



COMPLAINTS: POLICY & PROCEDURE

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This policy covers all areas across the Education for Industry (EFI) Group. It is a standard policy and process that applies to EFI Group, and all subsequent Divisions¹. The exception relates to complaints relating to any aspect of the admissions process.

Policy/Process Owner	Head of QAE
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¹ Fashion Retail Academy (FRA), London College of Beauty Therapy (LCBT), Education for Industry Training (EFIT)

1.0 KEY PRINCIPLES AND AIMS

The EFI Group Complaints Policy and Procedure is governed by the following key principles:

- 1.1 This policy applies to all complaints within FE, HE and Apprenticeship provision, and related EFI Group services and departments (with the exception of complaints relating to any aspect of the admissions process which should be raised according to the process outlined at [5.0](#) below).
- 1.2 The EFI Group strives for excellence and aims to continually raise the standard of teaching, learning and services provided to students and other key stakeholders. The EFI Group values the opportunity presented by complaints to continuously monitor our service and strive for improvements.
- 1.3 The policy is clear and sensitive to issues of confidentiality. All complainants should feel that they can bring issues of concern, difficulties or differences of opinion to the attention of the EFI Group. Complainants have a right to expect that they will be listened to and that their concerns will be investigated properly and dealt with fairly without fear of recrimination or penalty.
- 1.4 The overarching policy and procedures are monitored by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) and a summary of outcomes is reported to both the Group Performance Meeting (GPM) and the Board of Governors, as appropriate.
- 1.5 Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event which caused dissatisfaction. Generally, only complaints received within eight (8) weeks will be accepted. Any delay in submitting a complaint will need to be fully explained and may be grounds for rejection.
- 1.6 In cases where a student is over 18 years of age, the EFI Group will request the student's permission to pursue the complaint when parents/guardians (or other third parties) make a complaint on the student's behalf. In such cases permission must be received from the student in writing.

- 1.7 All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the timescales outlined within this document. In exceptional cases, where it may not be possible to meet a prescribed deadline, all affected parties will be made aware in writing at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.8 Every attempt should be made to resolve complaints informally through a dialogue with those immediately concerned.
- 1.9 Students or complainants who require reasonable adjustments (RAs) in order to undertake a complaint should contact the EFI Group Student Services department directly in the first instance.

All complaints must be supported by documented evidence. Failure to submit evidence with a completed complaint form will result in rejection.

2.0 ISSUES EXCLUDED FROM THE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The following areas are excluded from the EFI Complaints Policy and Procedure:

- 2.1 Complaints raised about any aspect of the admissions process (see section [5.0](#) below).
- 2.2 Complaints in relation to the decision of Final Award Boards. Such matters are covered by the relevant Appeals Procedure for the qualification or Awarding Body (for HE provision any appeals would follow the [Falmouth Appeals Procedure](#)).
- 2.3 Complaints in relation to the outcomes of a student disciplinary hearing. Students have a right of appeal against the findings of a disciplinary hearing through a separate procedure which will be managed at division level by the relevant curriculum Head, or nominated senior member of staff.
- 2.4 Complaints against fellow students unless those students are acting as agents or employees of EFI Group or its divisions.

3.0 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The procedure is made up of a number of stages which are required to occur in sequence. The following section outlines each stage of the complaint procedure and indicates roles and responsibilities alongside timescales and potential outcomes.

3.1 RAISING A CONCERN [INFORMAL]

The initial stage of the complaints process should facilitate an informal discussion with those staff who are immediately concerned with the event or matter of dissatisfaction. Every effort should be made to resolve complaints through a dialogue or a meeting with those involved as soon as possible. If a student does not feel comfortable approaching the person most directly concerned, they should speak to their Programme Manager (or equivalent), Personal Tutor or Head/Deputy Head of Division.

Complaints can be made in person, or by email. If appropriate, a meeting may be offered between the complainant¹ and relevant member of staff or department representative. The aim of any activity during this informal stage will be to resolve the complaint promptly at a local level and arrive at an agreed resolution which will then be recorded in writing and kept on file. The expectation will be that complaints at this informal stage will be acted upon and resolved within 10 working days.

Where the complainant is not satisfied, staff members will inform the individual of their right to raise a formal complaint, reference this policy and explain the relevant procedures.

3.2 STAGE I – INVESTIGATION BY THE HEAD OF QAE [FORMAL]

In the event that a resolution to the complaint is not possible by the complainant and relevant member of staff, the matter will be referred to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement for investigation.

In order to initiate this stage of the process, the complainant is required to complete and submit a Complaints Form (annex 1) to gae@efigroup.ac.uk.

