governance Procedure.

Making a Compliant	<p>A complaint against the Corporation; a Corporation Member; (including the CEO if the complaint relates to their role as a Board Member); or the Head of Governance may be made by an individual or an organisation in relation to their dealings with Activate Learning. Complaints must relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the performance by the Corporation, a Corporation Member or the Director of Governance of the functions respectively allocated to them under the Instrument and Articles of Government.</li><li>• the exercise by the Corporation of its powers; and/or</li><li>• any other alleged breach or non-observance of the duties of the Corporation, individual members or the Head of Governance under the Instrument or Articles of Government, its Code of Conduct for Corporation Members or the funding agreement.</li></ul>
Complaint is received	<p>All complaints should be made in writing and addressed to the Head of Governance (except for when the complaint is in relation to the Head of Governance, in which case it should be addressed to the Chair of the Corporation). Complaints will be preferably raised by email to <a href="mailto:Clerk@Activatelearning.ac.uk">Clerk@Activatelearning.ac.uk</a>.</p> <p>The complainant will be expected to state clearly the nature of and grounds for the complaint (see 6.1 above) and, if appropriate, provide copies of any related documentation. The complainant should also state the remedy they are seeking.</p>
Acknowledgement	<p>The complaint will be acknowledged within seven working days and will be referred to <b>one or more of the following for investigation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Activate Learning Audit and Risk Committee.</li><li>• One or more Board Members.</li><li>• A person (nominated by an external sector body) who has substantial experience of college governance.</li></ul>

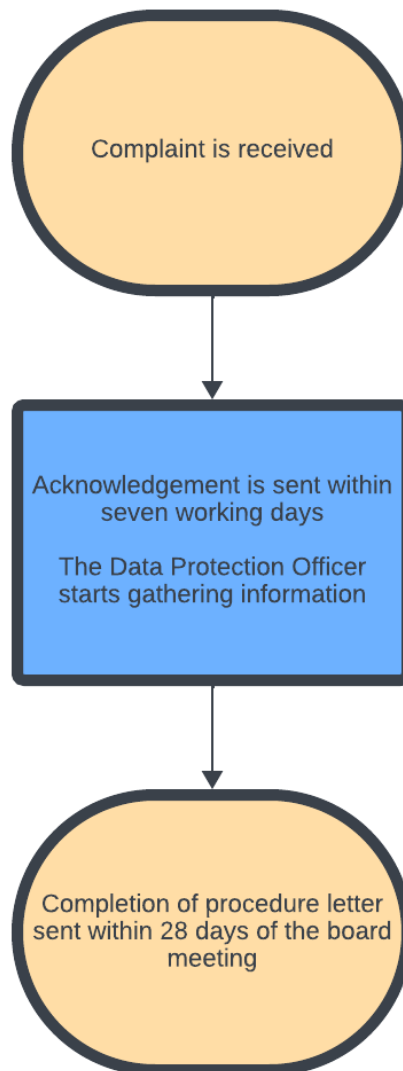
Investigation	<p>Such person(s) shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider the complaint and, if necessary, in order to determine disputed issues of fact, interview the complainant and those who are the subject of the complaint. They may refer issues to the Corporation’s auditors (external and/or internal) or other independent advisers as they feel appropriate; and</li> <li>• produce a written report of their findings in relation to the complaint and provide the complainant and the Corporation with a copy of such report as soon as possible. In any event they shall produce an interim report within twenty-eight days of the complaint being referred to them.</li> </ul>
	<p>The Board shall, at its next scheduled Board meeting following receipt of the investigation report, consider the findings and determine whether to uphold the complaint in whole or part. In the event that a complaint is upheld, the Board shall agree to a suitable and proportionate response or remedy. Where the complaint relates to one or more specified Board Members or the Head of Governance, they shall withdraw and take no part in the discussion of the investigation.</p>
Resolution	<p>The Head of Governance (Chair of the Corporation) shall within seven working days of the Corporation’s determination of the complaint, provide a written response to the complainant and to those who are the subject of the complaint, confirming the decision of the Corporation in relation to the complaint, with reasons for its decision. The response will include details of any arrangements for pursuing the matter with any relevant external body (e.g. Department of Education) as appropriate.</p>



