

POLICY NUMBER:

EFFECTIVE: September 2015

UPDATED: November 2016

St. Lawrence College recognizes the need to prescribe a set of administrative procedures to assist staff in addressing a complaint made by either a student or a member of the public. This policy reflects the College's commitment to address complaints in a prompt, fair, and effective manner. Our objective is to resolve the issues of dissatisfaction as close to the point of contact as can be reasonably managed. Our intention is to continuously improve our services and to achieve high standards in part through diligent consideration of all complaints. We also continually seek feedback from our students and customers by providing a feedback card in our Student Services Centres on each campus and/or through email at feedback@sl.on.ca.

BACKGROUND

Definitions

Complaint: An expression, either oral or written, of some discontent or dissatisfaction with the College by one or more individuals about its standards of service, its operation, or its employees

Complainant: Can be a student, vendor, member of the public, and or a new applicant

Manager, Associate Director, or Campus Dean/Associate Dean: Refers to an individual who has full supervisory responsibility for an employee and/or a service unit/department

Senior Manager: Refers to the next senior level of management – dean, director, or vice-president

Support Person: While not required, a support person may be chosen by any of the parties during the process to support the complainant or respondent involved. The support person will not be permitted to advocate for, or speak on behalf of, the complainant.

Working Days: Business days, i.e., Monday to Friday not including a statutory holiday

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures so that the concerns of students and customers can be addressed and resolved appropriately without fear of reprisal. This includes complaints from students, parents, customers, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors, consumers of products/ancillary services, and others. This procedure applies to circumstances not already covered by existing policy and procedures and specifically, Student Code of Conduct, Academic Appeals, Workplace Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying, Sexual Assault, and Sexual Violence. The College is committed to ensuring this policy is enforced in a consistent, fair, and non-discriminatory way.

APPROVED BY: CLT March 12, 2015

REFERENCE:

LINKS TO OTHER POLICY: Student Code of Conduct, Student Academic Appeal, Workplace Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying, Sexual Assault and Sexual Violence

COMPLAINT POLICY (March 12, 2015)

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. The College will respond to any dissatisfaction with its services fairly and promptly.
 - An initial response is provided within 10 working days.
 - A further more detailed response is made if appropriate.
 - The complainant may be offered a facilitated meeting with the parties involved if appropriate.
 - The complainant can appeal to the senior manager if dissatisfied with the outcome.
 - Information on how to move the complaint to the next level is provided if the complainant is not satisfied with the College's initial response.
2. While confidentiality is respected whenever possible, it is not typically possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant parties in order to allow the College a fair opportunity to resolve the issue. It is hoped that most complaints can be addressed informally. Where complaints are very serious or cannot be resolved informally, recourse to the formal process is made.
3. All College staff have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously, and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedure set out in Appendix A. Advice and information regarding the complaint process for students or clients can be obtained from Academic School offices, Student Services, and Student Government offices.
4. Department managers, associate deans, and/or senior management have the responsibility to resolve a complaint, and to lead or to contribute to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate. The Vice- President, Student Services and Human Resources is responsible for the appeal process.
5. A student who makes a complaint found to be vexatious, mischievous, or malicious, following the investigation under the Complaints Procedure, is deemed to be in breach of the Student Code of Conduct policy. The onus is on the student or the client to present sufficient evidence to warrant investigation under the procedure.
6. A student or client is protected from retaliation in accordance with this policy as long as the complaint is made in good faith and is not knowingly false or materially inaccurate. If retaliation occurs, further investigation is warranted.
7. Complaints made anonymously are considered if there is enough information provided in the complaint submission to allow the College to make further meaningful inquiries. If, however, an anonymous complainant does not provide sufficient information, the College has the right not to investigate the complaint. Complaints from third parties are only accepted if the student confirms in writing that the third party is acting on his/her behalf and if the student wishes the complaint to be investigated.

APPROVED BY: CLT March 12, 2015

REFERENCE:

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MONITORING

All areas of the College are accountable for ensuring that the principles of this policy are upheld. It is the responsibility of the Vice-President, Student Services and Human Resources to maintain a clear record of all complaints. The Office of the Vice- President prepares an annual report on the formal complaints and the outcomes and presents the report to the senior management team.

POLICY REVISION DATE

This is reviewed every three years.

The Office of the Senior Vice-President, Student Services and Human Resources is authorized to approve minor changes to the policy in response to legal changes and best practices.

The College views complaints, if substantiated, as opportunities to use the findings and the feedback for continuous improvement of services and standards.

