

ITALIA CONTI

Complaints Policy and Procedures

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Reviewed by:	Head of Quality Assurance and Policy Steering Group
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This policy will be reviewed annually.

Italia Conti

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2 Overview

Italia Conti is committed to providing a high-quality education and training experience for all its students. It is recognised that, from time to time, problems do arise and students, and parents or others may wish to alert us to aspects of our actions or behaviours where our standards are not what they should be. Italia Conti sees the handling and monitoring of complaints as an important aspect of its quality assurance procedures and its continuing improvement.

All issues identified as legitimate complaints will pass through the first of three formal stages in the Complaints Process. The first stage is contained at a Front Line level, and – in practice – this is where most complaints are resolved; through dialogue and collaboration. Italia Conti strongly encourages resolution of this kind and those wishing to make representation under this procedure will be expected to approach the complaints process with this in mind.

Italia Conti provides education at further and higher educational levels. It is expected that the working practices and processes of the policy will fulfil the specific needs and statutory requirements appropriate to each level.

3 Legislation

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides, and complies with the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that Italia Conti must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of students at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations, and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

4 Purpose

The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to provide a clear step by step process through which a complainant may make a complaint. Complainants are reminded that only by following the procedure outlined in this policy can they expect a full and satisfactory outcome to any complaint.

5 Scope

This policy document covers complaints made about Italia Conti (or its staff) by students and their parents/carers, and complaints made about Italia Conti (or its staff and students) by members of the public.

6 Exclusions

Unsatisfactory treatment of one student by another student will be dealt with through the [Disciplinary Procedure](#) in the first instance. Italia Conti may instigate proceedings as it sees fit without the dissatisfied student being required to follow the complaints procedure outlined here.

Suggestions for alterations or improvements to the content or delivery of the course, or to the general conditions in the building, do not constitute a complaint matter, and should be made through the **student representatives** to the Course Committee Meeting.

Dissatisfaction with grades/assessments constitutes an academic matter and should be dealt with through the Italia Conti [Academic Appeals Policy](#) which references our partner university and awarding body academic regulations and academic appeals procedures. It should be noted that a student cannot appeal against academic judgement.

Dissatisfaction with the outcome of an Extenuation Panel should be dealt with via the relevant academic appeals procedure.

Bullying and harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence fall outside of complaints procedures and must be dealt with through the processes laid out in our [Anti Bullying Policy Statement](#) or our [Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy](#).

Please also see section 7 below, which describes issues that do not fall within this complaints policy.

7 Definitions

What is not a complaint

Italia Conti encourages its students to talk with their tutors about concerns¹ and compliments they have about their time with us. We welcome the opportunity to provide reassurances on concerns raised, and do; through day-to-day, informal communication as far as possible. And we value the feedback and collaborative environment that this creates at the school, as it ultimately enhances the learning environment.

If you have an opinion you wish to share about the services we are providing, we will happily listen to it and – if necessary – take action as a result of your suggestion.

No procedural response should be expected in response to the expression of a concern, however, since it is part of the expected, day-to-day exchange between students and staff. A concern is unlikely to invoke the complaints process unless you have a clear and mutually understood expectation of something different to what you have experienced. To help with understanding this, examples of concerns that your tutor would hope to discuss with you but which do not invoke the complaints process at Italia Conti are:

- Not being offered a solo feature / leading role in a production or project, or being dissatisfied with casting decisions generally.
- Not liking the colour temperature of a studio.
- Not liking the flow of the timetable, the course curriculum generally.
- Not agreeing with grouping decisions or the deployment of staff within those groups.
- Not liking an assessment task/brief.

If you would like to raise a concern with someone, but – after reading this policy – are still not sure whether it falls within this Complaints policy or not, please speak with your tutor or

¹ A **concern** is defined by the DfE as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”¹.

another member of staff. You will not be dissuaded from making a legitimate complaint if you have one.

What is a complaint

You should make a complaint² when Italia Conti (or its staff, as its representatives) have, or appear to have, failed to meet expected standards in its actions or behaviours towards you. Italia Conti's policies (including this one) and its contracts with its students define the actions, behaviours and standards that students and the public can expect from the organisation.

A complaint that legitimately falls within this policy may refer to any aspect of the teaching and learning process or general treatment of the student(s) by members of staff or the institution, and will usually be about something that directly impacts the complainant. This presents a wide range of issues, and may include:

- Italia Conti not meeting obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks or the student charter;
- misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by Italia Conti;
- unreasonable or substandard delivery of a programme, teaching or administration including, where applicable, delivery by a partner provider;
- poor quality of learning resources or facilities;
- poor quality services³;
- inadequate response to events causing significant disruption to the normal delivery of a course, service or other aspect of the student experience, such as industrial action or a public health emergency;
- misleading, unfair or incorrect processes in policies or procedures relating to financial support, immigration processes or welfare support;
- the standard of service delivered by other organisations or contractors on behalf of the provider that the student feels has affected their learning experience;
- insensitive or disrespectful actions or use of language from Italia Conti towards its students, staff or the public, including that which displays insensitivity to an individual's

² A **complaint** is defined by the DfE as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"

³ For example, unsanitary bathroom or kitchen facilities, or unhygienic premises.

dignity⁴. (Students should note, however, that being uncomfortable with or offended by unpopular or controversial concepts or perspectives introduced reasonably as part of an education programme is not grounds for legitimate complaint.⁵);

- any other unreasonable behaviour by a member of staff which can be shown to have adversely affected either the professional nature of the staff/student relationship, or the progress of the student on the course.

All issues identified as legitimate complaints will pass through the first of three formal stages in the Complaints Process. The first stage is contained at a Front Line level, and – in practice – this is where most complaints are resolved; through dialogue and collaboration. Italia Conti strongly encourages resolution of this kind and those wishing to make representation under this procedure will be expected to approach the complaints process with this in mind.

Please see section 4 for a list of circumstances that should be dealt with under different policies.

Managing the investigating and handling of the complaint

The person managing the investigation and handling of the complaint is responsible for ensuring that the process is conducted according to this document. The COO will most often manage the investigation and handling of complaints, often performing the function of Investigating Officer (see below). However, after initially considering the complaint and the most appropriate course of action to take, they may choose to delegate this function, and the function of Investigating Officer to other, independent⁶ members of staff, while retaining oversight of the matter until it is concluded.

The Investigating Officer

The investigating officer will be responsible for conducting the investigation into the complaint, reaching conclusions as to remediations or resolutions in respect of the complaint, and writing to the complainant with their conclusions. They are also responsible

⁴ Please note that this is different behaviour from bullying and harassment (which is dealt with under the Anti Bullying Policy Statement and the Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy and Procedure).