## 7. Data Protection Complaints Procedure

Complaint is received	<p>Data subjects are encouraged to direct any data protection related complaints to the Data Protection Officer at <a href="mailto:dpo@activatelearning.ac.uk">dpo@activatelearning.ac.uk</a>. However, a complaint may be made to any member of staff, in which case the staff member should immediately forward the complaint to the DPO.</p> <p>Data subjects of Activate Learning may register a formal complaint concerning the way that Activate Learning processes, or has processed, their personal data in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate Learning has not kept their personal data secure.</li> <li>• Activate Learning has processed their personal data in a way that is contrary to Data Protection Legislation.</li> <li>• Activate Learning holds inaccurate personal data which has not been fully rectified.</li> <li>• Activate Learning has disclosed their personal data in a manner which not legal, fair or transparent.</li> <li>• Activate Learning has kept their personal data for longer than is necessary.</li> <li>• Activate Learning has collected their personal data for one reason and is using it for another</li> <li>• Activate Learning has failed to comply with a right request.</li> </ul>
Acknowledgement	The complaint will be acknowledged within seven working days.
Investigation	<p>The SIRO will initiate an investigation into the matter, with the support of relevant staff and departments. Where a complaint relates specifically to the actions of the SIRO or there is a conflict of interest, an independent member of staff, usually a Director, shall be appointed to conduct the investigation.</p> <p>The investigation will aim to ascertain how the incident occurred, whether a breach of Activate Learning’s data protection obligations has occurred, whether any risk or damage to the subject has arisen</p>

	as a result and, where relevant, what mitigations have been enacted in order to prevent further damage or distress to the data subject.
Resolution	Once the investigation has been concluded, the investigator will make a written report of the findings to the complainant within 28 days. This will outline the investigation process and conclusions and, where relevant, any resulting action that has or will be taken. Where appropriate, the complainant may be offered the opportunity to discuss the matter with the investigator; any appeal shall be referred to the Information Commissioner's Office.



## 8. External Appeal Procedure

In the rare cases where the internal complaints procedure has not resolved the matter, and depending on its nature, the following external organisations may review unresolved issues:

Contact	Area	Contact details
Ofsted	Nurseries only	<a href="mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk">enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk</a>
University Partners	University awarding bodies provide an opportunity for students to avail themselves of the university complaints procedure.	Dependant on the partner, refer to the student handbook or partner website.
Office of the independent adjudicator (OIA – Higher Education)	The OIA for Higher Education provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints or appeals. Students wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity for an independent review by the OIA must submit their application within 3 months of the issue of the completion of procedure letter.	<a href="http://www.oia.org.uk">www.oia.org.uk</a>
Education Funding Agency	Students up to the age of 18 years	<a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>
Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)	The ESFA can investigate complaints about quality or management of learning provision, undue delay or non-compliance with published procedures, poor administration by the Provider, equality and diversity issues (except where	Email. <a href="mailto:complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk">complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk</a>  For further concerns, complaints or enquiries regarding an <b>apprenticeship</b> , apprentices and employers can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) directly through the apprenticeship

	there is a more appropriate mechanism for dealing with the matter through the court or tribunal or other organisations), health and safety concerns, complaints made by learners following HE courses in FE colleges and complaints from apprentices and their employers.	helpdesk (on 08000 150400 or email <a href="mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk">nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk</a> ).
National Union of Students	Students recognised union representation	<a href="http://www.nus.org.uk">www.nus.org.uk</a>
Information Commissioners Office(ICO)	The ICO can investigate the results of your internal appeal regarding Freedom of Information requests.	<a href="https://ico.org.uk">https://ico.org.uk</a> Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire , SK9 5AF Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745(National rate number)

## **9. Associated policies and procedures.**

- [Student Positive Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Student Search Procedure](#)
- [Student Health and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)
- [Student Criminal Convictions Procedure](#)
- [Use of Reasonable Force Procedure](#)
- [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)
- [Residential Statement of Principles and Practice](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct and Behaviour in Accommodation](#)
- [HE Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)

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