

GUIDE TO MAKING A COMPLAINT

Ayrshire College is committed to providing excellence in the quality and standards of the services we provide to our customers. However, we recognise that sometimes things go wrong or you may be dissatisfied with our services.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints process and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

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

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- a failure to provide a service
- an inadequate quality or standard of service
- the admissions process
- the student disciplinary process
- discrimination in relation to protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation
- a request for a service which you have made and we have not taken appropriate action
- a request for information which you have made and we have not 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 complain about?

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

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a disagreement with an 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
- 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 other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. Please also read the section on 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, in writing, by email, or by using our complaints form. These are available from Reception at any of the College campuses, the Student Intranet or the College website (www.ayrshire.ac.uk). The complaints form can also be

made available in hard copy or in alternative formats on request by telephoning 0300-303-0303.

It is 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 are 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 has gone wrong
- how you would like us to resolve the matter.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must 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 should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our complaints process 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 will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage 2. You may choose to do this immediately or shortly after you get our initial decision.

Stage two – investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are 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 will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if 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. For qualifications that are regulated, if you remain dissatisfied with the way the awarding body has handled your complaint then you may complain to the qualifications regulator, SQA Accreditation.

The SPSO does not have the power to revise course awards. Only the SQA and other awarding bodies have the power to do this and students should always approach the SQA or other awarding body through the relevant procedure where this is what they want to achieve as a result of their complaint, following completion of Ayrshire College's complaint process.

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

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

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

The SPSO **cannot** normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints process (**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:

SPSO

Bridgeside House

99 McDonald Road

Edinburgh

EH7 4NS

By Post

Freepost SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330 or 0131 225 5300

Online contact www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

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

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 is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

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

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: **0131 524 1975** Website: www.siaa.org.uk Email: enquiry@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 putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font or Braille, please visit Reception in any campus or contact us on 0300-303-0303.

Contact Details

Online: Complete online form on www1.ayrshire.ac.uk/about-us/managing-complaints-and-improving-services/ and press submit

By letter: Information and Customer Relations Advisor
Ayrshire College
Kilmarnock Campus
Hill Street
Kilmarnock
KA1 3HY

By email: complaints@ayrshire.ac.uk

In person: To Reception at any College campus

MASTER

Quick guide to our complaints process

