Waltham International College

4.0 Academic Regulations



4.06 Complaints Policy

Version Number:	12
Reviewed by | Approved by:	Compliance Review | BoG
Review date | Approved date:	May 2026 | July 2026

Compliance Alignment Statement

This version of the Complaints Policy has been aligned to current UK and Office for Students requirements as of May 2026. The substantive changes are listed below.

Version Control Statement

Version	Date	Changes	Reason	Author	Next Review
1	02/03/16		New Policy	Director of Quality and Curriculum	01/03/17
2	14/12/16	Minor inconsistencies	Checked for inconsistencies	Director of Quality and Curriculum	13/12/2017
3	24/08/17	The complaint process has been simplified and explained in detail and the Principal has been removed from the informal stage.	QAA recommendations to ensure that no single person is involved at more than one stage.	Director of Quality and Curriculum	23/08/2018
4	20/08/18	No Changes The policy will be adjusted in the next period to account for the new structure.	Annual review.	Director of Curriculum and Quality	15/01/2019
5	Sept 18	Changes made to reflect new governance arrangements, the requirement for a Completion Letter for any further appeals and to include aspects of Good Practice from the OIA	Reflection of new governance arrangements	Head of HE	July/Aug 2019
6	Sept 19	Minor changes in grammar	Annual Review	Head of HE	Jul/Aug 2020
7	July 2020	Replaces Registrar with Student Support Manager Lists, the QAA core practices and requirements and explains how they are met Made changes to ensure procedures are easy to find and navigate, are accessible to all students and apply equally to all students Corrected some numbering errors Updated internal references in line with revisions in policies made in September 2019	Annual Review	Head of HE	Jul/Aug 2021
8	August 2021	Included provision for external complaints.	Annual Review	Head of HE	August 2022
9	June 2022	Changes made to the person/role responsible for keeping and updating the complaint log.	Annual Review	Head of HE	July 2023
10	April 2024	QA review, Updated the title "head of HE" to align with the current organisational structure	QA review	Senior QA Officer	July / August 2024
11	August 2024	Refreshed timelines and clarified process	Annual Review	Quality Lead	Aug 2025
12	September 2025	No changes	Annual Review	Head of Registry	Sep 2026
13	May 2026	- Textual revisions made throughout to bring the policy into compliance with applicable regulations - Changed to new template - Updated External Reference List - Change timelines for submitting and responding to complaints Added appendices 1, 2	Compliance Alignment 2026 (OfS)	QA Compliance Review	August 2027

External Reference Points

- OfS Regulatory Framework 2018 (as amended) – Conditions B5, C1, C5
- OfS Condition C5: fair treatment, student protection, and complaints handling
- QAA UK Quality Code 2024 – Concerns, Complaints and Appeals: Advice and Guidance
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework: Handling Student Complaints and Appeals (2022)
- Consumer Rights Act 2015 and CMA Guidance for Higher Education Providers 2023
- Higher Education and Research Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010 – protected characteristics and duty not to discriminate
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998 – right to fair process (Article 6)
- Awarding partner complaints procedures (where applicable)

Related Policies and Documents

Affects all other policy documents. This document should however be read together with the following documents:

- 1.10 Student Engagement Policy
- 3.01 Student Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy
- 4.03 Assessment Policy
- 4.05 Attendance, Retention and Support Policy
- 4.07 Academic Appeals Policy
- 4.08 Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures
- 4.09 Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- 4.10 Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure
- 4.11 Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure
- 4.13 Disability and Inclusion Policy

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1. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure sets out Waltham International College's (WIC) approach to handling student complaints. WIC is committed to treating all complaints seriously, fairly, and promptly, in accordance with its obligations as an OfS-registered provider, the QAA UK Quality Code, the OIA Good Practice Framework, and CMA consumer protection guidance.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that students have access to a clear, accessible, and effective process for raising concerns and complaints, and that complaints are used constructively to improve WIC's services, programmes, and student experience.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all students currently enrolled at WIC, and to recent graduates in relation to matters arising during their time as students. It covers complaints about any aspect of WIC's academic programmes, services, facilities, or the conduct of staff. External stakeholders may also use this procedure to raise complaints about WIC's services.

This Policy does not cover:

(a) academic appeals, which are handled under the Academic Appeals Policy;

(b) allegations of academic misconduct, which are handled under the Academic Misconduct Policy;

(c) allegations of bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct, which are handled under the Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Where a complaint encompasses multiple issues, the College will direct the student to the most appropriate procedure.

