



STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Stage 1: Informal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dealt with informally between student and any member of PPA staff
Stage 2: Formal Complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Referred to Course Leaders• Acknowledged within 3 working days• Initial response with 10 working days
Stage 3: Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Referred to Head of Faculty and Education within 5 working days• Response within 10 working days
Stage 4: Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appeal to Senior Management• Response within 10 working days

Statement of Policy

This policy reflects the principles, good practice and procedures that relate to student Complaints.

For the purpose of this policy the term “student” is used to mean any student enrolled at ‘theRTproject’. Where the student is under 18, or classified as a vulnerable student, then their parent, guardian or caregiver may make a representation on their behalf, with the agreement of the student.

1. Scope

This policy applies to all services offered by ‘theRTproject’.

This policy applies to all students who are enrolled at ‘theRTproject’ (hereinafter referred to as

'theRTproject'). This policy applies to all students equally regardless of the race, gender, disability, religion, age or sexual orientation of the complainant and all complaints will be dealt with without prejudice. The timelines and principles of prompt response and right to appeal set down here apply to all student complaints.

2. 'theRTproject' Accountability

All 'theRTproject' staff have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedure set out in paragraph 6. Below.

The **Senior Management Team** have the responsibility for tracking, recording and reporting on the outcomes of formal complaints.

The Senior Management Team have a responsibility for resolving a complaint and leading or contributing to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate.

The **Artistic Directors** are responsible for resolving complaints which have reached the appeals stage.

'theRTproject' is responsible for ensuring that the complaints policy is operating effectively and may become directly involved if a complaint is directed against all staff, other senior post holders or members of the governing body.

3. What Can be Dealt with under the Complaints Policy

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, about the lack of action by the 'theRTproject', its staff or representatives, or about the standard provided by or on behalf of the 'theRTproject'.

A complaint may relate to, but is not limited to:

- The quality and standard of services provided by 'theRTproject' including teaching and learning provision
- Failure to provide a service as advertised or reasonably expected
- Unsuitable facilities or learning resources
- Failure to follow an appropriate administrative or academic process
- The behaviour of staff and other students

4. When and How to Make a Complaint

The 'theRTproject' expects students to engage directly with 'theRTproject' staff when raising complaints. Complaints made by third parties on behalf of the student will not usually be accepted unless there are valid reasons why the student is unable to engage in the complaint themselves.

The complaints procedure aims to ensure complaints are resolved in a timely, effective and fair manner and for this purpose students are asked to follow the stages as set out in paragraph 6, starting at Stage one and therefore allowing the 'theRTproject' to resolve a complaint informally.

Each stage of the process will be administered by a member of staff who has received training in managing complaints.

The burden of proof shall always be on the student and the standard of proof will be the balance of probability. This means that students must provide evidence to support the complaint they are making. The decision to uphold or dismiss the complaint will be on grounds of which party is most likely to be correct based on the evidence provided.

At each stage, the 'theRTproject' will endeavour to find a solution to the issues raised that are mutually acceptable for the parties concerned. This will not always be possible and students may not agree with the outcome offered. Before escalation to the next stage, clear grounds must be given by the student. They cannot automatically escalate their complaint on the grounds that the outcome is not what they sought.

At all stages, students must, in writing, clearly state the issue of their concern and desired outcome.

No student will be disadvantaged either academically or personally if they choose to raise a complaint the college understands the importance of trust and confidence all parties must have in this process. Any student raising a complaint may continue their studies whilst the complaints procedure is conducted.

The student may have access to the 'theRTproject's **Equality and Diversity Officer**, or **Welfare Officer**, as appropriate.

Students are reminded of the 'theRTproject's Student Handbook and Code of Conduct when dealing with complaints. Students must at all times conduct themselves in a way which is polite, mature and conciliatory. Staff will not tolerate rudeness from any of its students or anyone speaking on their behalf. 'theRTproject' reserves the right to decline to investigate a complaint at any stage if it considers it to be frivolous, malicious or vexatious. In such circumstances 'theRTproject' will write to the student explaining this with any decision made, being final.

