

2019



# **STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Last updated: Jan 19 (JG)

# Sir George Monoux College

## Student Complaints Procedure

Sir George Monoux College is committed to providing high quality courses and supporting services but does recognise that sometimes things do go wrong and that you as a student are entitled to make a complaint. The Student Complaints Process offers both informal and formal routes to making a complaint and you must select the option you feel is most appropriate in the circumstances. The following sections provide information relating to:

- a) Informal Complaints
- b) Formal Complaints
- c) Formal Complaints Form
- d) Complaints Officer

### a) Informal Complaints

Most minor difficulties can be dealt with by your subject teacher(s) or coach/mentor who you should see first to resolve any problems you have. You are encouraged to take an informal approach as it can be the quickest and most agreeable way of resolving complaints or concerns. You can simply raise your concerns (verbally or in writing) directly with the relevant member of staff and if this approach does not resolve the concerns, then you can choose to discuss this with your Pathway Leader informally in the first instance.

### b) Formal Complaints

If you do feel a more formal approach is needed, we encourage you to discuss this with the Complaints Officer before deciding whether a formal approach is needed. There are three potential stages within the formal approach to making a complaint but the process itself is mirrored in each:

Formal complaints need to be made in writing using/attaching a **Formal Complaints Form**; these are available from the Tracy Straker (Complaints Officer) in the Principalship. Complaints might include unfair assessment or unreasonable treatment. You need to factually and objectively explain what your concerns are, make reference to and attach information that supports your complaint and note what outcome you would like to see (this needs to be realistic and is without prejudice). If you have difficulty in making a written complaint, a member of staff will discuss your complaint with you in confidence and will take details from you. You can also use the form in Appendix C of this document, complete it electronically and email it to [tracy.straker@sgmc.ac.uk](mailto:tracy.straker@sgmc.ac.uk)

This complaints procedure may also be used by parents/carers if they wish to make a complaint on behalf of a student in their care. However, this must be done with the student's consent. The student should write 'I consent to this complaint being made by my parent/carer' and their signature should also be included at the end of the form.

The complaint should then be handed to the **Tracy Straker in the Principalship** (Complaints Officer) who will carry out a '**validity assessment**' to make sure that the correct procedure is being used and where appropriate, forward to a relevant member of staff to investigate (the staff member is different depending on the Stage of the complaint). You can request to meet with the person investigating, or that member of staff might suggest a meeting. The complaint can be passed to any of the three stages at the outset depending on the concerns raised and the outcome you have requested - so the complaint can be addressed and resolved at the earliest opportunity. The Complaints Officer will confirm receipt and the outcome of the validity assessment, usually within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. You will receive a

written response to the complaint, normally within 15 working days of the complaint being submitted. Sometimes it may take a little longer to investigate complaints depending on their complexity and staff availability

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you can request that the next stage of the process is initiated. You will need to resubmit your complaint in writing, with additional information explaining why you are still unhappy, to the Complaints Officer, who will carry out a further validity assessment and where appropriate forward the documents to the relevant person.

Formal investigations are carried out by:

**Stage 1:** A Pathway Leader or Support Manager.

**Stage 2:** A Director of Curriculum (responsible for the area the complaint relates to).

**Stage 3:** A Complaints Panel would normally be made up of a Director of Curriculum or SLT, and a member of staff.

At any point, you or the person investigating can suggest that an informal approach is taken, even if a formal complaint has been submitted.

If the outcome remains unacceptable once all the above have been exhausted, you can apply to the **College Principal** for a final and binding decision. If you are still unhappy with this decision, you can complain directly to the Department for Education by following the procedure at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>. However, all the above stages must have been completed and exhausted (including the application to the College Principal) in order to submit a complaint to the Department for Education.

### **c) Formal Complaints Form**

The **Formal Complaints Form** is essential if you are wishing to make a formal complaint, however you may attach the form to a separate statement. The Formal Complaints Forms are available from Tracy Straker in the Principalship.

### **d) Complaints Officer**

The **Complaints Officer** is Tracy Straker and is based in the Principalship. She carries out validity assessments, making sure the correct procedure is being used and at what stage the complaint should be passed. She also ensures the process is completed within the timescales set out in the procedure and forwards the outcome of the 'investigation' to the student.