The Stage I investigation will be conducted within 10 working days following receipt of the Complaints Form. The Head of QAE will review all information provided within the form, along with any supporting evidence, and, if appropriate, may arrange a meeting with the complainant to further investigate the points raised. The outcome will be sent in writing by email to the address provided on the form.

3.3 STAGE II – FINAL REVIEW BY PRINCIPAL & CEO EFI GROUP (OR NOMINATED DIRECTOR) [FORMAL]

In the event that the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of a complaint following the Stage I process, the option to appeal against the findings of the formal investigation is offered by requesting a review by the

Principal & CEO of EFI Group (or nominated Director), and thereby triggering Stage II of the complaints procedure.

In order to initiate this stage of the process, the complainant is required to write to the Principal & CEO via the QAE Office gae@efigroup.ac.uk. The complainant must write to the Principal & CEO within 10 working days of the date of receiving the outcome of the Stage I Investigation, outlining the following:

- The areas of the Stage I outcome with which there is dissatisfaction.
- The reasons why the response to the Stage II was not deemed to be satisfactory.
- The desired resolution.

The QAE Office shall acknowledge receipt of the stage I complaint within 48 hours and an account of the complaint and the EFI Group's response to date shall be provided to the Principal & CEO or the nominated Director.

The Stage II review will be conducted within 10 working days and it may be necessary for a further meeting with the complainant to take place. The Stage II review may result in one of the following outcomes:

- The complaint is deemed to be unfounded and the original decision to dismiss is upheld.
- The complaint may be referred back to a particular area or department to propose an amicable settlement or for further investigation.
- The complaint is upheld or partially upheld and appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and avoid further occurrences.

3.4 ESCALATION TO AWARDING/VALIDATING INSTITUTION [FORMAL]

In the event that a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage II, they may request a review of the procedure undertaken. This will essentially be escalated to the relevant Awarding/Validating Body for review.

The procedure for Stage III will depend on the rules and regulations set by the Awarding/Validating Body. In order to initiate this stage of the process, the complainant is required to request a Stage III escalation to gae@efigroup.ac.uk in the first instance. This request must be sent within ten (10) working days of the outcome of the Stage II. An officer from QAE will then advise on the required next steps.

- For Higher Education students, complaints relating to academic standards can be escalated to Falmouth University.

- For complaints relating to qualifications awards, the relevant Awarding Body may be contacted.
- For publicly funded or financed students on Further Education programmes, complaints may be escalated to the Education and Skills Funding Body.

Generally, grounds for a Stage III escalation will be the following:

- A material error or irregularity in the conduct of Stage II of the EFI Group Complaints Policy and Procedure; and/or
- A student has new evidence that has become available since the commencement of the Stage II that they were unable, for valid reasons, to provide by the original Stage II complaint deadline.

Should a complaint be made against the Principal & CEO of EFI Group, these should be addressed directly to the Chair of the Board of Governors, c/o the Clerk to the Board of Governors. For further information on this process, advice should be sought from the QAE Office in the first instance gae@efigroup.ac.uk

Should a complaint be made against the Chair of the Board of Governors, these should be addressed directly to the Clerk to the Board of Governors and the Principal & CEO of the EFI Group. For further information on this process, advice should be sought from the QAE Office in the first instance gae@efigroup.ac.uk

Should a complaint be made against the Clerk to the Board of Governors, these should be addressed directly to the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Principal & CEO of EFI Group. For further information on this process, advice should be sought from the QAE Office in the first instance gae@efigroup.ac.uk

4.0 COMPLETION OF PROCEDURE

The completion of Stage III marks the conclusion of the EFI Group's internal processes and outlines that there is no further avenue for the student internally. At this point, a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter may be issued. A COP letter may be required by particular Regulatory Bodies should you wish to take your complaint to a further. It is a formal record that all internal stages and procedures have been followed.

If, following all internal stages, a complaint is not upheld, a COP will automatically be provided to you. If a complaint is upheld or partly upheld, complainants have the option to request a COP.

A QAE Officer will be able to provide further guidance should you wish to request this. In some instances, a COP will automatically be provided to you. Requests should be made to gae@efigroup.ac.uk within 28 days of the Stage III outcome.

5.0 ESCALATION TO THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (OIA)

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. The EFI Group's FRA Division is a member of this scheme.

Only students enrolled on the FRA's Level 4 programmes are eligible to escalate a complaint to the OIA under this clause¹. Students on any other courses offered by the FRA or the EFI Group are not entitled to recourse through the OIA scheme.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may be able to ask the OIA to review the case. More information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right if something has gone wrong can be found [here](#).

The OIA will normally only consider cases which have already exhausted the provider's internal processes.

Should a complainant decide to raise a case with the OIA, it must do so within 12 months of receipt of the COP letter.

