Cardiff Academy

POLICY /// STUDENT WELFARE AND SAFEGUARDING

Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

How students, applicants, parents and sponsors can raise a concern or complaint, how Cardiff Academy will investigate it, the timescales we commit to, and how complaints can be escalated, including to an independent panel and to our university partners.

REFERENCE	**CA-WEL-08**	VERSION	**1.0 (Approved)**
POLICY OWNER	**Principal**	APPROVED BY	**Board of Governors**
ISSUE DATE	**October 2026**	APPROVAL DATE	**October 2026**
REVIEW CYCLE	**Annual**	NEXT REVIEW DUE	**October 2027**
APPLIES TO	**Applicants, students, parents/guardians, sponsors, agents and all staff**	PUBLISHED	**Website (public), Student Handbook, staff portal**

RELATED POLICIES CA-ACA-07 Academic Appeals; CA-WEL-01 Safeguarding and Child Protection; CA-GOV-10 Whistleblowing; CA-ADM-02 Fees, Refunds and Cancellations; CA-WEL-05 Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct; CA-INF-01 Data Protection

LEGAL ENTITY Cardiff Education Group Ltd, trading as Cardiff Academy (Company No. 14569122). Registered office: 168 City Road, Cardiff CF24 3JE. Teaching premises: 8 Drake Walk, Cardiff CF10 4LG

1 Purpose

Cardiff Academy welcomes feedback, including complaints, as a way to put things right for the individual and improve what we do for everyone. This policy explains how to raise a concern or complaint, what will happen next, how long it should take, and what to do if you are not satisfied with the outcome.

The procedure is designed to be fair, accessible, timely and confidential. It is the Academy's **Stage 1 (local) resolution process** for students who will progress to a partner university, and it is the procedure referred to in our Terms and Conditions and on our website.

2 Scope

2.1 Who can use this procedure

- Applicants (including those who have not yet enrolled)
- Current students on any Cardiff Academy programme, including students who are under 18
- Former students, provided the complaint is made within three months of leaving
- Parents, legal guardians and education guardians of students under 18, or of adult students who have given written consent
- Sponsors (for example a government scholarship body or employer) and education agents acting with the student's written consent

2.2 What this procedure covers

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by Cardiff Academy, its staff or anyone acting on its behalf. Examples include:

- the quality of teaching, learning resources, timetabling or course delivery
- information we gave before or after enrolment, including marketing and advice from agents acting for us
- administrative services, fees, invoices and refunds
- facilities, premises, health and safety
- pastoral care, welfare support and the behaviour of staff
- treatment that a person considers unfair or discriminatory

2.3 What this procedure does not cover

Some matters have their own procedures because different rules or timescales apply. If you are not sure which route to use, contact the Complaints Coordinator, who will direct you.

Matter	Procedure to use
Disagreement with a mark, grade, progression or award decision	CA-ACA-07 Academic Appeals Policy
Concern that a child or adult at risk is being harmed	CA-WEL-01 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy – tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately
Bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct by another student	CA-WEL-05 Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy (a complaint may run alongside)
Staff reporting wrongdoing in the public interest	CA-GOV-10 Whistleblowing Policy
A decision to refuse admission	CA-ADM-01 Admissions Policy (admissions review)
A disciplinary decision taken against a student	CA-WEL-04 Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy (appeal stage)
Complaints about a partner university's own decisions or services	The university's own complaints procedure

SAFEGUARDING FIRST If a complaint reveals that a student or another person may be at risk of harm, the member of staff receiving it will pass it to the DSL straight away. The safeguarding concern is dealt with first. The complaint procedure resumes once it is safe to do so.

3 Principles

We will:

- treat every complainant with courtesy, respect and fairness, and make sure no one is disadvantaged for making a complaint in good faith
- deal with complaints at the earliest possible stage and as close as possible to where the problem arose
- make the procedure accessible, including providing translation or interpretation, accepting complaints in a student's first language where we can, and making reasonable adjustments for disabled complainants
- make sure that the person investigating a complaint has not been involved in the matter complained about and has no conflict of interest
- keep complaints confidential and share information only with those who need it to investigate or resolve the matter
- explain our decisions in writing with reasons, and tell the complainant what they can do next
- learn from complaints and report on them to senior leaders and the Board

We expect complainants to raise concerns promptly, provide accurate information, take part in the process constructively and treat staff with courtesy. Anonymous complaints will be considered but may be difficult to investigate fully. Complaints that are vexatious or pursued in an abusive way may be handled under section 9.