### **e) Sources of advice, support, representation & guidance**

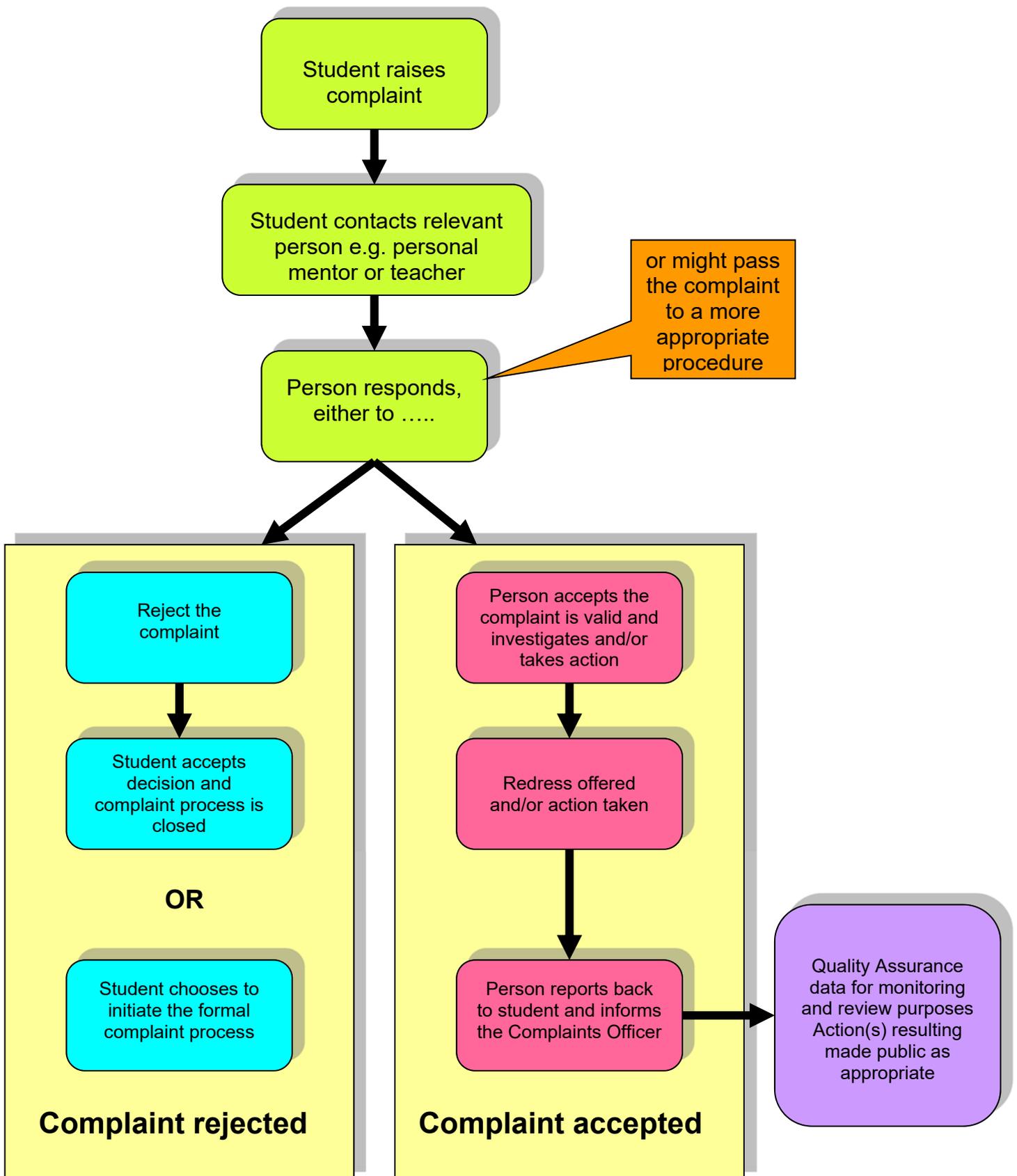
Help, support, representation and guidance is available from a number of sources within the College. However, it is the responsibility of the student making the complaint to seek advice and assistance where necessary. The following are key points of contact for help or advice:

- Your Progress Coach or Personal Mentor
- The relevant Pathway Leader
- The Complaints Officer can also offer advice on the applicability and operation of the procedure.

