

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Policy Number:	ICCS-CPP-V1-2025
Policy Owner:	Head of Quality Assurance
Approved By:	Senior Leadership Team
Approval Date:	November 2025
Next Review Date:	January 2027
Email:	info@iccs.uk

Content

- Introduction
- Purpose and Aims
- Regulatory and Sector Context
- Definition of a Complaint
- Scope
- Matters Outside the Scope of this Policy
- Principles
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Accessibility, Support and Reasonable Adjustments
- Time Limits
- Informal Resolution
- Formal Complaints Procedure
- Complex, Collective and Anonymous Complaints
- Outcomes and Remedies
- Confidentiality, Data Protection and Records
- Vexatious or Frivolous Complaints
- Monitoring, Reporting and Enhancement
- Review of this Policy

Introduction

International College of Contemporary Sciences ICCS is committed to providing a learning, teaching and support environment of consistently high quality, in which all students and stakeholders are treated fairly and with respect. The college recognises that there may be occasions when individuals consider that the standard of service, conduct or decision making has not met reasonable expectations and wish to raise a concern or complaint. ICCS welcomes such feedback as an important means of identifying where practice can be strengthened and where further support may be required.

This policy forms part of the ICCS quality assurance framework and explains how complaints are defined, how they may be raised and how they will be managed. It sets out the principles that underpin the complaints process and the relationship between this policy and other relevant procedures. The overarching aim is to ensure that complaints are considered in a manner that is proportionate, fair, timely and consistent with regulatory expectations and with the values of ICCS.

Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and accessible framework for the handling of complaints relating to ICCS provision, services and environment. It describes the stages of the complaints process, the standards of service that complainants can expect and the responsibilities of students, staff and other stakeholders who engage with the procedure. The policy seeks to ensure that concerns are, wherever possible, addressed close to the point at which they arise and at the lowest appropriate level, while providing a structured route for escalation where this is necessary in the interests of fairness or consistency.

The main aims are to enable concerns to be raised without fear of disadvantage, to ensure that complaints are investigated by staff who are suitably independent and informed, to promote early and fair resolution of issues, and to ensure that outcomes and learning from complaints contribute directly to the enhancement of the student and stakeholder experience. The policy also seeks to promote transparency and consistency so that complainants understand how their concerns will be considered and what range of outcomes is realistically available.

Regulatory and Sector Context

In operating this policy ICCS has regard to relevant United Kingdom legislation and regulatory guidance, including consumer protection requirements, equality and human rights legislation and data protection law. The college also takes account of the expectations and conditions set by bodies such as the Office for Students, the Department for Education and Ofqual, together with the requirements of awarding organisations and validating partners in relation to student complaints and student protection arrangements.

ICCS is committed to aligning its complaints procedures with recognised good practice across the higher and further education sectors. This includes ensuring that processes are explained clearly, are accessible to a diverse student body, operate within reasonable timeframes and focus on effective resolution. The college will keep this policy and associated procedures under review so that they remain consistent with developments in the regulatory landscape and in sector guidance.

Definition of a Complaint

For the purpose of this policy a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision by ICCS, or by someone acting on its behalf, which has had a negative impact on the complainant and where a response or remedy is reasonably sought. Complaints may concern, for example, the quality or delivery of teaching, supervision or academic support, the availability or standard of facilities and resources, the clarity and timeliness of information and communication, or the behaviour of staff, students or contractors connected with ICCS.

Concerns that relate primarily to academic judgement, such as decisions about marks, grades, progression or awards made in accordance with approved regulations and procedures, are not normally considered under this policy and are addressed through the ICCS Appeals Policy. Where a submission includes elements of both complaint and appeal, ICCS will determine the most appropriate route or combination of routes, taking into account the substance of the issues raised, and will explain this clearly to the complainant so that expectations are managed appropriately.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints raised by current and former students of ICCS, including apprentices and other registered learners, by applicants in relation to the admissions and recruitment process, by members of staff where the issue does not fall

within another specific procedure, and by visitors, partners and other stakeholders who have had direct dealings with ICCS or its staff or students. The policy covers concerns about programmes of study, academic and pastoral support, learning resources, facilities, services and aspects of the wider learning environment for which ICCS is responsible or over which it has reasonable influence.

Complaints arising solely from commercial or contractual relationships with external bodies, or relating to matters that are the exclusive responsibility of another organisation, will normally be managed through contractual mechanisms or referred to the relevant organisation. ICCS reserves the right to determine whether a concern falls within the scope of this policy and to signpost complainants to more appropriate procedures where this is necessary. Where ICCS operates programmes in partnership, the respective responsibilities of partners will be set out in collaboration agreements and students will be informed which complaints processes apply to their programme.