⁵ Please see Italia Conti's policies on Freedom of Speech and [Academic Freedom](#) which explain this in greater detail.

⁶ Because Italia Conti is such a small institution, it may not be possible to allocate an officer who is completely independent of the matter. However, every effort will be made to allocate a member of staff who is both sufficiently removed from the matter itself and any earlier stages of this process.

for keeping an appropriate written record of their actions in respect of the complaint investigation (see section 8 below in respect of records management).

8 Core Principles

In consideration of a complaints, Italia Conti will adhere to the following principles:

- our ethos and aim are that all concerns and the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily dealt with at the Stage 1 Front Line investigation;
- all complaints will be treated fairly, impartially, and effectively;
- all complaints will be treated seriously and constructively and can be made without fear of victimisation;
- a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel will be facilitated, where necessary;
- all the points at issue will be addressed with an effective and prompt response;
- any decisions that we make will be lawful, rational, reasonable, fair, and proportionate, and in line with the principles of administrative law;
- we will consider how the complaint can feed into Italia Conti's improvement evaluation processes;
- where a student has legitimately submitted a complaint that has not been upheld, that student will **not** be penalised in any way for raising a complaint.

In consideration of a complaints Italia Conti will follow these practices:

- wherever possible, the complaints will be resolved at the Stage 1 Front Line investigation;
- the Complaints Procedure will focus on resolving complaints rather than apportioning blame;
- the confidentiality owed to staff and students will be protected. Details of a complaint may, however, need to be shared with relevant parties for a full investigation to take place, and individuals named in a complaint will be made aware of the allegations and have the opportunity to give their version of events;
- repeated or vexatious complaints will not be considered;
- all parties involved in a complaint will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint at regular and appropriate intervals during the process;
- Italia Conti aims to respect complainants' desire for confidentiality and will keep confidential all records relating to individual complaints;

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- Italia Conti accepts that there may be cases where a student is unable or reluctant to make a complaint or academic appeal without support from an advisor or representative, and welcomes complaints from students who wish to be supported during the process. This is in addition to any health professional or support worker who may usually accompany the student or who may attend at Italia Conti's discretion by way of making reasonable adjustments for a student.
- Italia Conti will keep written records of all complaints as set out in our GDPR Audit Register and Retention Schedule and our Data Protection Policy:
 - Detailed complaints records for non-safeguarding matters (which may include notes, correspondence and statements) will be kept during the life of the complaints process and until the expiry of six years from the date of the last action on the complaint, after which they will be destroyed.
 - Detailed complaints records for safeguarding matters (which may include notes, correspondence and statements) will be kept during the life of the complaints process and until the later of the normal retirement age of the person against whom the complaint was made or the expiry of ten years from the date of the last action on the complaint, after which they will be destroyed.
 - Summary complaints records (which contain information about the issue(s) raised, relevant dates, the process outcome, and reasons for it) will be kept during the life of the complaints process and thereafter for six years, after which they will be destroyed. These records will be used for sharing learning from complaints and appeals, as well as for analysis and management and governance reporting. These records will be anonymised to ensure that no parties are identifiable.
 - All complaints records will be classified as confidential records the custodian of which will be the Head of Quality, on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer. Access to these records will only be granted to:
 - Those investigating the complaint or members of a review panel.
 - The complainant, requested through a Freedom of Information request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act.
 - The Secretary of State for education (or their representative).
 - Appropriately authorised inspection, audit or regulatory officers.

9 Allegations against members of staff

Where a complaint concerns a member of staff, the COO will manage the investigation and handling of the complaint, unless the complaint relates to the COO, in which case the CEO (or their nominated deputy) will do so.

Where complaints concern the CEO, the Chair of the Board of Directors will manage the investigation and handling of the complaint.

10 Timescales

Italia Conti aims to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out in the relevant paragraphs. For the purposes of this policy, a "working day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when Italia Conti is open. The definition of "working day" excludes weekends and Bank Holidays.

The complainant must raise the complaint within three months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within three months of the last incident.

Italia Conti may be flexible where necessary in respect of timescales, and will happily consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there are valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved. Depending on the circumstances, arguments for exception to this time frame may need to be supported by evidence.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next working day.

If at any point Italia Conti cannot meet the timescales set out in this policy, they will:

- set new time limits with the complainant;
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

In all cases, Italia Conti aims to resolve all complaints within 90 calendar days.

11 Responsibilities and Management

Italia Conti devolves day to day responsibility for managing the appropriate dissemination of this policy as follows:

Diploma, Degree and HE courses:	Vice Principals, Course Leaders
Staff:	CEO / COO / HR Director

The Quality Assurance Team, in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team, is responsible for monitoring the cyclical review and updating of all policies across Italia Conti according to statutory and regulatory timeframes.

Italia Conti reserves the right to alter these procedures where it is deemed appropriate.

Complaint procedures within Italia Conti will be independent of any formal legal proceedings which may ensue from the matters in question.

12 Italia Conti FE and HE Student Complaints Procedure

12.1 Additional policy statement on student complaints

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and easily. All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

No student should involve themselves in another student's complaint unless they are directly implicated as co-party or witness or are asked to do so in their capacity as one of the elected student representatives. No complaint can be made on behalf of a third party.

Students involved in a complaint procedure are expected to avoid discussion of the matter with other students or outsiders.

HE students are reminded that although they are welcome to involve one of their elected student representatives in complaint procedures, they cannot invite parents to speak or make statements on their behalf. This reflects students' status as independent adults on the programme.

It is expected that any complaint should be dealt with by Italia Conti's complaints procedure, however, where the complaint cannot be resolved by Italia Conti's internal processes, the partner university may be the more appropriate conduit for the student.

Further advice on the procedures of Italia Conti's HE partner universities, and advice on how to access them is available via:

www.uel.ac.uk/qa/studentsarea/studentcomplaints

(for students on courses validated by UEL)

[Academic Regulations: Procedures - Resolving Student Complaints](#)

(for students on courses validated by the University of Chichester)

12.2 Procedure if a student has a legitimate complaint⁷

Stage 1: Front Line Investigation Stage

- [1] If a student has a complaint, they should complete and submit a Stage 1 Complaint Form. This form records only basic information about the complaint and the complainant, and triggers the creation of an appointment to discuss the complaint privately. The form will enable them to choose a member of staff to discuss their issue with. Students are encouraged to discuss the matter with their Head of Year and / or Course Leader. The Stage 1 Complaints Form can be found on the website or accessed through a student's ProPortal™ account. A non-submittable version of it is available at Appendix A of this document, for information only.
- [2] We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide the student with a front line investigation appointment within two (2) working days. We will aim to arrange the investigation appointment for within three (3) working days of the acknowledgement, but will be flexible in rearranging this appointment where it is not convenient for the complainant.
- [3] During the front line investigation discussion, the complainant and member of staff will discuss the facts of the complaint, with the intention of investigating and resolving the problem quickly and easily. The staff member will make a record of the meeting, the points raised, and actions agreed.
- [4] The staff member will investigate the complaint, and aim to achieve a resolution to the issue within ten (10) working days of the front line appointment. A progress update and projected delay will be issued at this stage if the complaint cannot be resolved within this timescale.
- [5] Following the investigation or responsive action, the staff member will provide a written response to the complainant, which will:
- Explain the proposed resolution;
 - If there is no resolution, explain the reasons for this;

⁷ The definition of a complaint that legitimately falls within this policy can be found in [section 6](#).