5. Stages of a Complaint

Stage One – Informal Complaint

- The student should consider whether they have been able to resolve the matter themselves by talking to a member of 'theRTproject' community, resolving the concern independently and utilising the support services 'theRTproject' can offer. Concerns should be raised in the first instance with any member of staff.

- All complaints must be raised as soon as possible and not later than within ten days of the incident being reported. However, complaints made beyond this timeline (but within 3 months) will not be rejected for being out of time but may prove more difficult to resolve satisfactorily.
- Examples of how 'theRTproject' may deal with students concerns at this stage include:
 - Actively listening and being empathetic and understanding to the complaint
 - Apologising where it is appropriate to do so
 - Clarifying reasons why decisions have been made
 - Suggesting solutions
- The student will be expected to cooperate at all stages. Lack of cooperation may result in the complaint being dismissed at any stage.

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

- If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, the student should make a formal complaint in writing, setting out their complaint and why the matter could not be dealt with at Stage one.
- This should be forwarded to the appropriate **Artistic Director** who will acknowledge the complaint within 3 days and respond within 10 days. Complaints made outside of this time frame or with insufficient grounds may be dismissed.
- The **Artistic Director**, to whom the complaint has been referred, will investigate the complaint fully (or delegate a person to do this on their behalf whilst retaining responsibility for the outcome), including meeting with the student to understand the complaint fully. Where appropriate, a meeting may be offered between the complainant and the individuals they are complaining about to reach an agreed resolution.
- **Artistic Directors** must write to the student with their written response within ten working days.
- Students may only escalate their complaint at this stage if they are dissatisfied with the decision made on the grounds stated below:
 - The complaint procedure was not followed correctly
 - New information that was not available earlier in the process, can now be provided by the student

Stage Three – Review

- If the **Artistic Director** is unable to resolve the issue, or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, it should be referred to the **CEO** for investigation, with a clear outline regarding what grounds the review is being requested on.

- The **CEO** may contact the student to confirm the purpose and scope of their investigation in order to manage expectations about possible outcomes. They may talk to other staff and students and consider documents and other relevant evidence.
- All complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible. Receipt of all formal complaints will be acknowledged. An initial response will be given within 10 working days and a further, more detailed response provided where appropriate.
- All formal complaints will receive a formal written response explaining the reasons for the outcome and providing evidence used in the decision-making process, stipulating the outcome and the right of appeal where appropriate.
- The response will be one of the following:
 - Dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons
 - Mediate an amicable settlement
 - Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, and take appropriate steps to address the issue and avoid a similar problem arising in future

Stage Four – Appeal

- If the student remains dissatisfied with ‘theRTproject’'s response to their complaint they may appeal in writing to **Senior Management** [REDACTED]
- The appeal does not allow for additional complaints to be added that have not previously been raised and can only relate to procedural irregularities. Any appeal must be received within ten working days of being sent the outcome of the complaint at Stage Three.
- **Senior Management** will review all the available evidence of the investigation and ‘theRTproject’'s response and will respond within 5 working days.
- The response will be one of the following:
 - Uphold the decision of the Artistic Director
 - Dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons
 - Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, and take appropriate steps to address the issue and avoid a similar problem arising in future
- The decision of **Senior Management** [REDACTED] is final.

6. Complaints Against the **Artistic Directors** or ‘theRTproject’

Complaints against the Artistic Directors should be addressed to **Senior Management** [REDACTED]

7. Anonymous Complaints

'theRTproject' will not respond to anonymous complaints, but issues contained in the complaint may be investigated at 'theRTproject's own discretion.

8. Record Keeping and Reporting

The **Artistic Directors** will maintain a record of all formal complaints and their outcomes. Issues will be fed into 'theRTproject's self- assessment and other quality improvement processes as appropriate.

Students will be advised that, while confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is not normally possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant staff in order to allow 'theRTproject' a fair opportunity to resolve the issue.

All records relating to complaints will be retained for a maximum of three years.

Policy Updated: Feb 2026

Policy Review Due: Feb 2027