Matters Outside the Scope of this Policy

Certain issues are ordinarily dealt with under separate ICCS policies and procedures and are therefore outside the primary scope of this Complaints Policy. These include academic appeals relating to assessment outcomes and progression decisions, allegations of academic misconduct or malpractice by students, formal staff grievances and disciplinary matters, safeguarding concerns involving children or adults at risk and public interest disclosures made under any whistleblowing or protected disclosure policy. In such cases complainants will be directed to the relevant procedures and supported to access them where appropriate.

Requests for access to information or personal data are handled under data protection and freedom of information arrangements rather than through this complaints procedure. Where there is overlap between procedures, ICCS will decide the order and manner in which matters are considered, taking account of any legal, regulatory or safeguarding obligations and seeking to avoid unnecessary duplication or confusion for the complainant. Where possible, related processes will be coordinated so that individuals do not have to repeat their account more often than is necessary.

Principles

The ICCS approach to handling complaints is based on principles of fairness, transparency and respect. Complaints will be taken seriously, considered without prejudice and addressed as promptly as is reasonably practicable, with clear communication of progress and outcomes. The level of investigation will be proportionate to the nature, complexity and seriousness of the issues raised, and all

parties will have a reasonable opportunity to present their perspective and relevant evidence.

Complainants will not be disadvantaged or victimised for raising concerns in good faith and confidentiality will be respected, with information shared only where this is necessary for the proper consideration of the complaint or to meet legal or regulatory obligations. Where shortcomings are identified, ICCS will seek to provide an appropriate remedy, apologise where appropriate and use the learning to inform continuous improvement. All participants in the process are expected to engage constructively and to treat one another with courtesy and professionalism.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for assuring itself that ICCS has effective arrangements in place for the consideration of complaints and that these are implemented consistently and robustly. The Principal and senior leadership team are responsible for promoting a culture in which feedback and complaints are welcomed as opportunities for enhancement and for ensuring that this policy is applied fairly and consistently across the college.

Programme leaders, managers and heads of service are responsible for seeking to resolve concerns at a local level where appropriate, for undertaking investigations with due care and impartiality and for implementing agreed actions within their areas. The Academic Administration Office or designated Complaints Officer coordinates the formal process, maintains secure records, monitors timescales and provides procedural advice to staff and complainants. Staff and students share responsibility for engaging with the process constructively, providing accurate information and evidence and treating others involved in the complaint with courtesy and respect.

Accessibility, Support and Reasonable Adjustments

ICCS is committed to ensuring that the complaints process is accessible to all potential complainants, including those with disabilities, long term health conditions or specific communication needs. Information about this policy and associated procedures will be made available through the ICCS website, student and staff handbooks and induction activities, and can be provided in alternative formats where this is reasonably practicable.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered for complainants who require support to engage with the process, for example accepting a complaint in an alternative format, providing additional time to respond at particular stages or arranging support with

communication. Students and staff may seek advice and guidance from appropriate support services, student representatives, trade union representatives or colleagues when preparing or pursuing a complaint. ICCS will seek to ensure that individuals are aware of these sources of support and how to access them.

Time Limits

Complaints should normally be submitted as soon as possible and no later than three months after the event or decision that is the subject of the concern, or three months from the date on which the complainant became aware of the matter. Prompt submission helps to ensure that relevant evidence is available, that memories are fresh and that the issues can be addressed while they remain current and capable of remedy.

ICCS may, at its discretion, consider complaints submitted outside this period where there is compelling evidence of good reason for the delay, such as serious illness, bereavement or other circumstances beyond the complainant control. In such cases the complainant should explain the reasons for late submission and provide any supporting evidence. The decision on whether to accept a late complaint will be confirmed in writing and there is no automatic right of appeal against that decision.

Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, ICCS encourages concerns to be raised and resolved informally at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be addressed swiftly through discussion, clarification or the provision of additional information, without the need to invoke the formal complaints procedure. Informal resolution may be particularly suitable where the concern arises from a misunderstanding, a lack of information or a relatively minor difficulty.

Complainants are therefore encouraged, where they feel able, to discuss concerns directly with the relevant member of staff, such as a module tutor, programme leader or service manager. Staff approached with a concern should seek to listen carefully, explain decisions, provide clear information and, where possible, agree practical steps to address the issue. Seeking informal resolution does not remove the complainant right to submit a formal complaint within the overall time limit set out in this policy, and individuals will be advised of this right where appropriate.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Where informal resolution is not appropriate, has not been successful or the matter is of such seriousness that informal steps would be insufficient, a formal complaint may be submitted. Formal complaints should normally be made in writing using the ICCS Complaint Form and sent by email to info@iccs.uk or by post to the Academic Administration Office. The complaint should set out the nature of the concern, key facts including dates and people involved, any steps already taken and the outcome sought, and should include relevant supporting evidence such as correspondence, programme information or other documentation.

