

## POLICY 4.10 COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Labette Community College's (LCC) mission is to provide quality learning opportunities in a supportive environment for success in a changing world. This is done through the college's core values shared by students, faculty, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees.

Comments and compliments are valuable, welcome, and important when they are received, either verbally or in writing. Comments and compliments enable the college to understand that services are being provided satisfactorily, provide positive feedback to staff, or influence organizational and service development.

The college welcomes every opportunity to monitor and improve services, and having a "comments, compliments, and complaints" policy with a clear procedure for resolving complaints is one way of addressing concerns.

The college recognizes that there will be times when employees make mistakes, or get things wrong. To learn from mistakes, the college must know about them and encourage people to provide that information. Such comments or complaints will always be taken seriously, recorded, and responded to as detailed in the procedure for resolving complaints that accompany this policy statement.

Adopted: 5/4/23

## **1. The College Approach**

Labette Community College views comments, compliments and complaints as a valuable source of feedback from its customers and an opportunity to respond to complaints by reviewing practices and processes. Where appropriate this may involve change and improvement. The practice at the college is to distinguish between a comment, compliment, informal and formal complaint.

## **2. Definitions:**

### **Comment**

A comment is a positive or negative feedback about a service which requires no formal response.

### **Compliment**

The college is happy to receive any compliments to be acknowledged. Compliments are unsolicited expressions of thanks or praise for a member of staff, a service, or the college as an organization.

### **Informal Complaints**

Informal complaints are those raised, usually verbally and directly with a staff member involved in delivering the service. The majority of complaints are informal, responded to and usually resolved promptly and effectively. No formal records are kept of these complaints; however, they are logged as an official communication to the college. The person complaining may not perceive the matter as a complaint, but rather, an inquiry, suggestion or expression of a concern.

### **Formal Complaints**

A formal complaint is a written expression of the complainant's dissatisfaction with the outcome of the informal complaint process. A formal complaint may also be the initial complaint filed when the complainant believes the issue is of a more serious nature that cannot be resolved at the informal complaint level. Any formal complaint will be appropriately documented.

## **3. Scope of the Complaints Procedure**

The complaint procedure covers complaints from students, employees, customers who purchase a service provided by the College, visitors, or members of the local community.

With regards to complaints specifically relating to any complaint regarding a staff member, will be reviewed by the Human Resource Director to determine the most appropriate method of addressing the matter depending on which college policies and procedures will control the review and resolution of the complaint.

Complaints must be filed within 15 business days of the event or issue which is the basis for the complaint.

This procedure does not include areas that are specifically covered by other college policies and procedures such as:

- Non-Discrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Harassment Policy 2.01
- Sexual Harassment Policy 2.010
- Academic Misconduct Procedure 3.07
- Appeal of Final Grade Procedure 3.18
- Student Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure 4.08
- Working Conditions (Policy 7.01, 8.01, 9.01)
- Payment of Educational Fees and Refunds Procedure 4.02

Please see these specific policies and procedures for the appropriate process to file a complaint or grievance related to those issues.

**4.** Any complaints against the President should be referred to the Board of Trustees Chair, via e-mail to the Board Clerk at [boardclerk@labette.edu](mailto:boardclerk@labette.edu).

#### **5. Confidentiality**

Anonymous complaints will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the college president. The president's decision whether an anonymous complaint is investigated will be final.

#### **6. Advice and Guidance**

Written guidance on the complaint procedure is available on the college's website. The complaint policy and procedure is managed by President's Council. Complainants can seek advice and support regarding the operation of the complaint process from any of the college's Vice Presidents.

#### **7. Fair Treatment**

No individual filing a complaint under this process, whether successfully or otherwise, will be treated less favorably by any member of staff than if the complaint had not been submitted. All staff involved in handling any stage of a complaint have a duty to ensure that any decision made regarding assessment of evidence, or the treatment of a student, is not influenced a complaint is filed. If evidence to the contrary is found, the staff member may be subject to action under the Performance Improvement Policy and Procedure.

