

# Talkback

## Guidance and Policy



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## Summary

There are a number of ways to give the College compliments, complaints and feedback through Talkback:

- ❖ Talkback cards – these are available in public areas at various points throughout campuses, for example, at receptions, Student Services, dining areas, and in teaching rooms.
- ❖ Email - [Talkback@gloscol.ac.uk](mailto:Talkback@gloscol.ac.uk)
- ❖ Via the College website - [www.gloscol.ac.uk](http://www.gloscol.ac.uk) or SharePoint.
- ❖ In writing - The Improvement Support Officer, Gloucestershire College, Llanthony Road, Gloucester, GL2 5RQ.

The Talkback Policy and Procedure are detailed further in this document. In summary:

### **Stage 1**

Any expression of dissatisfaction, you are encouraged to resolve issues locally before a concern becomes a complaint. You should raise the complaint through the appropriate member of staff responsible for providing the service.

### **Stage 2**

If your concern has not been resolved at Stage 1 you can progress your concern to Stage 2 of the procedure.

**Stage 3** - Where a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily at Stage 2 you may wish to progress your complaint to Stage 3, which is the final stage of the College procedure.

***We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.***

### **Appendices:**

Procedure – page 11, 12 and 13  
Flow Chart – page 14 and 15



# Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy

## September 2018

### 1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all services the College provides and is available to students, former students, employers, members of the public, and College employees who wish to raise a complaint or compliment about the service they have received from the College.

This policy does not cover issues relating to individual employment matters as these are the subject of separate procedures such as the College's grievance procedure.

- 1.2 Higher education students studying on a programme validated by one of our partner Universities need to use the College's complaints procedure (Talkback) before escalating a complaint to a University. Every effort has been made to align this procedure to indicators described in Chapters B2 and B9 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Once the College processes have been exhausted Higher Education students may complain to their partner University using their complaints policy. The College will provide all necessary evidence and details pertaining to the complaint to the University as appropriate.
- 1.3 Higher education students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint may be entitled to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, or the Quality Assurance Agency.
- 1.4 Further education students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint may be entitled to complain to the Skills Funding Agency or Ofsted.
- 1.5 Apprenticeship students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint may be entitled to complain to the National Apprenticeship Service.
- 1.6 Complaints must be registered within the academic year in which they take place. In the majority of cases the end date will be 31 July of each academic year. The College will not normally investigate any complaints made more than three months after the incident.
- 1.7 Whilst the College values all complaints, the College will not usually consider or investigate complaints that are received anonymously as this can impede any investigation and communication of an outcome. However, an anonymous complaint may be considered when the



College accepts that there is a compelling case for the matter to be investigated provided there is supporting evidence for the complaint. Where an anonymous complaint is pursued, this will be recorded on the complaints database.

- 1.8 The College will not accept or act upon malicious complaints. The College may take disciplinary action against a complainant where a complaint is found to be malicious. The College may also terminate consideration of a complaint if it considers it to be inappropriate. In such instances the College will inform the complainant why it is terminating consideration of the matter and how to appeal against the decision.
- 1.9 The College will usually only investigate complaints received on behalf of someone else if the complainant is under 19 years of age, or if he/she is over 18 and entitled to community care services and support, and protection (a vulnerable adult) and/or has a learning difficulty or disability and they require assistance with raising their complaint. Where issues affect a whole group, students may submit a complaint as a group complaint. In such a circumstance the College may ask the group to nominate one student to act as group representative.
- 1.10 If a complainant wishes someone else to raise concerns with the College on their behalf, please note that the College has a legal obligation under the Data Protection Act 1998 with regard to the sharing of personal data with third parties. Therefore, in most circumstances the College will require the written permission from the data subject to share their personal data with a third party. Before such content is obtained, the complainant must consider whether their complaint will include any personal data about them. If this is the case, the College needs to be told in advance whether the complainant consents to disclosure of their personal data to the third party raising the complaint on their behalf and what information can be disclosed.
- 1.11 The College operates a staged complaint procedure (see Talkback procedure for further information). All formal complaints, including any decisions reached, are recorded on the complaints database.
- 1.12 Student input is essential in understanding the customer experience and must be used by both academic and professional services teams to inform their quality processes. Any shortcomings in the level of service identified by a complaint must be examined to ensure that the root causes of complaints are addressed.
- 1.13 Students raising a complaint may be advised of the support services available, such as Learner Support, Student Services, Study Skills, which can provide helpful independent support and advice.