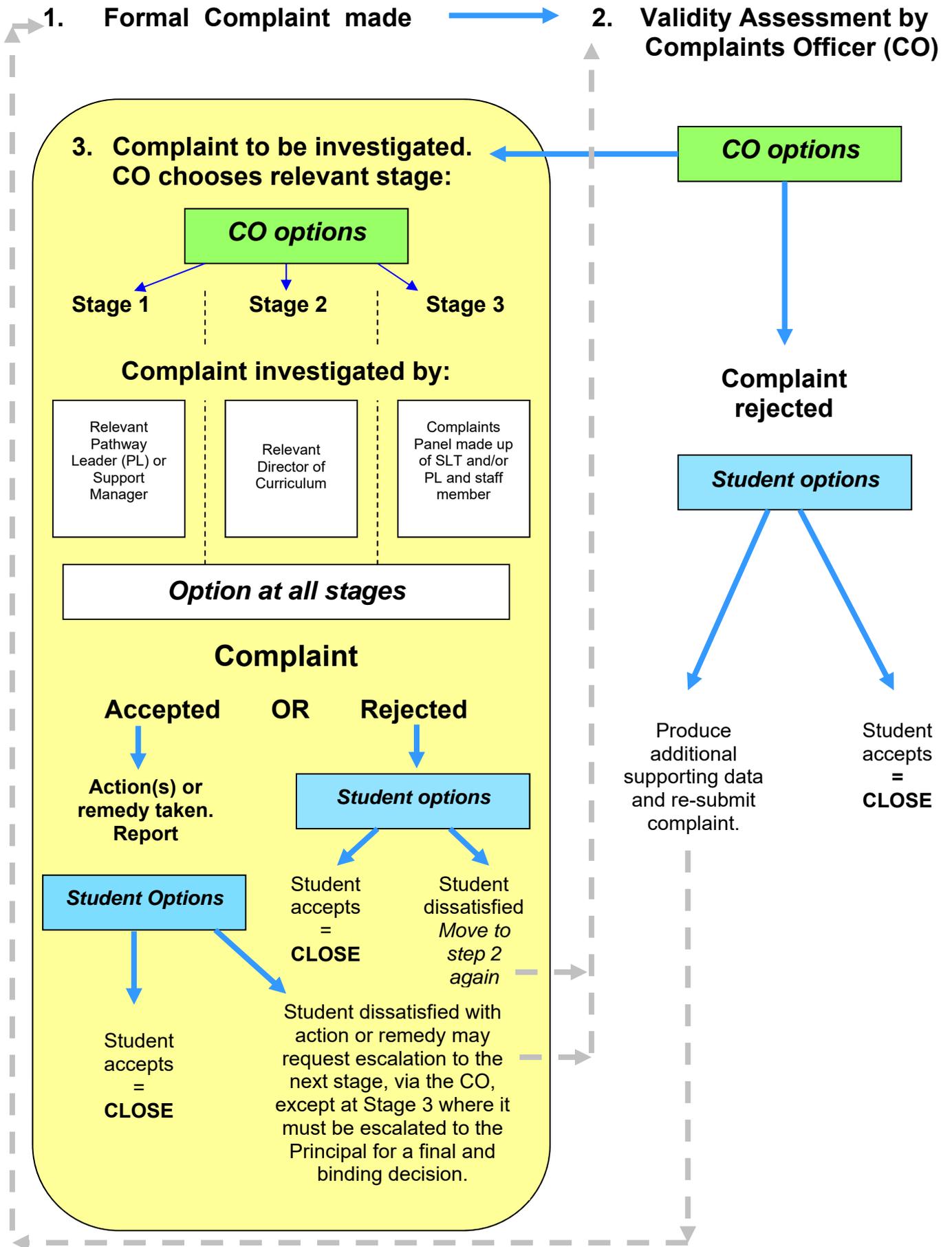
### **f) Student Complaints Policy & Process (policy documents)**