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- Advise that the complainant may proceed to Stage 2 of the Complaints Process if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1;
- Request that the complainant confirms either their satisfaction with the resolution or confirms that they wish to proceed to Stage 2 of the Complaints Process within five (5) working days of the date of the response;
- Advise that if the complainant does not respond within five (5) working days from the date of the response, their complaint entry will automatically close, marking the closure of the complaint.

Proposed actions may include:

- Closure of the matter, with no action upon this occasion;
- A formal apology;
- Discussion of the complaint matter with the member of staff concerned, with or without the Course Leader being present, as appropriate;
- Informal action by the Course Leader - normally discussion with the member of staff concerned or relevant line-manager, as appropriate;
- A recommendation for further action by the complainant; for example, progressing the complaint to the next stage.

[6] Complainant confirms their response to the Front Line Investigation outcome. In most circumstances, the complainant will be satisfied with the resolution and the complaint will be closed. However, if the complainant is not satisfied with the level of action proposed at this stage, they may decide to proceed to Stage 2 of the Italia Conti complaints process.

Stage 2: Internal Investigation Stage

- [7] Within five (5) working days of their confirmation that they wish to proceed to Stage 2, the complainant should complete a Stage 2 Complaint Form, setting out the circumstances surrounding the complaint, and the rationale for their dissatisfaction with the outcome of Stage 1. The Complaints Form will be made available through a link in the outcome of the Stage 1 notification or can be accessed via the student's ProPortal™ account. A non-submittable version of it is available at [Appendix B](#) of this document, for information.
- [8] We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two (2) working days and will aim to conduct an internal investigation and respond to it within ten (10) working days (term time) from the date of acknowledgement.

At this step, any relevant member(s) of staff named in the complaint will also be informed that a complaint has been lodged and that it will be investigated and considered based on the evidence provided and discussions deemed appropriate.

The COO will normally manage the investigation and handling of all complaints at Italia Conti, often performing the function of Investigating Officer. However, after initially considering the complaint and the most appropriate course of action to take, they may choose to delegate the function of Investigating Officer to an allocated independent⁸ staff member.

Where a complaint relates to the COO, the CEO (or their nominated deputy) will manage the investigation and handling of the complaint.

Where a complaint relates to the CEO, the Chair of the Board of Directors will manage the investigation and handling of the complaint.

- [9] In investigating the complaint, the Investigating Officer will review documentation and may meet with relevant parties (including the complainant) to establish whether:

⁸ Because Italia Conti is such a small institution, it may not be possible to allocate an officer who is completely independent of the matter. However, every effort will be made to allocate a member of staff who is both sufficiently removed from the matter itself and any earlier stages of this process.

- there is valid basis for the complaint;
- the complaint falls within this complaints procedure;
- responding to the complaint requires it to be dealt with in another way.

The complainant is welcome to bring a person to support them at meetings with the Investigating Officer. The Investigating Officer will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and at which stage the complaint was at when it was resolved or not resolved at all.

Once the Investigating Officer is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made as to the validity of the complaint, and – where appropriate – recommendations will be made for actions to be taken in response to it.

[10] Once the validity of the complaint has been determined, and any appropriate actions by Italia Conti agreed, the officer managing the investigation and handling of the complaint will communicate this in writing to the complainant, providing reasons for their decision(s), and will arrange for the appropriate action to be taken. They will also:

- Advise that the complainant has the right to appeal against the decision by responding in writing within ten (10) working days (term time) of the Stage 2 decision;
- Request that the complainant confirms either their satisfaction with the resolution or that they wish to proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Process within five (5) working days of the date of the response;
- Advise that if the complainant does not respond, their complaint entry will automatically close five (5) working days from the date of the letter, marking the closure of the complaint.

Where – as a result of the investigation – a member of staff is perceived by the Investigating Officer to be failing to meet the required standards of professionalism demanded by Italia Conti, the CEO will be advised to take immediate and appropriate action in accordance with the Staff disciplinary procedure. The complainant, or other

students directly implicated, may be asked to produce further written statements as part of the staff disciplinary process, or any other action taken by the Italia Conti.

[11] Where a formal course of action taken in response to the complaint proves unsuccessful in addressing a problem, or where a complainant is not satisfied that their complaint has been dealt with appropriately, the complainant has the right to appeal against the decision by responding in writing as part of Stage 3 of the complaints process (see below).

Grounds for appeal may include (but are not confined to):

- The complainant considers that the investigation was not conducted appropriately (i.e. according to the Italia Conti complaint policy and procedures).
- The outcome reached was not one that a reasonable person with no prior knowledge of the matter might consider reasonable.
- The availability of new evidence that could make a difference to the outcome, which the student could not reasonably have provided earlier in the process.

We recognise that these grounds may not cover all circumstances, and are happy to consider alternative reasons for reviewing the process to this point.

Stage 3: Final Stage (Appeal)

[12] Written appeals against decisions reached in Stage 2 should be submitted in writing to SpeakUp@italiaconti.co.uk no later than ten (10) working days after the date of the Stage 2 decision letter. There is no prescribed format for presenting an appeal, but complainants are asked to be succinct in their reasons for appealing, and not to re-present the facts of the case, since these will already have been recorded.

[13] We will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within two (2) working days and will aim to perform a review and respond with its conclusions within fifteen (15) working days (term time) from the date of acknowledgement. Unless the complaint concerns the CEO⁹, the CEO will review all appeals.

⁹ Appeals on complaints investigations concerning the CEO will be reviewed by the Chair of the Board of Directors.

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[14] The CEO will review of all the complaint circumstances, the conduct of the investigation, its outcomes and recommendations and the success (or not) of resolution actions.

[9] Following the review, the CEO will make a decision as to whether the complainant has grounds for requesting further response from Italia Conti and this will be communicated to the student in writing.

