

A.10 Complaints

Policy

It is The Oxford English Centre's policy to hear complaints fairly and openly and to resolve them as quickly as possible.

Procedure

Student Complaints

We hope that students are happy with both their teacher and the school in general. There is a separate written *Complaints Procedure for Students*, which is displayed in every classroom and this outlines the steps available and the order in which they need to be taken.

If there is anything they are not happy about they should be able to talk to somebody immediately to try and resolve it. As employees of the school all staff have a responsibility and duty of care to students. In the first instance this involves taking the time to actively listen to the student without prejudice. The Oxford English Centre is committed to a fair and open complaints policy without any form of discrimination.

An initial judgement should be made as to whether it is appropriate for the conversation to take place publicly. To make this judgement staff should take into consideration the sensitivity of the issue, the preference of the student and the potential impact and consequences of speaking openly and publicly. If it is deemed best not to speak publicly then two members of staff should be present.

After listening to the complaint the staff member should not make any comment but instead make a judgement on the severity and seriousness of the complaint. If it is deemed to be a minor issue which can easily and quickly be resolved then the issue should be dealt with immediately avoiding the use of any subjective or provocative language. A diary note should be made in Becas for future reference.

If the complaint is not deemed to be a minor issue then a member of the management team should be involved. In the first instance contact the appropriate member of the management team and explain the situation. Do not discuss the situation with the student present or on the phone so the student can overhear. The manager involved will then make a judgement as to whether to see the student immediately (ideal) or make an appointment to see the student with minimal delay involved.

It is recommended best practice that the manager has another member of staff present during the meeting. The manager will listen to the complaint without prejudice and ask any further questions to try and establish the full set of circumstances surrounding the incident and what response/further action the student would like to see. The manager will then arrange for a further meeting on an agreed day and time to allow for a full and thorough investigation. The student will be given the opportunity to have a witness present at the second meeting. The student will be given the opportunity to put the complaint in writing to the manager.

A full and thorough investigation will then take place, which may involve speaking to other members of staff and/or students and gathering witness statements to support the case.

The conclusion of the investigation will be relayed to the student at the arranged meeting, not usually more than five days after the initial complaint. Where a student has put a complaint in writing the response will be put in writing as well. The response to a written complaint will only be given after consultation with Head Office. The student will be asked if they are happy with the outcome. If they are not the student should be reminded of the school's complaints procedure and the next stages available to them.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the British Council via email at general.enquiries@britishcouncil.org, by phone on 0161 957 7755, by fax on 0161 957 7762 or you can write to them at 10 Spring Gardens, London, SW1A 2BN.

You can also contact English UK via email at info@englishuk.com, by phone on 0207 802 9200, by fax on 0207 802 9201 or you can write to them at 56 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6AG.

Any complaints received only in writing should be passed to the Operations Director immediately. The manager involved will contact the student after liaison with the Centre Director and try to arrange a meeting, following the procedures outlined above.

All complaints in writing, including email, will be filed with the response and outcome in a separate Complaints folder.

Any complaint against a member of staff relating to their capability is covered in the *Employee Handbook* under *Capability Procedures*. We recommend all staff are familiar with this.

Any complaint against a member of staff relating to misconduct is covered in the *Employee Handbook* under *Disciplinary Procedures*. We recommend all staff are familiar with this.

Any complaint which involves an allegation of a criminal offence will be reported to the Police. The alleged perpetrator (student or staff member) may be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.

Staff Complaints

We hope that all staff are happy with both their colleagues and the school in general.

Management operates an open door policy and welcomes informal discussions and meetings relating to your employment. Many small issues are successfully resolved this way and this is a good first step in many cases. This may include issues arising with students.

There is also a formal procedure which is outlined in the *Employee Handbook*. This appears under three sections;

- 1) *Whistle-Blowers*
- 2) *Grievance Procedure*
- 3) *Personal Harassment Policy and Procedure*

We request all staff are familiar with the handbook and, in particular, with these three sections relating to complaints and grievances.

If your complaint is relating to the misconduct of a colleague this will be dealt with using the guidelines under *Disciplinary Procedures* in the handbook.