

Consumer Protection Law Self Assessment

Dudley College of Technology

UKPRN: 10007924

Your overall approach to ensuring compliance with consumer protection law

We are compliant with consumer protection law as laid out by the Competition and Markets Authority - higher Education provider guidance in that we:

Provide extensive information covering our policies and procedures that are compliant with consumer protection law. This includes our refund policy and complaints procedure. The following policies are all available on our website.

- [Assessment \(including Appeals Against Assessment\)](#)
- [Assessment for HE Programmes](#)
- [Assessment Malpractice and Maladministration in Relation to Higher Education Programmes](#)
- [College Charter](#)
- [College Fee Refund Policy](#)
- [How Are We Performing? \(Complaints /Compliments/Suggestions\)](#)
- [Equality & Diversity](#)
- [Gender Pay Gap Report](#)
- [Higher Education Admissions Policy](#)
- [Borrowing Learner Support Fund Equipment](#)
- [Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement](#)
- [Plagiarism](#)
- [Safeguarding](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [Subcontracting \(Fees and Charges\)](#)

We believe the provision of this information, alongside our course fee information fulfils our obligations under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 which replaces the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading regulations (2008), The Supply of Goods and Services Act (1982) and the Consumer Contracts (information Cancellation and Additional Charges) regulations (2013) - which mandate us to enable students to make informed decisions about what and where to study.

Prior to learners completing their enrolment we provide them with the necessary pre-contract information, so that they understand the contractual obligations they are entering into. Where learners are applying for Higher Education Loans we refer them to impartial advice from the [Gov.uk website](#)..

A member of the Executive Leadership Team, the Chief Officer Finance & Resources, is responsible for all legal matters, including any issues relating to consumer protection. The college's Senior Leadership Group (SLG) review the learning agreement, including consumer protection matters as appropriate, used when enrolling learners onto a programme annually and discuss other consumer protection matters promptly as appropriate.

The college takes legal advice from our legal advisors on new contracts and when amending material clauses (such as GDPR) and terms and conditions. This year we will be incorporating more terms and conditions into the learning agreement, or into a side agreement provided to the learner at the same time as the learning agreement, to ensure we remain compliant with the latest legislation and to adopt best practice procedures. We have already instructed our legal advisors to review the learning agreement and propose changes to it or provide a model contract and terms and conditions that we can follow or adopt. This advice and any subsequent approval by SLG will be completed prior to using the new or revised agreement to enrol learners on programmes for the 2020-21 academic year.

As part of our Standards and Performance team we have a designated member of staff who is responsible for monitoring the Complaints Process, this encompasses possible infringements under consumer law.

As part of our internal auditing procedure all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated. They are available to all staff via the college intranet and to students where relevant via Blackboard VLE.

We have a designated member of staff responsible for information management and data protection who is trained and regularly updated to work in this area.

Other college policies and procedures relating to consumer protection and information handling are referred to elsewhere in this annex. The college provides training and updates to staff on a wide range of issues and new legislation at CPD events undertaken across the

Issue No: 001

Document Change Note Ref: 2201

Date: 15.11.2020

Review Date: 14.11.2022

Page | 2

year. One of the main training events is the college conference which sets aside a full day of training for all staff twice a year and covers hot topics and matters relating to learner, curriculum, finance, student finance and business support services. A session on consumer protection law will be provided to staff on one of the college conference days in 2020-21.

Your approach to providing information to applicants and students: research and application stage, offer stage and enrolment stage

Information regarding the higher education offer at Dudley College of Technology is communicated to prospective and existing students through the following channels:

- Website: <https://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/Higher-Education> (including online Prospectus and individual course information, student support and finance guidance)
- Print Prospectus – distributed across the region
- Events: including Open days, Career Fairs, HE Fairs and Employer recruitment events
- School/Community engagement outreach work
- Social media: focus on aspects of study
- Online advertising (paid for advertisements across a range of platforms and channels)
- Via a face-to-face Information Advice and Guidance service (open to all)
- Through support services including Student Finance
- Via promotion of Advanced Learner Loans, Higher Education Loans and Childcare support.

Material information is provided before learners make a decision about the course and information is given in writing, visually and verbally.

All information is reviewed as part of the Business Planning Process annually and Marketing is also a recurring item on the Higher Education Key Client Group meetings.