3. Introduction

Waltham International College (WIC) recognises that students may, at times, experience concerns or dissatisfaction with aspects of their academic experience, support services, or interactions with staff. The ability to raise a complaint and have it considered seriously is a fundamental aspect of a fair and transparent educational environment.

WIC views complaints not merely as procedural obligations, but as a valuable source of feedback that drives continuous improvement. A culture in which students feel confident and safe raising concerns is essential to the College's commitment to quality, accountability, and student wellbeing.

This Policy has been developed in line with the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS), the QAA UK Quality Code, the OIA Good Practice Framework, and applicable consumer protection legislation. It reflects WIC's commitment to handling complaints in a manner that is fair, timely, independent, and transparent, and that respects the rights and dignity of all parties involved.

Students are encouraged to engage with this process in good faith. WIC is committed to ensuring that no student suffers detriment as a result of raising a legitimate concern.

4. Principles

- Accessibility: The complaints process is simple, clear, and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities, language needs, or other potential barriers to access
- Fairness: All complaints are investigated impartially and all parties are given a fair opportunity to present their position
- Confidentiality: Information is handled sensitively and in accordance with UK GDPR; only those who need to know will be informed of the complaint
- No detriment: A student who raises a complaint in good faith will not suffer any academic or other detriment as a result
- Timeliness: Complaints are handled within the timeframes set out in this Policy
- Transparency: Students are kept informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint
- Continuous improvement: Complaint outcomes are used to improve WIC's services, programmes, and student experience
- Proportionality: The level of investigation is proportionate to the nature and complexity of the complaint

5. Definitions

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about WIC's provision of academic or support services, about the actions or inactions of staff, or about conditions or facilities, where a student considers that they have been adversely affected. A constructive comment or suggestion for improvement is also welcome and will be considered, though it will not normally be processed as a formal complaint.

A vexatious or malicious complaint is one that is made in bad faith, is clearly designed to cause harm, or that repeats an issue that has already been fully investigated and responded to. Such complaints may be declined and the student may be directed to the College's student conduct policy.

6. Complaints Procedure

6.1 Stage 1 – Informal / Conciliation Stage

Students are encouraged to raise concerns informally in the first instance with the relevant member of staff, Programme Leader, or Student Support Services. Many concerns can be resolved quickly and informally without the need for a formal complaint. Students are not required to use the informal stage before proceeding to the formal stage, but are encouraged to do so where it is safe and reasonable.

Timeline: The College will endeavour to respond to an informal concern within 5 working days.

6.2 Stage 2 – Formal Stage

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, or the student prefers to proceed directly to the formal stage, the student should submit a formal complaint in writing using the College's 'Formal Complaint Form', available in Appendix 1 and emailing it to complaints@wic.ac.uk. The formal complaint should be submitted within 3 months of the issue giving rise to the complaint (or 3 months from the student becoming aware of the issue).

The complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and assigned to an investigating officer who was not involved in the matters complained of. The investigation will include:

- reviewing the student's complaint;
- gathering evidence from all relevant parties;
- and considering relevant policies, procedures, and records.

The outcome of the formal investigation will normally be communicated in writing within 28 calendar days of receipt. Where this timeframe cannot be met due to the complexity of the complaint, the student will be informed and given a revised timeline.

6.3 Stage 3 – Review Stage

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, they may request a review of the decision within 10 working days of receiving the formal response. A review may be requested on the grounds that:

(a) the investigation was not conducted fairly;

(b) new evidence has come to light; or

(c) the outcome was unreasonable.

The student should submit a review request in writing using the College's ‘Complaint Review Request Form’, available in Appendix 2 and emailing it to complaints@wic.ac.uk. A review is not a re-investigation of the original complaint.

The review will be conducted by a senior manager who was not involved in the original investigation. The outcome of the review will normally be communicated within 21 calendar days.

6.4 Stage 4 – External Referral – Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

Once all internal stages have been exhausted, WIC will issue the student with a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter. The student may then refer their complaint to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the COP letter. WIC is a member of the OIA scheme as required by the Higher Education Act 2004. Information about the OIA and the referral process is provided to students in the COP letter and on the College's website.

7. Complaints About Partner Awarding Organisations

Where a student's complaint relates to the services or decisions of an awarding partner organisation, WIC will advise the student of the relevant policy and process of the awarding organisation. WIC will liaise with the awarding partner as appropriate to support the resolution of the complaint.