- 1.14 The College will make reasonable adjustments to this procedure in accordance with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 Gloucestershire College aims to provide a high quality service to all students, employers, partner organisations, members of the public and employees.
- 2.2 Feedback on the services the College provides is welcomed and this may, from time to time, include dissatisfaction with aspects of the College's services. Anyone who feels it is appropriate to express dissatisfaction should be offered the opportunity to report the circumstances openly and confidently to the College with full assurance that it will be received in a manner which reflects the caring philosophy of the organisation. No complainant will be treated less favourably on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.3 Similarly anyone who wishes to formally compliment the College on aspects of our service, actions, or who wishes to feedback on experiences at College is welcome to do so through the Talkback procedure.
- 2.4 Confidentiality will be respected throughout the operation of this policy, except where any other legal obligation prevails which requires disclosure. Otherwise information will only be released to those who need it for the purposes of investigating or responding to the complaint.
- 2.5 There are separate policies and procedures for dealing with matters such as academic appeals, disciplinary action, or staff grievance. This policy does not replace these.

## **3. Aims**

- 3.1 To deal with each expression of dissatisfaction courteously, sympathetically, fairly and objectively.
- 3.2 To offer an appropriate remedy to anyone who is adversely affected by a service that fails to meet its standards.
- 3.3 To provide procedures for handling complaints which are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.
- 3.4 To provide opportunities for students, employers, partner organisations and members of the public to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage.



## 4. Definitions

4.1 'Complaint' – means “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more people about the College’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College.” For example:

- failure by the College to meet obligations as outlined in public information such as course handbooks;
- misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information the College provides;
- concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration;
- poor quality facilities, learning resources or services provided by the College;
- complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the University.

The following are not normally dealt with as complaints:

- concerns about decisions regarding student progression, academic assessment and awards;
- dissatisfaction about the outcome of an academic misconduct or disciplinary process;
- concerns about a decision made under specific regulations, such as fitness to practise;
- matters relating to external funding agencies, which have their own complaints procedures.

The above lists are not exhaustive.

Complaints regarding assessments should be raised through the Academic Appeals and Extenuating Circumstances Procedures which can be found on the student intranet.

4.2 'Student' – means any student who has registered or enrolled on their course at the College; including current students who are on placement or engaged in work-based learning or on an approved leave of absence. It also includes students who have recently left the College and completed their studies within the previous 3 months.



4.3 'Talkback' is the name of the procedure for making a compliment or complaint to Gloucestershire College. Talkback is available in a number of ways:

- Talkback cards – available in public areas at various point throughout campuses, for example, at receptions, Student Services, dining areas, and in teaching rooms.
- Email [talkback@gloscol.ac.uk](mailto:talkback@gloscol.ac.uk)
- Via the College website, [www.gloscol.ac.uk](http://www.gloscol.ac.uk) or SharePoint.
- Write to: The Improvement Support Officer, Gloucestershire College, Llanthony Road, Gloucester, GL2 5RQ.

4.4 'Vulnerable adult' - means an adult aged 18 or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reasons of mental or other disability or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or is unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

## 5. Responsibility

5.1 The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality, has overall responsibility for this policy and to ensure that this procedure is fit for purpose, is implemented throughout the College and is reviewed regularly.

5.2 All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve informal complaints prior to invoking the Complaints Procedure, be this from a student, former student, parent, employer, employee or member of the public. An exception to this is where the member of staff dealing with the complaint is the subject of the complaint and/or have a clear conflict in the matter.

5.3 Heads of schools and directors/managers of professional services are responsible for receiving, investigation and responding to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints and within prescribed timescales.

5.4 The responsibility for dealing with Stage 3 complaints rests with a Vice Principal depending on the nature of the complaint.

5.5 The Improvement Support Officer is responsible for:

- offering support to complainants in the framing and progressing of a complaint
- logging and maintaining accurate records of all complaints at Stages 2 and 3
- preparing regular reports on data relating to complaints.

## 6. Monitoring and review

6.1 This policy and the Talkback procedure will be reviewed after two years or earlier if required.



6.2 This policy will be approved and its operation monitored via the Executive Team and the Curriculum and Quality Committee of the Board of Governors.

6.3 The College will identify actions from complaints received to improve and develop our services.

## 7. Other Information

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 3 process, you have the opportunity to appeal to the appropriate external body.

