

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

Francis James is committed to delivering a positive learner experience. The Complaints Policy relates to matters that are the responsibility of Francis James, but which do not directly relate to academic complaints about assessment board outcomes relating to assessment outcomes, student progression decisions and award outcomes. This policy sets out the principles and procedures for complaints.

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to complaints against decisions relating to:

1. Non-Academic Complaints:
 - Learner support services
 - Library services and resources
 - Facilities, resources and other learner support services
2. Academic Complaints:
 - The quality or delivery of teaching, supervision or programme content
3. Other
 - Actions or lack of actions by Francis James' staff or departments that affect a learner's experience
4. Exclusions:
 - Complaints about admissions decisions when applying to study with Francis James.
 - Complaints that fall under separate institutional policies and processes (e.g. academic misconduct or harassment, bullying or disciplinary issues).
 - Appeals relating to Assessment & Exam Board outcomes
 - Matters outside Francis James' control (e.g. personal disputes between learners, wider government policy).

3. Principles

1. Fairness: All complaints will be handled in a fair, unbiased and timely manner, respecting the rights of all parties.
2. Transparency: Procedures and decisions will be clearly documented, and learners will be informed of progress at each stage.
3. Accessibility: Information regarding this policy will be widely accessible, and reasonable adjustments will be made in applying this policy for learners with disabilities or additional learning needs.
4. Confidentiality: All cases will be treated confidentially, and records will be managed in accordance with Data Protection legislation.
5. No Detriment: Learners will not suffer reprisals or disadvantage for raising a genuine complaint in good faith.

4. Definitions

- Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction relating to the quality of the learner's educational experience or the services provided by Francis James.

5. Complaints Procedure

1. Stage 1: Informal Resolution
 - Wherever possible, learners should attempt an informal resolution by discussing the issue with the relevant department, service area or staff member.
 - Quick and amicable resolutions are often reached at this level.
2. Stage 2: Formal Complaint
 - If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the learner submits a formal Complaint Form within a reasonable timeframe (usually within 20 working days of the issue or the outcome of informal discussions).
 - The complaint should detail the nature of the concern, the steps already taken and any requested remedies.
3. Stage 3: Investigation and Resolution
 - The Complaints Team or a designated investigator reviews the complaint, gathering evidence and potentially conducting interviews.
 - A decision is normally communicated within 25 working days of receipt of the formal complaint, outlining the outcome and any remedial actions.
 - Possible outcomes include:
 - Complaint Upheld (with corrective measures).
 - Complaint Partially Upheld.
 - Complaint Not Upheld.
4. Stage 4: Review of Decision
 - If dissatisfied with the Stage 3 outcome, the learner can request a review on specified grounds (eg, procedural irregularity or new evidence).
 - A senior manager, independent of the original investigation, will review the process.
 - A Completion of Procedures Letter is issued at the conclusion of the review.

6. External Review

- If a learner exhausts the internal processes and remains dissatisfied, they may escalate the issue to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within 12 months of receiving the Completion of Procedures Letter, which is issued by Francis James at the end of their processes. The OIA offers an independent review of the complaint or appeal decision.

7. Monitoring and Oversight

- Monitoring: Francis James maintains records of all complaints to identify trends, highlight areas for improvement and ensure policy effectiveness.
- Reporting: An annual report on the volume, nature and outcomes of academic appeals and complaints is presented to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee to inform continuous quality enhancement.
- Review: This policy is reviewed annually or as needed, ensuring ongoing compliance with OfS requirements and alignment with good practice.

8. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- All personal data related to appeals and complaints is handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Information is only shared with individuals involved in resolving the matter, unless disclosure is required by law or regulatory obligations.

9. Policy review

- This policy will be reviewed annually by Francis James to ensure continued fairness and accuracy, and consistency with other institutional policies and procedures.

Written By	Revision Date	Revision Number	Approved By	Review Date
K Tucker	31/12/2024	1	 S Graham	31/12/2025
H Barratt	28/07/2025	2	 S Graham	08/07/2026