4 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Governors	Approves this policy; receives an annual complaints report; provides an independent member for Stage 3 panels
Principal	Owns this policy; decides Stage 2 complaints or appoints an independent investigator; ensures lessons are acted on
Complaints Coordinator (Razwan Nazir, Chief Financial Officer)	Logs every formal complaint, sends acknowledgements, tracks deadlines, keeps the Complaints Register and prepares termly reports
All staff	Try to resolve concerns informally; record Stage 1 concerns; know how to direct complaints and safeguarding concerns
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Takes over any complaint that raises a safeguarding concern

5 The procedure

5.1 Stage 1 – Early resolution

Most concerns can be resolved quickly by talking to the person concerned or their manager. Students can raise a concern with their teacher, personal tutor, the Student Welfare Officer, the Director of Studies or Reception, in person, by email or by phone.

- The member of staff will listen, try to resolve the matter, and agree what will happen next.

- Staff record every Stage 1 concern on the Concerns Log (date, issue, action, outcome) so that patterns can be identified.
- We aim to resolve Stage 1 concerns within **5 working days**.
- If the matter is not resolved, or is too serious or sensitive to deal with informally, the complainant may go straight to Stage 2.

5.2 Stage 2 – Formal complaint

A formal complaint should be made in writing, using the Complaint Form (Appendix A) or by email to enquiries@cardiffacademy.co.uk, or by letter addressed to the Complaints Coordinator. A member of staff will help anyone who needs support to put their complaint in writing. The complaint should include:

- the complainant's name and contact details, and the student's name and ID if different
- what happened, when, and who was involved
- any steps already taken to resolve it
- the outcome the complainant is seeking
- any supporting evidence

Formal complaints should normally be made within **three months** of the event, or of the complainant becoming aware of it. Late complaints are accepted where there is good reason.

What happens next

1. The Complaints Coordinator logs the complaint and sends a written acknowledgement within **3 working days**, naming the person who will investigate.
2. The Principal appoints an investigator who has not been involved. If the complaint is about the Principal, the Chair of the Board appoints the investigator.
3. The investigator reviews documents, speaks to the complainant and to relevant staff and students, and keeps a written record. The complainant may be accompanied at any meeting by a friend, parent, guardian or student representative (not a legal representative at this stage).
4. The investigator decides whether the complaint is upheld, partly upheld or not upheld, and recommends any remedy.
5. The complainant receives a written outcome, with reasons and details of how to request Stage 3, within **20 working days** of acknowledgement. If more time is needed, we will explain why and give a new date.

Possible remedies include an explanation, an apology, a change to a decision, additional teaching or support, a fee adjustment or refund, or a change to our procedures.

5.3 Stage 3 – Review by an independent panel

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 2 outcome, they may ask for a review by writing to the Complaints Coordinator within **10 working days** of receiving it, explaining why they remain dissatisfied.

- A review panel of three people is convened: a senior manager not previously involved (Chair), a member of the Board of Governors, and **one person who is independent of the management and running of the Academy**. The independent member will not be a member of staff, an owner or a relative of either.

- The panel meets within **15 working days** of the request (or as soon as practicable if the request falls in a holiday period). The complainant is invited to attend and may be accompanied.
- The panel reviews whether the procedure was followed fairly and whether the Stage 2 outcome was reasonable, considering any new evidence that could not have been provided earlier.
- The panel's written decision, with reasons and any recommendations, is sent to the complainant, and where relevant the person complained about, within **5 working days** of the meeting.
- A copy of the findings and recommendations is kept at the Academy and is available for inspection by the Principal and the proprietor.

The Stage 3 decision completes the Academy's internal procedure. The complainant will receive a **Completion of Procedures letter** confirming this.

5.4 After the internal procedure

- **Students progressing to a partner university:** where a complaint concerns matters covered by a progression or partnership agreement, the complainant may refer it to the partner university under that university's procedure once our procedure is complete. The Completion of Procedures letter will explain this where it applies.
- **Students under 18 or their parents** may also raise concerns with the relevant regulator (see Appendix B).
- **British Council Accreditation UK:** students on accredited English language courses may contact the British Council if they remain dissatisfied after completing our procedure.
- **Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI):** ISI does not investigate individual complaints but will consider information that suggests the Academy is not meeting the standards.
- **Data protection complaints** may be made to the Information Commissioner's Office after our procedure is complete.

6 Complaints about fees, refunds and agents

Complaints about fees, invoices or refunds are handled under this procedure and recorded separately in the Complaints Register so that they can be reported to inspectors. Where a complaint concerns an education agent acting for the Academy, we will investigate the agent's conduct under CA-GOV-12 Education Agent Recruitment and Management Policy, and may suspend or end the agent's contract.

7 Students under 18 and adults at risk

- Parents or guardians of a student under 18 will be kept informed of any complaint made by or about the student, unless doing so would put the student at risk.
- A student under 18 may make a complaint in their own right and will be supported by a member of staff of their choosing.
- Any meeting with a student under 18 will be arranged so that the student has an appropriate adult present.