- Appendix A. The Informal Complaints Process (flowchart)
- Appendix B. The Formal Complaint Process (flowchart)
- Appendix C. The Formal Complaint Form
- Appendix D. Complaint Record Form
- Appendix E. The roles of the Complaints Officer and Investigating Officer

# The Informal Complaints Process



# The Formal Complaints Process Appendix B



# COMPLAINTS FORM – CONFIDENTIAL

*Before you make a formal complaint it is important that you do everything you can to resolve the problem informally by speaking directly to your teacher or Personal Mentor. Please do not complete the form if you have not done this. This should also not be used for complaints about assessment decisions, these are dealt with separately by the Pathway.*

Please complete this form and return it to Tracy Straker in the Principalship, the Complaints Officer.

Roll No.	First Name	Family Name	Personal Mentor

### Your complaint:

(Please explain the circumstances clearly; if you have difficulty in making a written complaint, the Complaints Officer will discuss your complaint with you in confidence and will take details from you) –

**Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.**

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

The Complaints Officer will contact you within ten working days and explain progress being made with your complaint.

**SIR GEORGE MONOUX COLLEGE**  
**Complaints: Academic Year XXXX**

	Student Id	Date	Nature of Complaint	Action taken & Outcome	Ethnicity Strand	LSC Code	Gender	Disability
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								

### *The role of Complaints Officer*

The Complaints Officer is Tracy Straker who is based within the Principalship office and acts as the impartial guardian of the Student Complaints process. Her role is to ensure that each complaint is addressed in accordance with the Student Complaints Policy and Process.

The Complaints Officer does **not** investigate complaints, but acts as the point of contact for:

- students who are making a complaint; and
- those staff with responsibility for investigating a complaint (Investigating Officers).

The Complaints Officer makes an initial assessment of a complaint, to determine whether it is valid under the scope of the Student Complaints Policy and Process. The Complaints Officer can help explain the process that will be followed to the student complainant, should the assessment determine the complaint is valid for investigation.

The Complaints Officer can signpost the student to appropriate sources of information, advice, guidance and where requested, to support and/or representation.

A student can contact the Complaints Officer for information about the process of making a complaint and to gain an update regarding the progress of a complaint once submitted and accepted for investigation. The Complaints Officer will inform the student in writing of the outcomes from an investigated complaint, including about any resulting actions taken or redress being offered.

The Complaints Officer has the authority to reject or return a complaint as 'not valid', possibly indicating a more appropriate procedure to pursue, to deal with the concerns or issues raised. Where possible, the Complaints Officer will signpost or assist the student to initiate the relevant procedure. The Complaints Officer rejecting or returning a complaint would inform the student of the right to appeal to the Director of Curriculum or Senior Leadership Team.

The Complaints Officer also has a critical role to play in relation to quality processes. She maintains records of all complaints handled (whether formally or informally) and provides the Quality Office with the documentation from each complaint case, for safekeeping, once the complaint is closed and/or the process is completed. The complaint documentation is used only to derive anonymous data for monitoring and evaluating the complaints process. The data is used for annual review purposes only.

### *The role of Investigating Officer*

An Investigating Officer is a member of the College Management Team, usually the Pathway Leader or Support Manager who is passed a complaint by the Complaints Officer. The Investigating Officer looks into the complaint by conducting an impartial and objective investigation and reporting on the investigation and any outcome(s) to the student, via the Complaints Officer. The Investigating Officer may meet with the student during the course of an investigation. An Investigating Officer can take appropriate action where a complaint is upheld, if it is within their authority to do so.

Investigating Officers are different for each stage in the complaint process, to ensure an impartial and objective investigation.

**Stage 1:** A Pathway Leader or Support Manager.

**Stage 2:** A member of the relevant Pathway (responsible for the area the complaint relates to).

**Stage 3:** A Complaints Panel is normally made up of a Director of Curriculum or SLT, and a member of staff.

If the outcome remains unacceptable once all the above have been exhausted, you can apply to the **College Principal** for a final and binding decision.