The CEO's decision is final and closes the Italia Conti complaints process. Complainants still have the right to external adjudication on the matter if they wish to pursue it, however.

Independent Adjudication

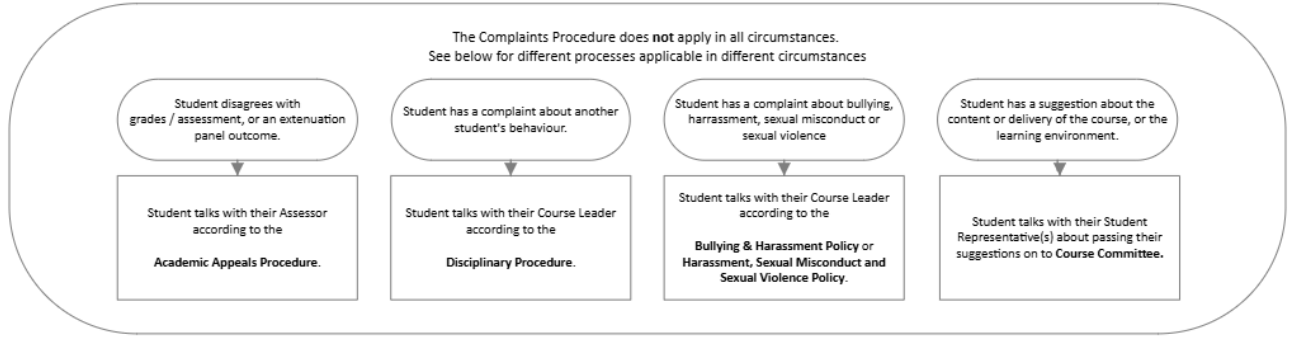
Where the complainant remains dissatisfied after a full investigation and exhaustion of the Italia Conti process, they may refer their complaint to independent adjudication.

Complainants on courses validated by UEL may refer their case to the University of East London to conduct an independent review through their own procedures if they so wish, at the exhaustion of Italia Conti's procedures. Please see [UEL's student complaint procedure](#) for more information. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied after a full investigation and exhaustion of the UEL process, they may refer their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

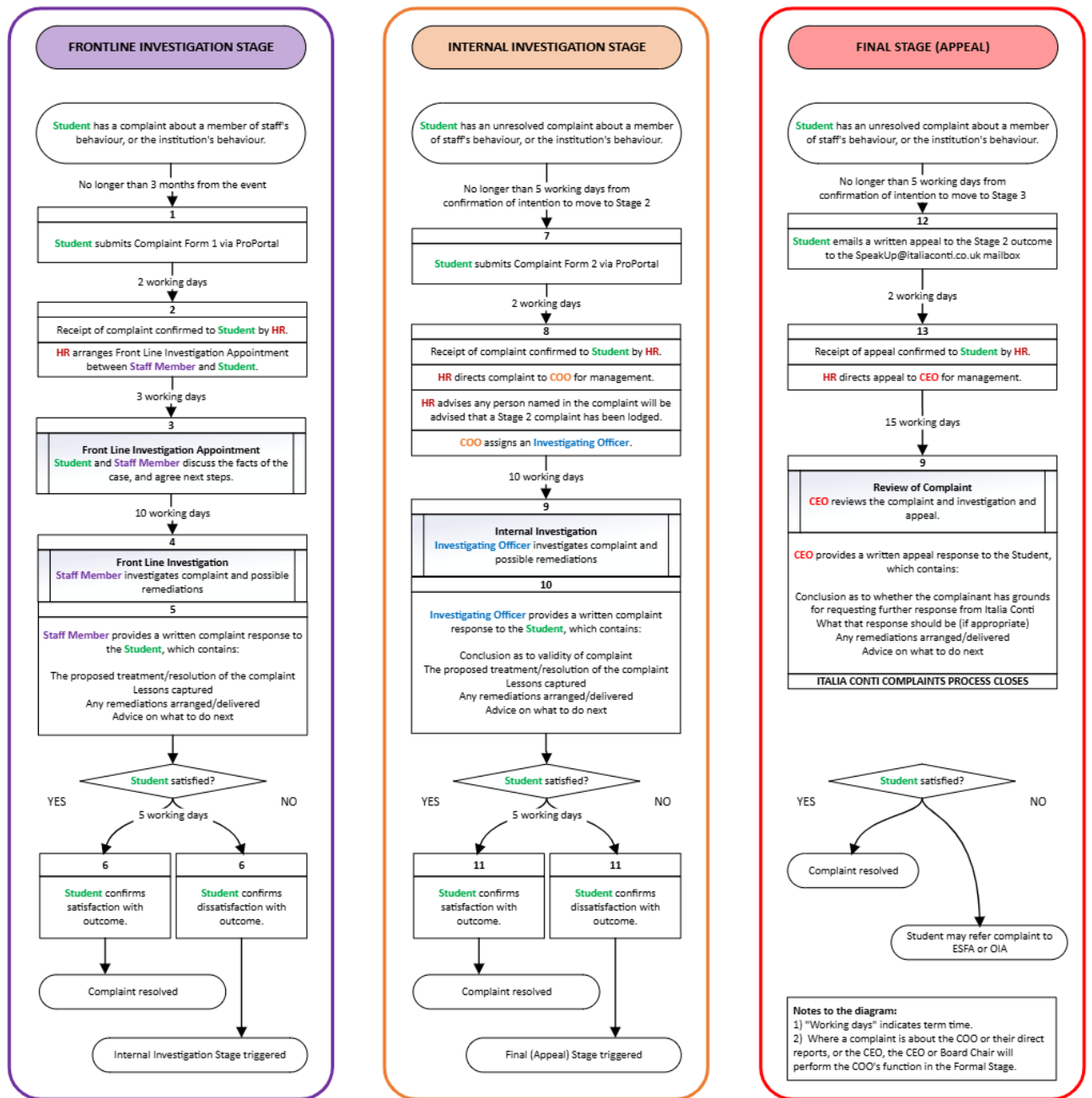
FE students may refer their complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Further details and advice can be found at: [Complaints about post 16 education and training provision funded by ESFA - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

HE students may refer their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) which is the designated operator of the complaints handling scheme for higher education students, within 12 months of the completion of procedures at Italia Conti. Further details and advice can be found on www.oiahe.org.uk.

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Italia Conti Student Complaints Procedure



13 Italia Conti Complaints Procedure for Parents of FE students

13.1 Additional policy statement on parental complaints

Italia Conti has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents or carers do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by Italia Conti in accordance with this Procedure.