For **Further Education** courses this is the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) can investigate complaints about:

- the quality or management of education and training
- undue delay or non-compliance with published procedures
- poor administration by the College
- equality and diversity issues (except where there is a more appropriate mechanism for dealing with the matter through the court, tribunals or other organisations)
- health and safety concerns (unless these are matters for the Health and Safety Executive)

The Education and Skills Funding Agency will not investigate complaints about:


- examination results or curriculum content where a more appropriate form of redress would be the examining body
- individual employment issues (not in the wider public interest), which are a matter for the employer and the employee where employment law provides appropriate remedies
- contractual disputes which arise from a contractual agreement between a provider and a party providing services to the provider or from someone who is not a consumer of the provider's services
- matters that are the subject of legal action
- Higher Education (HE) courses in FE colleges, which you should direct to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (see below)

Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all three stages of the College's Complaints Procedure. If your concern reaches this stage, we will give you full information on how to proceed. You should note that any complaint made to the ESFA must be made in writing within 12 months of exhausting the above Complaints Procedure.

The address for the ESFA is:-

Complaints Team





Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT  
Email: [complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk)

**Apprentices and Employers** can contact the apprenticeship helpline regarding apprenticeship concerns, complaints and enquiries:

National Apprenticeship helpline  
Email: [nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0800 015 0400

For **Higher Education** courses, Higher Education students can appeal to the relevant partner University, and a further complaint can be made to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if you are still not satisfied by the University's response.- <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

The OIA will investigate complaints about, for example:

- teaching and facilities
- student accommodation
- research supervision
- welfare
- discrimination – race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation or religious belief
- bullying and harassment
- Placements
- maladministration
- procedural irregularities
- unfair practices
- disciplinary matters, including plagiarism
- fitness to practice processes

The OIA will not investigate complaints about, for example:

- admissions
- academic judgement
- student employment
- matters which have already been considered by a court or tribunal and where the proceedings have been concluded
- matters which are being considered by a court or tribunal where the proceedings have not been stayed
- matters which the OIA consider have not materially affected the complainant as a student
- the matter complained about was previously considered by another Alternative Dispute Resolution entity
- the OIA will not normally look at complaints where the main issues complained about took place more than three years before the complaint is received by the OIA



Before you can complain to the OIA, you must have exhausted all three stages of the College's Complaints Procedure and if applicable the procedures of the relevant partner University. If your concern reaches this stage, we will give you full information on how to proceed. You should note that any complaint made to the OIA must be made in writing within 12 months of exhausting the Complaints Procedure.

The address for the OIA is:-

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education  
Second Floor  
Abbey Gate  
57-75 Kings Road  
Reading  
Berkshire  
RG1 3AB

Tel: 0118 959 9813

Email: [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

Related policies

Related Policies and Procedures
PROC-09-01 Academic Appeals and Extenuating Circumstances Procedures

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## Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Procedure (including how to appeal a decision)

### Stage 1

#### Students and Apprentices

Students and apprentices are encouraged to resolve issues locally before a concern becomes a complaint. This can be done through various channels:

- Students can raise concerns directly with the person who, in your opinion, is responsible for the problem or with a teacher / leader/ training co-ordinator or assessor.
- Where applicable students can raise issues with their course or programme student representative who may take this to staff / student course meetings or to student forum meetings.

#### Employers

Employers are encouraged to attempt to resolve concerns locally. However, if an employer is dissatisfied, or has concerns with the service provided by the College, they can:

- Raise a concern with the training co-ordinator, assessor or work based learning manager.
- Raise concerns with the Business Development Team.
- Raise a concern with the Director of Employer Training.
- Use an employer forum to bring concerns to attention of managers.

#### Others

Former students, parents, members of the public, employees, or any incidental user of the College services who are dissatisfied or have concerns about the service provided, should, in the first instance, raise the issue directly with the person who, in their opinion, is responsible or with the supervisor or manager responsible for the area concerned. For example, if you have a concern regarding College restaurant facilities you should contact the Restaurant Manager.

The College will aim to conclude Stage 1 without unreasonable delay. The outcome of the informal resolution will usually be communicated in writing to the complainant and should include an apology, if appropriate.

If the complainant does not know who to contact, or is dissatisfied with the informal resolution, or has a more serious concern then the matter should be raised formally using Stage 2 of the procedure.

### Stage 2

If your concern has not been resolved at Stage 1 you can progress your complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure. Complaints should be directed to the Improvement Support Officer, using one of the methods identified in 4.3.



In your correspondence you should clearly identify the nature of your concern at Stage 1, and, if appropriate, the individual against whom the complaint is being made. Any relevant evidence may also be submitted. You should also include what has been done to attempt to resolve this. Where the College requires additional information from the complainant, such information should be provided to the College within 5 working days to allow sufficient time for the College to fully consider the complaint.

We will acknowledge receipt that we have received your form within 3 working days. The complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate Senior Manager who will take responsibility to fully investigate the matter. The College's Senior Manager will consider the complaint provided they have had no prior involvement in the complaint at Stage 1 in which case an alternative Senior Manager will consider the complaint.