APPENDICES AND ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Procedures

Appendix B – Complaint Form

Appendix C - Complaint Process Flowchart

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APPENDIX A - PROCEDURES

1. Step 1 – Informal Process (Front-line)

- 1.1 Concerns are raised in the first instance with the person or area concerned as soon as possible and no later than five working days after the incident. This timeline is reconsidered in extenuating circumstances only. Complainants are normally directed to the person responsible for the service or program. If appropriate, a meeting of the complainant and the area of complaint is arranged to arrive at an agreed upon resolution.
- 1.2 A complaint about a member of staff is referred to the appropriate manager of the staff member's department or a designate.
- 1.3 Verbal complaints made in Reception and to staff in public areas and requests to meet with the president are referred to the manager or to the associate dean of the department of the area of complaint or to an appropriate representative.
- 1.4 At this informal stage, complaints may be made in person, by phone, or by email. The complainant is kept informed of progress at all stages with a written or verbal response provided within ten working days. If the issue is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the complaint moves to step 2 within five days of receiving notification of the decision.

2. Step 2 - Formal Process

- 2.1 A complainant who has been through Step 1 and remains dissatisfied submits a complaint form (Appendix B) within five days of receiving notification of the decision. This form is available in all Academic School offices, Student Services, Student Government offices, and on the College website. The completed form is sent to the Complaints Resolution Office located in the Student Services and Human Resources Office – Kingston Campus, or is sent via email to complaint@sl.on.ca.
- 2.2 The Complaints Resolution Office documents and reviews the complaint and responds to the complainant within five days and identifies the individual who will be addressing the concern. The Complaints Resolution Office forwards the complaint to the appropriate senior manager for follow-up and response.

2.3 The senior manager investigates the complaint and responds to the complainant within ten working days. The manager may decide to:

- Propose an amicable settlement.
- Dismiss the complaint as unfounded with reasons.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, and take appropriate steps to address the issue and avoid a similar problem in the future.

2.4 All complaints are to be addressed as quickly as possible. All formal complaints (Step 2) are acknowledged in writing, including the detailed response, within 15 working days. All formal complaints receive a formal written response outlining the outcome and the right of appeal where appropriate. The Complaints Resolution Office is copied on all decisions.

3. Step 3 - Appeal

3.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response to the complaint, he/she may appeal in writing to the Vice-President Student Services and Human Resources through the Complaints Resolution Office within five days of receiving notification of the Step 2 formal decision.

3.2 The Vice-President will review the decision, responds within ten days of receiving the appeal and decides to:

- Uphold the original decision or to dismiss the complaint as unfounded.
- Refer the complaint to the area concerned and to propose an amicable settlement.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, to offer an apology, and to recommend that appropriate steps be taken by the manager responsible to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem in the future.

3.3 The decision of the Vice-President is final and the complainant and senior manager are advised in writing of the outcome.

4. Further Assistance

- 4.1 The Complaint Policy and Procedure is published on the College website and is available through SLC.me. Copies of the Complaint Policy and Procedure, including the complaint forms, are available in the academic school offices, Student Services, and in Student Government offices.
- 4.2 Staff requiring assistance are to contact their immediate supervisor. Students requiring assistance are to approach the receptionist in the appropriate academic school offices or the Student Services Centres.
- 4.3 While every effort is made to respond according to the timelines, there may be, on occasion, an extension granted if both parties are in agreement.

Formal Complaint Form

Please read the Complaints Procedure before completing this form. Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, consistent with a full investigation of the complaint. Complaints made anonymously may not be accepted

Today's Date
(MM/DD/YYYY)

Student ID
number

Email Address

First Name

Last Name

Program (if applicable)

Campus

.....

Date of incident
or situation
MM/DD/YYYY

Time of Incident

Location of incident

Please describe what happened. Be as detailed as possible including any witnesses.

If the complaint was received via e-mail, please indicate here and attach a copy.

Desired outcome

Did you raised this issue informally first?

Yes
No

If Yes, who did you raise it with

If No, please explain why the issue was not raised informally first

If Yes, what was their response

I declare that to the best of my knowledge, this form contains a complete and accurate account of all the factors relevant to my complaint. I understand that a copy of this form may be provided to a member of staff who is the subject of the complaint, or who is otherwise involved, and that making a complaint which is found to be mischievous or malicious may be deemed to be a breach of the Code of Conduct Policy.

Signature:

Date:

The completed form should be addressed to the Complaints Resolution Office, Vice-President Student Services and Human Resources, or sent by Email to Complaint@sl.on.ca.

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Complaint Received
MM/DD/YYYY

Received by:

Related Dates:

Status of Complainant:

Action Taken

- Not Started
- In Progress
- Complete

Complaint Policy