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and easily. Parents and carers can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

13.2 Procedure if a parent has a legitimate complaint¹⁰

Stage 1: Front Line Investigation Stage

- [1] If parents / carers have a complaint, they should complete and submit a Stage 1 Complaint Form. This form records only basic information about the complaint and the complainant, and triggers the creation of an appointment to discuss the complaint privately, either in person, or virtually. The form will enable them to choose a member of staff to discuss their issue with, and students are encouraged to discuss the matter with the relevant Head of Year and / or Course Leader. The Complaints Form can be found on the website at <https://www.italiaconti.com/about-us/policies>. A non-submittable version of it is available at [Appendix A](#) of this document, for information only. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the complainant's satisfaction.
- [2] We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide the complainant with a front line investigation appointment within two (2) working days. We will aim to arrange the investigation appointment for within three (3) working days of the acknowledgement, but will be flexible in rearranging this appointment where it is not convenient for the complainant.
- [3] At the front line investigation discussion, the complainant and member of staff will discuss the facts of the case, with the intention of investigating and resolving the

¹⁰ The definition of a complaint that legitimately falls within this policy can be found in [section 6](#).

problem quickly and easily. The staff member will make a written record of the meeting, the points raised, and the actions agreed.

[4] The staff member will investigate the complaint, and aim to achieve a resolution to the issue within ten (10) working days of the front line appointment. A progress update and projected delay will be issued at this stage if the complaint cannot be resolved within this timescale.

[5] Following the investigation or responsive action, the staff member will provide a written response to the complainant, which will:

- Explain the proposed resolution;
- if there is no resolution, explain the reasons for this;
- Advise that the complainant may proceed to Stage 2 of the Complaints Process if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1;
- Request that the complainant confirms either their satisfaction with the resolution, or that they wish to proceed to Stage 2 of the Complaints Process within five (5) working days of the date of the response;
- Advise that if the complainant does not respond within five (5) working days from the date of the response, their complaint entry will automatically close, marking the closure of the complaint.

[6] If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they should confirm their intention to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the Italia Conti Complaints Process.

Stage 2: Internal Investigation Stage

[7] The complainant should complete a Stage 2 Complaint Form, setting out the circumstances surrounding the complaint, and the rationale for their dissatisfaction with the outcome of Stage 1. A non-submittable version of it is available at [Appendix B](#) of this document, for information.

[8] We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two (2) working days and will aim to conduct an internal investigation and respond to it within ten (10) working days (term time) of the date of acknowledgement.

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At this step, any relevant member(s) of staff named in the complaint will also be informed that a complaint has been lodged and that it will be investigated and considered based on the evidence provided and discussions deemed appropriate.

The COO will normally manage the investigation and handling of complaints, often performing the function of Investigating Officer. However, after initially considering the complaint and the most appropriate course of action to take, they may choose to delegate the function of Investigating Officer to an allocated independent¹¹ staff member.

Where a complaint concerns a member of staff, the COO will manage the investigation and handling of the complaint, unless the complaint relates to the COO, in which case the CEO (or their nominated deputy) will do so.

Where complaints concern the CEO, the Chair of the Board of Directors will manage the investigation and handling of the complaint.

[9] In investigating the complaint, the Investigating Officer will review documentation and may meet with relevant parties (including the complainant) to establish whether:

- there is valid basis for the complaint;
- the complaint falls within this complaints procedure;
- responding to the complaint requires it to be dealt with in another way

The Investigating Officer will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and at which stage the complaint was at when it was resolved or not resolved at all.

Once the Investigating Officer is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made as to the validity of the complaint, and – where appropriate – recommendations will be made for actions to be taken in response to it.

¹¹ Because Italia Conti is such a small institution, it may not be possible to allocate an officer who is completely independent of the matter. However, every effort will be made to allocate a member of staff who is both sufficiently removed from the matter itself and any earlier stages of this process.

[10] Once the validity of the complaint has been determined, and any appropriate actions agreed, the Chief Officer managing the investigation of the complaint will communicate this in writing to the complainant, providing reasons for their decision(s), and will arrange for the appropriate action to be taken. They will also:

- Advise that the complainant has the right to appeal against the decision by responding in writing within 10 working days (term time) of the Stage 2 decision.
- Request that the complainant confirms either their satisfaction with the resolution or that they wish to proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Process within five (5) working days of the date of the response;
- Advise that if the complainant does not respond, their complaint entry will automatically close five (5) working days from the date of the letter, marking the closure of the complaint.

Where – as a result of the investigation – a member of staff is perceived by the Investigating Officer to be failing to meet the required standards of professionalism demanded by Italia Conti, the CEO will be advised to take immediate and appropriate action in accordance with the Staff disciplinary procedure. The complainant, or other students directly implicated, may be asked to produce further written statements as part of the staff disciplinary process, or any other action taken by the Italia Conti.

[11] Where a formal course of action taken in response to the complaint proves unsuccessful in addressing a problem, or where a complainant is not satisfied that their complaint has been dealt with appropriately, the complainant has the right to appeal against the decision as part of Stage 3 of the Complaints Process (below).

Stage 3: Final Stage (Appeal)

[12] Appeals against decisions reached in Stage 2 should be submitted in writing to SpeakUp@italiaconti.co.uk no later than ten (10) working days after the date of the Stage 2 decision letter. There is no prescribed format for presenting an appeal, but complainants are asked to be succinct in their reasons for appealing, and not to re-present the facts of the case, since these will already have been recorded.

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- [13] We will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within two (2) working days, and will aim to convene a panel within ten (10) working days (term time).

Unless the complaint concerns the CEO¹², the CEO will manage all appeals under this process.

The CEO will appoint a panel of at least three persons not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of Italia Conti, and will schedule a panel appeal hearing for as soon as possible. In the event of the complaint involving sensitive material, the CEO will share the names of the panel members with the complainant, so that they have the opportunity to object to a panel member; for example, on the grounds of bias.

- [14] The CEO will Chair the Panel hearing, which will review the circumstances of the complaint, the conduct of the Stage 2 investigation, its outcomes and recommendations and the success (or not) of resolution outcomes. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than seven (7) working days prior to the hearing.

The Panel may wish to hear in-person statements, which may be daunting for a complainant. Panel hearings will be conducted in a constructive and non-aggressive manner, and will be governed so as not to intimidate the complainant. Nonetheless, complainants are welcome to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person, who may be a relative, teacher or friend, to provide support if they would like to do so. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

¹² Appeals on complaints investigations concerning the CEO will be reviewed by the Chair of the Board of Directors.

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[15] After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, and within two (2) working days of the appeal panel hearing, the Panel will prepare a report summarising the decisions reached and making any recommendations for action.