We publish a prospectus containing information on our course offer and campus facilities, feedback from the Higher Education review, How to apply, Student satisfaction data, destination data of previous learners, student finance and learner support, student union and progression routes.

We ensure this is accurate and clear by regularly reviewing content and responding to student feedback via Student Services where requests for clarity and further information are collected and fed into the marketing team. We have the ability to update information displayed on our website immediately and course information which links to the Business Planner updates on a 24 hour cycle, allowing us to refresh information as required.

Our course information outlines the course content including mandatory and optional units, entry requirements, assessment methodology and finance arrangements.

On our website we deploy the LSTAT Widget – where the data threshold is appropriate.

All applicants for courses within our Higher Education provision are invited to interview so an assessment can be made of their ability to study at the requisite level and their commitment to the intended programme of learning.

Formal offer letters are issued from our Central Admissions service. Applications via UCAS are processed via this channel.

At the point of enrolment learners sign a Learner Agreement which forms the basis of the contractual relationship with us following this process at Induction we continue to draw attention to the important information which forms the basis of their agreement with us. This is reinforced through the College Charter.

We have a college wide Access and Participation statement (<https://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/Higher-Education/Access-and-Participation-Statement>) and the review of our performance against this forms part of the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment which is published on the college website and as part of a Widening Participation review process (<https://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/Portals/0/downloads/access-and-participation-statement-2017.pdf>). This forms the basis of our access and participation statement.

Your contract terms and conditions

Our terms and conditions, including rules and regulations, are made available to students through our website: <https://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/Higher-Education/Student-Finance>

And <https://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/About-Us/Policies-Procedures>. They are also accessible through the student internet and included in an Essentials Guide given to students at Induction, which is written in a more student accessible format..

As referred to above, in order to remain compliant with legislation and to adopt best practice and fair procedures, we take legal advice when introducing new contracts or terms and conditions. In 2020-21, we will also introduce new terms and conditions or a new model contract (subject to legal advice) to help make the contractual position clear to prospective learners to ensure that they understand what they are contracting to when they enrol with the college. This piece of work will be completed in time to start new enrolments for the 2020-21 academic year.

Your complaint handling processes and practices

Complaints can be made by students, employers, members of staff, parents, visitors, local residents, related organisations or any other stakeholder relating to all aspects of college business except relating to employment as this is covered under Human Resources.

Complaints can be made using the following mechanisms:

- Telephone,
- E-mail,
- Letter,
- Telephone or in person
- By completing our How Are We Performing? form which is available at all of our campuses,
- From our college website: <https://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/About-Us/Policies-Procedures/Complaints-Compliments>
- From our intranet: <http://intranet/Document-Store/Policies>

Our complaints process is easy to complete, gives complainants clear information regarding the process and how it will be handled and is responsive to individual needs. It gives clear information about how the complaint will be processed, with specified time limits and gives clear definition of what constitutes a complaint. All complaints are recorded and records are kept for 6 years.

Our staff at all levels are trained to deal with complaints and all complaints received are given a response. Where appropriate reasons are given for the decisions reached. No learner, member staff or any other stakeholder is disadvantaged as a result of bringing a complaint. Dudley College of Technology is committed to the development of positive policies and procedures to promote equal opportunities for all people regardless of age, disability, gender, (including gender reassignment), relationship status, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief or sexual orientation.

We review our complaints at the end of each term by our key client groups to ensure that we don't discriminate against any particular learner or staff group within the college and this ensures that:

- Decisions are consistent.
- Decisions are made at the appropriate level
- Appropriate action is taken to address any identified issues.
- Any information is gathered to ensure that we improve the services we offer to all our stakeholders (both external and internal).

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator's good practice framework is used to support our handling of complaints within the college for our higher education learners.

We have the following evidence that our complaints process is clear, accessible and fair such as:

- How are we performing? procedure (Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions)
- Complaints covered at staff and learner inductions.
- All complaints logged on Pentana document management system and management responsibility identified.
- Termly analysis for each of the key client groups.
- Complaint analysis logged on the college Dashboard
- Minutes of meetings where appropriate.

We ensure that staff know and are competent at following the process because this will ensure that we maintain our OFSTED 'outstanding' rating in line with our mission "outstanding technical and professional learning, which raises aspirations, develops skills and changes lives" which meets the needs of all of our stakeholders and hopefully keeps our complaints to a minimum.