A meeting may be arranged with the complainant to discuss the complaint. The College aims to provide you with a formal response within 15 working days. If we are unable to do so in this timescale you will be kept informed of our progress and a likely timeframe for a response.

### **Stage 3**

Where a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily at Stage 2 you may wish to appeal the outcome to Stage 3 which is the final stage of the College procedure (appealing a decision). This should be made in writing within 10 working days of when you received the Stage 2 response. Again you should explain why the outcome of Stage 2 is not satisfactory, what you have done to try to remedy the complaint informally and what you would like us to do next. Correspondence for Stage 3 should be addressed to the Vice Principal, Students, Gloucestershire College, Llanthony Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL2 5RQ. If the Vice Principal, Students has had any prior involvement in the matter, the complaint will be considered by an alternative Vice Principal.

We will acknowledge receipt of your request for a Stage 3 review within 5 working days. The Vice Principal, Students may consider whether there are any alternative means of resolving the complaint.

The Vice Principal, Students will aim to provide you with a response (together with reasons for any decision reached) to your Stage 3 complaint within 20 working days. If we are not able to do so within this timescale, we will write to you and let you know a likely timeframe for a response.

### **Higher Education**

For complaints from Higher Education students the College will issue a Completion of Procedures letter within 28 days to enable a student to request an external review by the OIA if he or she remains dissatisfied at the conclusion of the review stage.

This is the final stage of the College's complaints Talkback procedure.