[16] Within five (5) working days of the panel hearing, the CEO will communicate the Panel's findings to the complainant and to the person(s) named in the complaint. This communication will confirm:

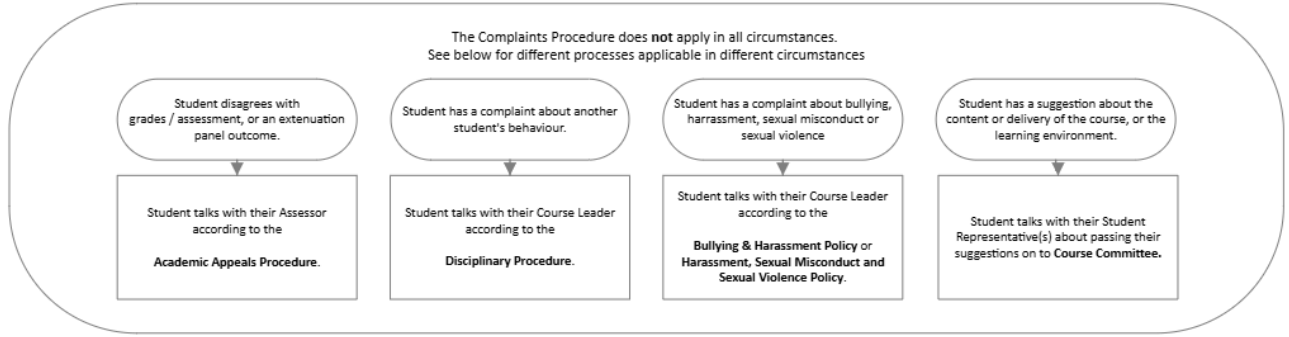
- That the findings represent a final decision which closes the Italia Conti Complaints Process;
- Italia Conti's commitment to fulfilling the actions recommended to it by the Appeal Panel;

Whilst this Stage closes the Italia Conti Complaints Process, complainants still have the right to external adjudication on the matter if they wish to pursue it.

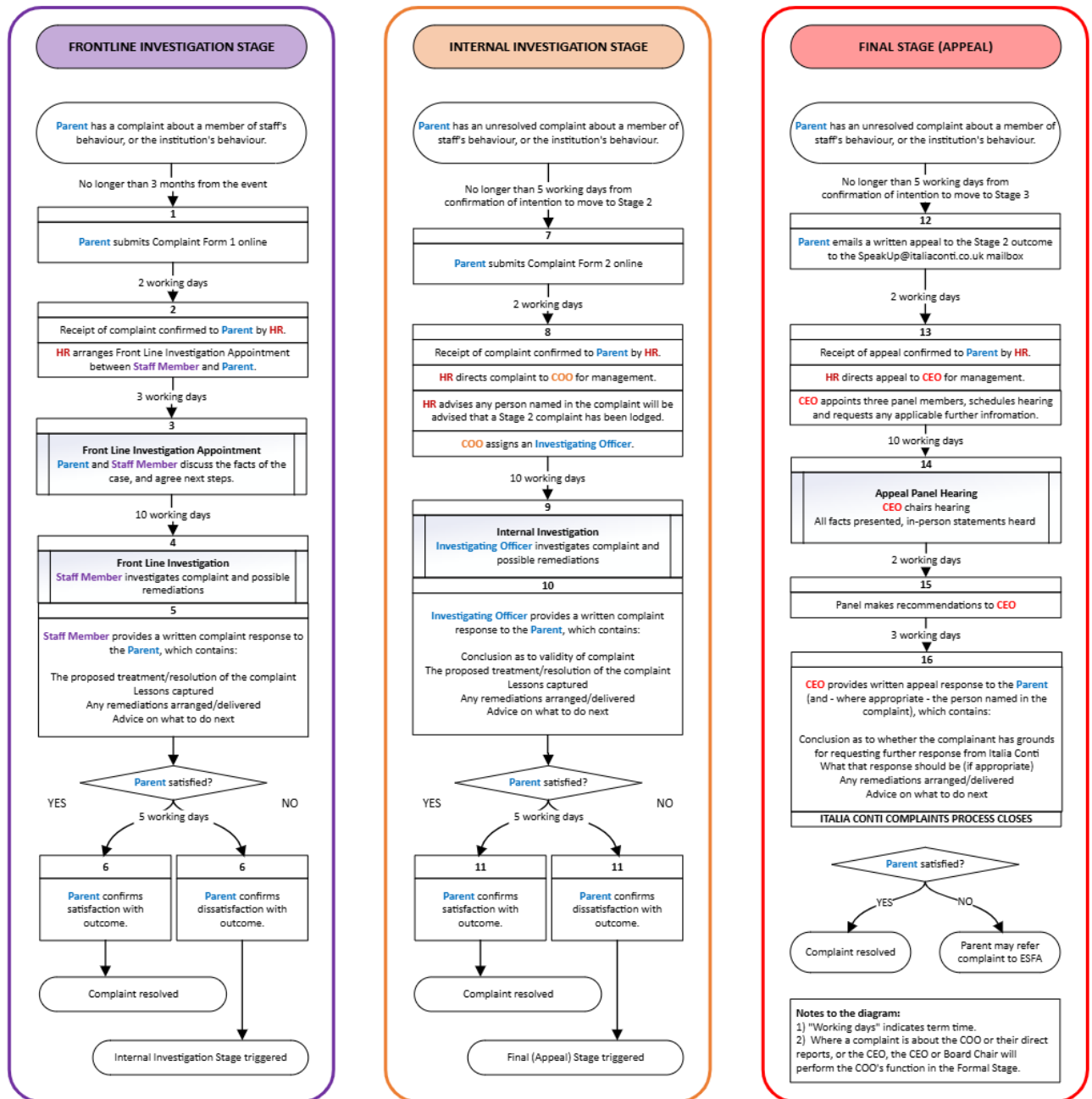
Independent Adjudication

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied after a full investigation and exhaustion of the Italia Conti process, they may refer their complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Further details and advice can be found at: [Complaints about post 16 education and training provision funded by ESFA - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

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Italia Conti Complaints Procedure for Parents of FE Students



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14 Italia Conti Complaints Procedure for Members of the Public

Where a member of the public feels that the behaviour or actions of Italia Conti, or of its staff or students have not met the standards it publicly claims to uphold or is required to uphold, they are entitled to complain about this to the organisation. All such complaints will be treated seriously.

Complaints from members of the public should be made directly to the CEO via the SpeakUp@italiaconti.co.uk mailbox.

Because the nature of complaints from members of the public is unpredictable and because they may occur outside of term time, no timeframes are prescribed for this procedure save the timeframes outlined below, and Italia Conti's commitment to concluding the complaints process within ninety (90) calendar days.