8 Records, confidentiality and data protection

- The Complaints Coordinator keeps a **Complaints Register** recording, for every formal complaint: the date received, nature of complaint, whether it concerned fees, the stage at which it was resolved, the outcome and any action taken.
- Complaint files are kept securely and confidentially for **6 years** from the date the complaint closed, in line with CA-INF-01 Data Protection Policy. Correspondence, statements and records are confidential, except where the Secretary of State, an inspectorate, a partner university or UKVI requests access, or where disclosure is required by law.
- Personal data is processed only for handling the complaint and improving our services.

9 Unreasonable or vexatious complaints

We will not normally investigate a complaint that has already been fully investigated and concluded, unless new and significant evidence is provided. If a complainant behaves in an abusive, threatening or persistently unreasonable way, the Principal may restrict how they contact the Academy (for example, to one named member of staff or to written communication only). Any restriction is confirmed in writing, kept under review, and does not stop us considering genuinely new complaints.

10 Learning from complaints and reporting

- The Complaints Coordinator produces a **termly complaints report** for the Senior Leadership Team, analysing numbers, themes, timeliness and outcomes, including Stage 1 concerns.
- The Principal presents an **annual complaints report** to the Board of Governors and to the Academic Board, including actions taken as a result.
- Relevant themes are reported to partner universities through annual monitoring and to the British Council and ISI at inspection.
- The number of formal complaints registered in the preceding academic year is made available to parents and students on request.

11 How this policy is made known

This policy is published on the Academy website and summarised in the Student Handbook, the Under-18 Information for Parents pack and the pre-arrival information. It is explained at induction, displayed on student noticeboards, and is available in simplified English and, on request, in other formats.

12 Monitoring and review

The Principal reviews this policy annually, or sooner if legislation, accreditation requirements or partner university agreements change. Changes are approved by the Board of Governors.

Appendix A – Complaint Form

Section	Information required
Your details	Name; student ID (if applicable); programme; email; phone; your relationship to the student if you are not the student
Your complaint	What happened, when and where; who was involved
Steps already taken	Who you have spoken to (Stage 1) and what happened
Outcome sought	What you would like the Academy to do
Evidence	List any documents attached
Support needed	Interpreter, translation, reasonable adjustment, accompanying person
Consent	If you are complaining on behalf of an adult student, the student's signed consent
Signature and date	

Appendix B – Useful contacts

Organisation	Contact
Complaints Coordinator, Cardiff Academy	enquiries@cardiffacademy.co.uk · 029 2003 7434 · 8 Drake Walk, Cardiff CF10 4LG
Chair of the Board of Governors (complaints about the Principal)	Chair of the Board of Governors, c/o Cardiff Academy, marked "Private and confidential"
British Council Accreditation UK	accreditation.unit@britishcouncil.org (after completing our procedure)
Independent Schools Inspectorate	info@isi.net · 020 7600 0100
Information Commissioner's Office	ico.org.uk · 0303 123 1113
Partner universities	See the Completion of Procedures letter and the relevant university's student complaints procedure

Compliance mapping

This policy has been written to meet, and to evidence, the following external requirements. Inspectors and university partners can use this table to locate the relevant provisions.

ISI Educational Oversight (PFE) standards	Standard 52 (transparent complaints procedure with written records, including fee complaints and stage of resolution); Standard 53 (independent panel stage); Standard 57 (complaints procedure published on website); Standard 63 (information to inspectors)
British Council Accreditation UK criteria	M20 (students, group leaders and parents receive written information on how to complain); M14 (staff courteous; complaints handled); M5–M7 (feedback reviewed and acted on); S8 (contact with parents of under-18s)
UKVI Student sponsor guidance	Student sponsor guidance – sponsors must have and follow fair procedures and keep records available to compliance officers

University partner due diligence	Local Stage 1 resolution before escalation to a partner university; reporting of complaints that affect progression; QAA UK Quality Code principle on concerns, complaints and appeals
Legislation and statutory guidance	Consumer Rights Act 2015; Equality Act 2010 (reasonable adjustments); UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018; Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (data protection complaints)

Document control

Version	Date	Author / reviewer	Summary of changes
0.9	Pre-2026	Various	CA Complaint Policy 2025 (v3); CA FORMAL COMPLAINTS POLICY; CA Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy (JCQ); Complaints Procedure (2017)
1.0	October 2026	Principal	New policy written for university partnerships, ISI Educational Oversight and British Council Accreditation UK. Supersedes all previous versions.

APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD	SIGNATURE	DATE
Chair of the Board of Governors		