6.0 COMPLAINTS PRODEDURE FOR ADMISSIONS

The following procedure is applicable to EFI Group Division applicants who wish to appeal a decision made on their application, or raise a concern regarding a procedural error, irregularity or administration error in the application process.

The procedure applies to applicants for FE and Apprenticeship provision at any division within EFI Group. For HE provision, applicants are advised to follow the complaints procedures for our validating partner Falmouth University.

Once a student has completed enrolment they would normally use the FRA Complaint Procedures outlined in section [3.0](#) above.

6.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Complaints can cover a wide range of issues which may have resulted in an irregularity in the conduct of the application process and be material enough to affect the outcome (of the application). This may include the way in which an application has been handled, the outcome of the selection, or, where applicable, the way in which an applicant has been interviewed.

- Complaints in relation to academic judgement² will not be accepted.

¹ Undergraduate and Masters students will also have recourse to the OIA but only once the complaint has been escalated to Falmouth University and a COP has been issue by Falmouth University.

- All complaints will be dealt with in confidence, and as close as possible to the point in time that it arises.

6.2 ADMISSIONS COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Initially, concerns should be raised by telephone or email. The member of staff responding to the concern is responsible for listening to all details in full and taking notes of all relevant information. If the applicant is not content with the response provided, they should be informed that they are able to make a formal complaint, following the procedure outlined below:

- Complaints relating to admissions should be made no more than 14 working days after the communication of the admissions decision, or after the cause of the complaint arises.

² Defined as a judgement about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice.

- Formal complaints must be made in writing, either by email or by letter, and should be sent to the EFI Group Registry team FRARegistry@efigroup.ac.uk
 - The Complaints Form is not required for concerns relating to admissions.
 - The Registry team will confirm if the complaint is within the scope of the policy, and, if so, will confirm in writing to the applicant that the complaint has been received and will be investigated within 14 working days.
 - The Registry team will appoint a member of their team to act as the Investigator on their behalf. If this is the case, they will ensure that they are independent from the issues under consideration.
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- An initial investigation will be conducted, and a recommendation will be put forward. The Registry team will discuss the case with the EFI Group Director of Operations and Partnerships to ensure they have a full understanding of the case before a formal response is made.
- The response to the complaint will be confirmed in writing to the applicant.
- The written response will mark the completion of the complaint.
- All correspondence, along with any notes relating to the case will be retained by the Registry team.

6.0 STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS CONFIDENTIAL

Before completing this form:

- Please ensure you have read the EFI Group Complaints Policy;
- If you require advice or support in completing this form, please contact the QAE Office in the first instance who will liaise with Student Services to allocate support; gae@efigroup.ac.uk;
- Please note that this form **should not be completed for concerns relating to admissions**. Any such concerns should be made in writing to the Applicant Services Manager via enquiry@efigroup.ac.uk (see section 5.0 of the FRA Complaints Policy)..

Please submit the completed form to gae@efigroup.ac.uk along with supporting evidence, and ensure you retain a copy for your records.

6.1 PART A: DETAILS OF COMPLAINANT		
1	First Name:	
	Surname:	
	Email address:	
	Contact Telephone:	
	Postal Address:	
	If you are/were a student, please provide us with the following details: Course: Year of Study: Course Leader:	
2	Do you have a disability? Y/N	
	Do you think you will need any disability related support of adjustments at any stage during the complaints process?	Y/N
	If yes, please provide further details of your requirements below:	
3	Have you spoken to anyone about your complaint? (e.g. your Course Leader, a student representative, other staff member?)	Y/N

If yes, please provide the person's name and position:	
Have you attempted to resolve your complaint informally as per the required Early Resolution stage of the process?	Y/N
If yes, please provide details of the member of staff you spoke with and provide a summary of the meeting/discussion, and outcome:	

6.2 PART B: SUPPORTING STATEMENT

4	Please outline below the reasons for your Stage II Formal Complaint:
	Please indicate the resolution you are seeking:
	Please list all evidence in support of your complaint which should be attached to this form, as appropriate (please note that forms submitted without evidence will be rejected): 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. <i>[Delete/continue as appropriate]</i>

5	I confirm that I have had access to a copy of the EFI Group complaints policy and know I can ask for clarification on the procedures at any time: Y/N	
	Complainant Signature:	Date:
	*In line with the Data Protection Act 2018, if you are appealing on behalf of a student who is over the age of 18, the student in question must provide consent by signing the declaration below: <i>I confirm that I am happy for the person noted above to submit the complaint on my behalf. I give permission for the EFI Group to liaise with the named person on any matters relating to this complaint.</i> Y/N	
	Student Signature:	Date