The procedure for responding to complaints from members of the public will broadly follow the steps outlined below.

- [1] We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three (3) working days and advise on the timescale and the approach to be taken for investigating the complaint.

At this step, any relevant member(s) of staff named in the complaint will also be informed that a complaint has been lodged and that it will be investigated and considered based on the evidence provided and discussions deemed appropriate.

The CEO will normally manage the investigation and handling of complaints from members of the public, often performing the function of Investigating Officer. However, after initially considering the complaint and the most appropriate course of action to take, they may choose to delegate the function of Investigating Officer to allocated independent staff member.

Where a complaint concerns a member of staff, and unless it concerns the COO, the COO will be deputised to investigate the complaint, Where a complaint concerns the CEO, the Chair of the Board of Directors will manage the investigation and handling of the complaint.

[2] In investigating the complaint, the Investigating Officer will review documentation and may meet with relevant parties (including the complainant) to establish whether:

- there is valid basis for the complaint;
- the complaint falls within this complaints procedure;
- responding to the complaint requires it to be dealt with in another way.

Once the Investigating Officer is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a conclusion will be reached as to the validity of the complaint, and – where appropriate – recommendations will be made for actions to be taken in response to it. Where the Investigating Officer is not the CEO, this will be communicated to the CEO in the form of a report.

[3] Within ninety [90] calendar days of the receipt of the complaint, the CEO will respond to the complainant in writing, confirming:

- The findings of the investigation;
- Italia Conti's commitment to fulfilling the recommendations reached during the investigation;
- That the findings represent a final decision which closes the Italia Conti Complaints Process.

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Appendix A: Exemplar Stage 1 Complaint Form

Stage 1 Complaint Form	
Section 1: Important information and guidance – please read before submitting your complaint	
<p>You are advised to read through the Complaints Policy, found on the website here: https://www.italiaconti.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Complaints-Policy-and-Procedures-2023-2024-A1.pdf</p> <p>It contains important information about what constitutes a complaint, how your complaint will be handled and respective timeframes.</p> <p>Italia Conti encourages its students to talk with their tutors about concerns they have about their time with us. We welcome the opportunity to provide reassurances on concerns raised, and do; through day-to-day, informal communication as far as possible.</p> <p>A concern is unlikely to invoke the complaints process unless you have a clear and mutually understood expectation of something different to what you have experienced.</p> <p>A complaint that legitimately falls within this policy may refer to any aspect of the teaching and learning process or general treatment of the student(s) by members of staff or the institution and will usually be about something that directly impacts the complainant. concern is unlikely to invoke the complaints process unless you have a clear and mutually understood expectation of something different to what you have experienced.</p> <p>If you would like to raise a concern with someone, but – after reading the Complaints Policy – are still not sure whether it falls within the Complaints Policy or not, please speak with your tutor or another member of staff. You will not be dissuaded from making a legitimate complaint if you have one.</p> <p>Stage 1: All issues identified as legitimate complaints will pass through the first of three formal stages in the Complaints Process. Italia Conti's ethos and aim is that all concerns and the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily dealt with at the Stage 1 Front Line Investigation stage.</p>	
<p>1. Please confirm that you have read and understood the definitions, and the policy itself.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p>	
Section 2: Complainant Details	
2. First name	
3. Surname	
4. Contact Email address	
5. Contact mobile number	
6. Are you currently enrolled on a course at Italia Conti?	Yes / No
Yes:	Go to Section 3: Current Student Details -7. Student Ref details: -8. Course (drop down list:

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No:	Go to Section 4 - Details of Complaint
Section 4: Details of Complaint:	
<p>A complaint that legitimately falls within this policy may refer to any aspect of the <u>teaching and learning process</u> or <u>general treatment of the student(s)</u> by members of staff or the institution and will usually be about something that directly impacts the complainant. This presents a wide range of issues, and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Italia Conti not meeting obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks or the student charter;• misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by Italia Conti;• unreasonable or substandard delivery of a programme, teaching or administration including, where applicable, delivery by a partner provider;• poor quality of learning resources or facilities;• poor quality services;• inadequate response to events causing significant disruption to the normal delivery of a course, service or other aspect of the student experience, such as industrial action or a public health emergency;• misleading, unfair or incorrect processes in policies or procedures relating to financial support, immigration processes or welfare support;• the standard of service delivered by other organisations or contractors on behalf of the provider that the student feels has affected their learning experience;• insulting or offensive insensitive or disrespectful actions or use of language from Italia Conti behaviour towards its students, staff or the public, including that which displays insensitivity to a student's an individual's dignity own beliefs or culture. (Students should note, however, that being uncomfortable with or offended by unpopular or controversial concepts or perspectives introduced reasonably as aspects part of an education the programme is not which reasonably introduce views or opinions other than their own, and that may be considered offensive, cannot be seen as grounds for legitimate complaint;• any other unreasonable behaviour by a member of staff which can be shown to have adversely affected either the professional nature of the staff/student relationship, or the progress of the student on the course.	
9. Please set out the main points of your complaint, including whether you have already spoken to anyone at Italia Conti about it.	
<p>It is helpful if, in providing your complaint, you can adhere to the following guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be concise and stick to the facts• Present the facts in a chronological order, as far as possible• Try and keep emotion out of your reported complaint, but do explain how you feel it has affected you and any resulting impact	
Enter your answer:	
10. You are encouraged to discuss your issue with your Head of Year and / or Course Leader. If there is someone else that you would like to discuss this matter with, please enter their name or role here:	
Enter your answer:	

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11. Desired Outcomes: What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Enter your answer:

Submit

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Appendix B: Exemplar Stage 2 Complaint Form:

Stage 2 Complaint Form	
Section 1- Please use this form if you wish to proceed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the Complaints Process.	
<p>You are advised to read through the Complaints Policy, found on the website here: https://www.italiaconti.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Complaints-Policy-and-Procedures-2023-2024-A1.pdf</p> <p>It contains important information about what constitutes a complaint, how your complaint will be handled and respective timeframes.</p> <p>Stage 1: All issues identified as legitimate complaints will pass through the first of three formal stages in the Complaints Process. Italia Conti's ethos and aim is that all concerns and the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily dealt with at the Stage 1 Front Line Investigation stage.</p> <p>If you wish to proceed to Stage 2, you should confirm this by completing this form and submitting it to SpeakUp@italiaconti.co.uk within 5 working days of receiving the outcome of the Stage 1 Frontline Investigation.</p> <p>Please confirm that you have read and understood the definitions, and the policy itself.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p>	
Section 2: Complainant Details	
First name	
Surname	
Contact Email address	
Contact mobile number	
Are you currently enrolled on a course at Italia Conti?	
Yes / No	
Yes:	Section 3: Current Student Details -Student Ref details: -Course (drop down list:
No:	
Section 4 - Details of Complaint	
<p>A complaint that legitimately falls within this policy may refer to any aspect of the <u>teaching and learning process</u> or <u>general treatment of the student(s)</u> by members of staff or the institution and will usually be about something that directly impacts the complainant. This presents a wide range of issues, and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italia Conti not meeting obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks or the student charter; • misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by Italia Conti; • unreasonable or substandard delivery of a programme, teaching or administration including, where applicable, delivery by a partner provider; • poor quality of learning resources or facilities; • poor quality services; 	