On receipt, the complaint will be acknowledged and an initial review will be undertaken to confirm that it falls within the scope of this policy and to determine the most appropriate way forward. A manager who has not been directly involved in the matter complained about will normally be appointed to investigate. The complainant and relevant staff or students may be invited to meetings to clarify the issues and to present their perspective. A written outcome will be provided, explaining the findings, indicating whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part and setting out any actions or remedies. Where a further review stage is available, information about how to request it and the relevant timescales will also be included.

Complex, Collective and Anonymous Complaints

ICCS recognises that some complaints may involve multiple issues, more than one programme or service, or a group of complainants raising the same or similar concern. In such cases the college may adapt the way in which the procedure is applied, while retaining its core principles, in order to manage the complaint efficiently and coherently. This may include appointing a lead investigator, coordinating responses across departments and agreeing common timelines and communication channels.

Where a group of students or stakeholders wishes to bring a collective complaint, ICCS may ask the group to nominate a representative for the purposes of communication and coordination, while ensuring that the views of individual members are appropriately considered. Anonymous complaints will be considered at the discretion of ICCS. While anonymity may limit the ability to investigate fully or to provide individual remedies, the college will consider whether the information received points to wider issues or risks that require attention and may act to address systemic concerns.

Outcomes and Remedies

Where a complaint is upheld, in whole or in part, ICCS will consider what remedies are appropriate in the circumstances, taking into account the nature and impact of the issues identified. Possible outcomes may include an explanation or clarification of what

happened, a formal apology, practical steps to correct an error where this is feasible, actions to improve communication or service delivery, changes to local procedures or practices and staff development measures aimed at preventing recurrence.

Remedies will be proportionate and fair and will not normally include measures that would compromise academic standards or the consistent application of academic regulations. In exceptional cases, and where justified by the specific circumstances and relevant ICCS policies, the college may consider limited financial or other redress. Any recommendations arising from a complaint will be monitored to ensure that agreed actions are implemented and that improvements are embedded in practice.

Confidentiality, Data Protection and Records

Information relating to complaints will be handled in accordance with data protection legislation and ICCS data protection and records management policies. Personal data will be collected and processed only to the extent necessary to manage the complaint, to implement any actions arising and to meet legal or regulatory obligations. Wherever possible, information will be anonymised when used for monitoring and reporting.

Details of a complaint will normally be shared only with those who need the information in order to respond, investigate or implement outcomes. Records of complaints, investigations and decisions will be retained securely for defined periods in line with ICCS retention schedules. Access to such records will be restricted to authorised staff with a legitimate need to know, and complainants have the right to request access to information held about them in accordance with data protection legislation.

Vexatious or Frivolous Complaints

ICCS encourages the responsible use of this policy but will not normally progress complaints that are judged to be frivolous, malicious or vexatious, or where the behaviour of the complainant is unreasonable or abusive. Examples may include repeated complaints about the same issue without new evidence, the use of offensive, discriminatory or threatening language, or refusal to engage with reasonable attempts to clarify or resolve the matter.

Where a complaint is deemed to fall into this category ICCS may decide to limit or withdraw access to the complaints procedure and will inform the complainant of this decision in writing, explaining the reasons. Persistent or serious misuse of the process may be treated as misconduct under the relevant student or staff disciplinary procedures. ICCS will, however, continue to review whether any underlying issues of

legitimate concern can be identified and addressed notwithstanding the behaviour of the complainant.

Monitoring, Reporting and Enhancement

ICCS will monitor complaints at programme, departmental and institutional levels in order to identify trends, recurring themes, areas of good practice and matters requiring improvement. This monitoring may include quantitative data, such as the number and type of complaints, the time taken to resolve them and the proportion upheld, and qualitative information drawn from complaint narratives, outcomes and feedback from complainants and staff.

Findings from complaints monitoring will be reported through appropriate governance and management structures and will inform quality enhancement activity, staff development priorities, risk management and strategic planning. Where necessary, action plans will be developed to address issues highlighted by complaints and progress will be tracked as part of routine quality assurance processes. Learning from complaints will be disseminated, where appropriate, to support continuous improvement across ICCS.

Review of this Policy

This Complaints Policy and Procedures will normally be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner where required by changes in legislation, regulatory expectations, external guidance or organisational structure. The review will draw on evidence from the monitoring of complaints, feedback from students and staff and findings from internal or external audits or reviews, and will take account of developments in sector practice.

Revisions to the policy will be considered and approved through the appropriate academic governance and management processes to ensure that arrangements for the handling of complaints remain effective, transparent, inclusive and aligned with the strategic aims and values of ICCS.

References

- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation UK GDPR.
- Human Rights Act 1998, as applicable to the treatment of students and staff.

- Consumer Rights Act 2015 and Competition and Markets Authority guidance on students as consumers in higher education.
- Office for Students regulatory framework and associated conditions relating to quality, standards, consumer protection and student protection.
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator Good Practice Framework for handling complaints and academic appeals, where applicable.
- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition and Ofqual handbook, where relevant to regulated qualifications and awarding organisation requirements.
- Relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education and other sector bodies on the management of student complaints.