## Compliments and comments

A number of systems are in place to assist with filing a compliment or comment:

- A suggestion system is in place in the following locations on campus:  
Student Union, Second Floor of the Main Building
- Via email to [comments@labette.edu](mailto:comments@labette.edu)
- Via feedback questionnaires or focus groups
- LCC Website

## Complaint Process

### Stage 1: Informal complaint

The complainant should normally identify their dissatisfaction informally to an appropriate member of staff (e.g. faculty, financial aid advisor, finance assistant, coach, custodian, etc.). The complaint must be made as soon as possible and, in any case, not later than 15 business days after the reason for the complaint. A complaint can be raised in person, via telephone or in writing.

If the staff member with whom the informal complaint is filed is unable to resolve the issue, it will be referred to a supervisor.

If the complaint is about a particular staff member, it is a requirement that the staff member be made fully aware of the complaint and the complainant's identity as soon as possible.

Complaints made directly to the President will also follow this initial procedure.

The staff member investigating the complaint will document the outcome as follows:

- The complaint is not substantiated
- The parties reached an acceptable solution
- The complaint is substantiated and an appropriate resolution is implemented
- The complaint is not resolved at the informal level but is sufficiently serious to warrant direct referral to the formal stage

A record will be kept of the outcome.

### Stage 2: Formal stage

Formal complaints must be in writing and filed with the Executive Assistant to the President. If the complaint is against the President it must be with the Clerk of the Board of Trustees.

Complainants must identify themselves in order for a complaint to be investigated. Anonymous complaints will only be investigated in exceptional circumstances as determined by the President.

Complainants may be asked to provide further details if the written complaint does not clarify the reasons for the complaint.

The appropriate Vice President will appoint an appropriate senior manager to investigate the complaint. When the results of the investigation are known, the Vice Presidents or designee will make one of the following decisions:

- Dismiss the complaint if it is not substantiated
- Uphold the complaint in whole or part and implement the appropriate resolution

A record of the outcome will be maintained.

#### **Response times to complaints:**

All complaints, whether informal or formal, will be addressed as quickly as possible. The complainant will receive an initial response in writing within 15 days of being filing the complaint, followed by a more detailed response within a reasonable time frame, if appropriate.

#### **Appeal**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, an appeal may be filed with the Clerk of the Board of Trustees within five (5) days of receiving the final resolution at the Stage 2 Formal level. The Board of Trustees will conduct the appeal or appoint a panel of three independent staff members to hear the complainant's appeal. If a panel is selected to hear the appeal, it will conduct a hearing, prepare a decision, and submit it to the Board of Trustees for a final decision.

The Complainant has the right to be represented by a friend or advocate at any level of the complaint procedure.

Complainant will be provided with not less than five (5) days' notice of the hearing.

Each party is given the right to make a statement and ask questions. The decision of the Board of Trustees is binding on all parties. The complainant shall be notified in writing of the Board of Trustees' decision not later than 15 days from the date of the hearing.

#### **Responsibilities for implementing the policy**

All staff have a responsibility for receiving comments, compliments or complaints, treating them seriously and making sure they inform their supervisors. Staff should deal with comments, compliments, or complaints promptly and appropriately.

Supervisors have a responsibility to contribute towards an investigation into a complaint when it is considered appropriate.

Administrators are responsible for dealing with complaints which have reached the formal stage and might become involved informally in dealing with other complaints. The Executive Assistant to the President has a responsibility to keep a record of all formal complaints, Labette Community College's response, and to report annually to the President of the College.

The President is responsible for ensuring that the complaint policy and procedures operate effectively. Board of Trustees will for complaints is against the President of the College.

**Documentation of Complaints:**

The Executive Assistant to the President shall maintain a log of all informal and formal complaints. The log will include the following information:

- Complainant name
- Complainant status (student, community member, etc.)
- Date
- Brief summary of complaint
- Outcome

Sample:

Date	Name	Status	Brief	Outcome
4/1/2000	Joe Cardinal	Student	Sidewalk slippery	XXXXX
4/2/2001	Joe Cardinal	Community	No signage for Thiebaud Theatre	XXXXX

The log of all Formal Complaints will also include the following documentation:

- Complainant’s written documentation of complaint
- College’s written responses

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