8. Support for Students Making Complaints

Students who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to seek support from Student Support Services, who can provide advice on the process and assist with completing the complaint form. Students may also be supported by a student representative or another person of their choice (but not a practising legal representative) at any stage of the process. Students with disabilities or additional

needs who require adjustments to the complaints process (such as additional time, alternative formats, or a support person) should inform the College at the outset.

9. Consumer Protection and CMA Compliance

WIC's complaints process is designed to comply with the CMA guidance on consumer protection for higher education providers. Students' rights as consumers are respected throughout the complaints process. In particular, WIC will:

- provide clear information about the complaints process before students enrol;
- handle complaints relating to course changes, fees, or service delivery with particular regard to the Consumer Rights Act 2015;
- and ensure that any refunds or remedies are considered where students have been disadvantaged by WIC's failure to meet its obligations.

10. Equality and Accessibility

WIC is committed to ensuring that the complaints process is equally accessible to all students. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with disabilities or other protected characteristics that may affect their ability to participate in the process. The College will monitor complaint data disaggregated by protected characteristic to identify any inequality in access to, or outcome from, the complaints process.

11. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Information collected during the complaints process is personal data and is processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Complaint records are held securely and are accessible only to those with a legitimate need to know. Information may be shared with awarding partners or regulatory bodies where required. Students have the right to access information about their own complaint, subject to any legal exemptions.

12. Monitoring and Reporting

The Head of Registry maintains a complaints log, which records all formal complaints received, the stage at which they were resolved, and the outcome. Anonymised complaint data is reported to the Academic Board quarterly and used to identify themes, trends, and areas for improvement. The Annual Report on complaints is shared with the OfS through the Annual Monitoring Return. This Policy is reviewed annually.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: Formal Complaint Form Template

To be completed and emailed to complaints@wic.ac.uk

Section A: Your Details

- Full Name:
- Student ID Number:
- Programme of Study:
- Year of Study:
- Email Address:
- Phone Number (optional):
- Preferred contact method:

Section B: Your Complaint

- Date(s) of the issue(s):
- Who or what is your complaint about (e.g. member of staff, service, facility — no need to name individuals if uncomfortable):
- Please describe your complaint in full, including what happened, when, and how it has affected you: *(Continue on a separate sheet if needed)*
- Have you already raised this informally? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, who did you speak to, and what was the outcome?

Section C: Supporting Evidence

- Please list any documents, emails, or other evidence you are attaching: *(You may attach up to 10 documents. Label each clearly, e.g. "Exhibit 1 – Email dated 01/05/26")*

Section D: Outcome Sought

- What outcome are you hoping for as a result of this complaint?

Section E: Support Needs

- Do you require any adjustments to participate in this process? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, please describe:
- Would you like support from Student Support Services? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do you have a representative supporting you? ☐ Yes ☐ No — If yes, their name:

Section F: Declaration *I confirm that the information provided in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that submitting a complaint in bad faith may result in action under the College's Student Conduct Policy.*

- Signature (or typed name):
- Date:

Submission: Email this completed form with any supporting documents to complaints@wic.ac.uk

You will receive acknowledgement within 3 working days.

13.2 Appendix 2: Complaint Review Request Form Template

To be completed and emailed to complaints@wic.ac.uk within 10 working days of receiving your formal outcome.

Section A: Your Details

- Full Name:
- Student ID Number:
- Programme of Study:
- Email Address:
- Original Complaint Reference Number *(if provided)*:
- Date of Formal Outcome Letter:

Section B: Grounds for Review *A review may only be requested on one or more of the following grounds. Please tick all that apply and provide detail.*

☐ **The investigation was not conducted fairly** Please explain:

☐ **New evidence has come to light that was not available at the time of the investigation** Please explain and attach the new evidence:

☐ **The outcome was unreasonable** Please explain why you consider the outcome unreasonable:

Section C: Outcome Sought

- What outcome are you seeking from this review?

Section D: Declaration *I confirm that the information provided is accurate and that I am requesting this review in good faith. I understand that a review is not a re-investigation of the original complaint.*

- Signature (or typed name):
- Date:

Submission: Email this completed form to complaints@wic.ac.uk. *A senior manager not involved in the original investigation will conduct the review. You will normally receive the outcome within 21 calendar days.*