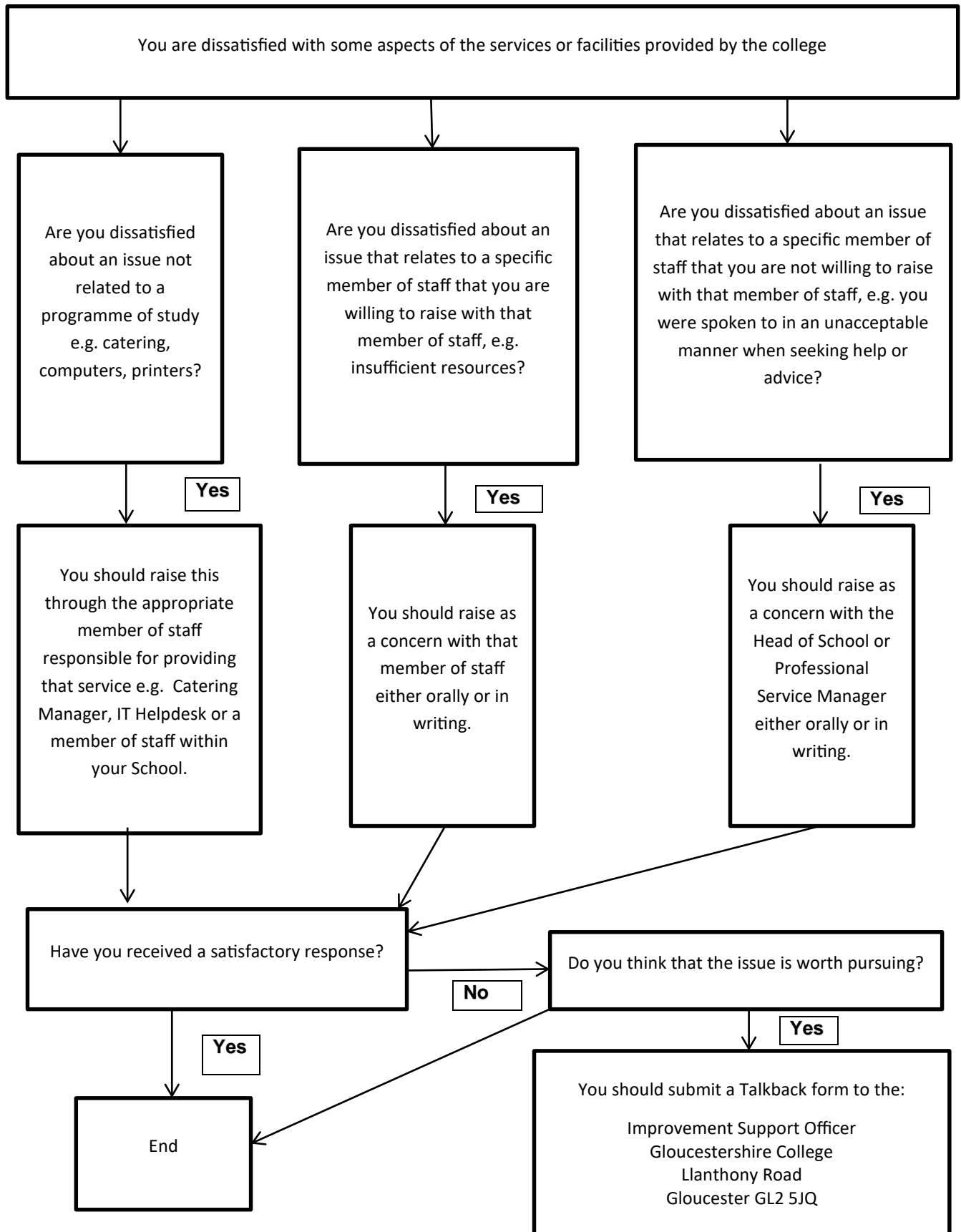


## **External Resolution**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 3 process you have the opportunity to appeal to the appropriate external body as detailed under paragraph 7 'Other Information' of this policy.



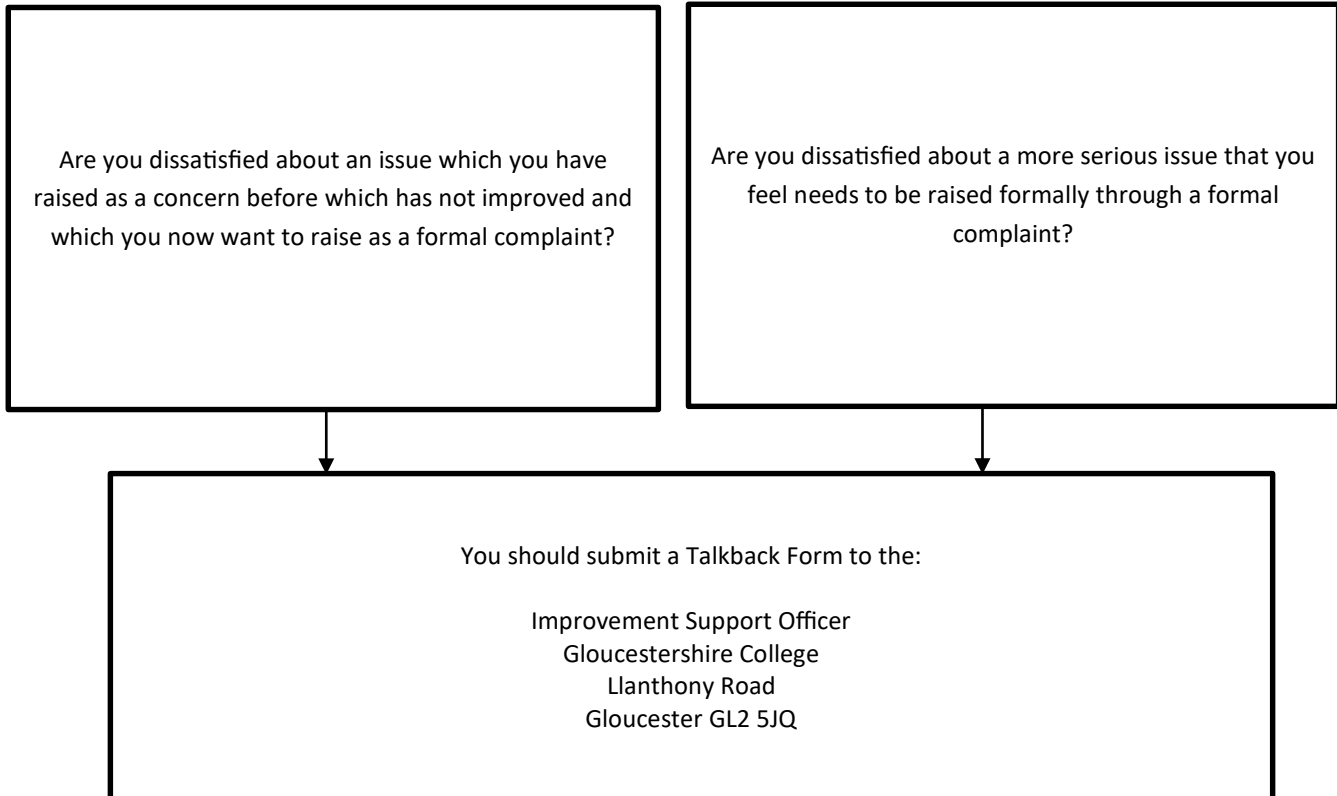
## Raising a concern Stage 1:





## Talkback Stage 2:

### Raising a complaint



## Talkback Stage 3:

### Appealing a decision