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- inadequate response to events causing significant disruption to the normal delivery of a course, service or other aspect of the student experience, such as industrial action or a public health emergency;
- misleading, unfair or incorrect processes in policies or procedures relating to financial support, immigration processes or welfare support;
- the standard of service delivered by other organisations or contractors on behalf of the provider that the student feels has affected their learning experience;
- insulting or offensive insensitive or disrespectful actions or use of language from Italia Conti behaviour towards its students, staff or the public, including that which displays insensitivity to a student's an individual's dignity own beliefs or culture. (Students should note, however, that being uncomfortable with or offended by unpopular or controversial concepts or perspectives introduced reasonably as aspects part of an education the programme is not which reasonably introduce views or opinions other than their own, and that may be considered offensive, cannot be seen as grounds for legitimate complaint;
- any other unreasonable behaviour by a member of staff which can be shown to have adversely affected either the professional nature of the staff/student relationship, or the progress of the student on the course.

Please set out the main circumstances surrounding your complaint, and the rationale for your dissatisfaction with the outcome of Stage 1.

It is helpful if, in providing your complaint and reasons for progressing to Stage 2, you can adhere to the following guidance:

- Be concise and stick to the facts
- Present the facts in a chronological order, as far as possible
- Try and keep emotion out of your reported complaint, but do explain how you feel it has affected you and any resulting impact

At this step, any relevant member(s) of staff named in the complaint will also be informed that a complaint has been lodged and that it will be investigated and considered based on the evidence provided and discussions deemed appropriate.

Enter your answer:

Desired Outcomes: What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Enter your answer:

Submit

Appendix C: Exemplar Stage 3 Appeal Form:

Stage 3 (Appeal) Complaint Form	
Important information and guidance – please read before submitting your Stage 3 (Appeal)	
<p>The Stage 3 (Appeals) procedure is available when the complainant selects to proceed from Stage 2 to Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy.</p> <p>If you wish to proceed to Stage 3, you should confirm this within 5 working days of receiving the outcome of the Stage 2 Investigation using the confirmation below.</p> <p>Your written appeal against any decision reached in Stage 2 should be submitted in writing to the CEO via SpeakUp@italiaconti.co.uk no later than ten (10) working days after the date of the Stage 2 decision letter.</p> <p>There is no prescribed format for presenting an appeal, but complainants are asked to be succinct in their reasons for appealing, and not to re-present the facts of the case, since these will already have been recorded.</p> <p>The grounds for asking for a review may be limited, including but not confined to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A review of the procedures followed at the formal stage - A consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable - New evidence that could make a difference to the outcome, and which the student could not reasonably have provided earlier in the process <p>If you wish to make an Appeal, you are advised to review the Complaints Policy, found on the website here: https://www.italiaconti.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Complaints-Policy-and-Procedures-2023-2024-A1.pdf</p>	
1. I confirm that I wish to proceed to Stage 3 (Appeal) of the Complaints Process.	
Please input the date	
Section 2: Complainant Details	
2. First name	
3. Surname	
4. Contact Email address	
5. Contact mobile number	
6. Are you currently enrolled on a course at Italia Conti?	
Yes:	<p>Goes to Current Student Details</p> <p>7. Student Reference details</p> <p>8. Course (drop down)</p> <p>Goes to Submit</p>
No:	No: Goes to Submit

Submit

Appendix D: Unacceptable Behaviour

ITALIA CONTI

Policy on Unacceptable Behaviour

Whilst the Complaints Panel recognises that a panel hearing is the last stage in the Italia Conti processes for complainants, they recognise their duty to ensure the safety and welfare of students, parents and staff throughout it.

The Complaints Panel is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who make them. As part of this service, the Complaints Panel would not normally limit its contact with complainants. However, the Complaints Panel does not expect Italia Conti's staff to tolerate behaviour by complainants which is unacceptable; for example, behaviour which is abusive, offensive, or threatening, and it will act to protect staff from that behaviour. This applies to unacceptable behaviour on any part of Italia Conti premises.

If the CEO considers that a complainant's behaviour is unacceptable the complainant will be told why their behaviour is deemed to be unreasonable and will be asked to change it. If the unacceptable behaviour continues the Chief Operations Officer / CEO will act to restrict the complainant's contact with Italia Conti.

Unacceptable actions and behaviours

These are some of the actions and behaviours of unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants which Italia Conti find problematic. It is by no means an exhaustive list and local factors may vary:

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- Foul and abusive language towards staff, other parents, and students.
- Behaviour that staff consider to be harassing and intimidating, including in-person, over the telephone, or any other type of communication.
- Undermining Italia Conti policies by actively encouraging students to ignore staff requests.
- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of staff; for example, by excessive telephoning or emailing numerous staff, writing lengthy complex letters every few days and expecting immediate responses.

The decision to restrict access to Italia Conti will normally be taken by the CEO.

Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options most likely to be considered are:

- Requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only) ;
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff;
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times; and/or
- Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct.

In all cases we will write to tell the complainant why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable, what action we are taking and the duration of that action. Where a complainant continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable, we may decide to terminate contact with that complainant and discontinue any investigation into their complaint. However, the Complaints Panel will seek to limit any detriment to any students who attend Italia Conti, as far as is reasonable within these circumstances.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of Italia Conti's staff, we will consider other options; for example, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant warning of that action.

Appendix E: Persistent Complainants

ITALIA CONTI

Policy on unreasonably persistent complainants

Italia Conti is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who make them. As part of this service, it does not normally limit the contact complainants have with the organisation.

However, there are a small number of complainants who, because of their frequent contact with the academy, hinder consideration of their or other people's, complaints. Such complainants are referred to as 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and, exceptionally, the Chief Operations Officer / CEO will take action to limit their contact with Italia Conti.

Actions and behaviours of unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants

Below are examples of the actions and behaviours of unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants. It is by no means an exhaustive list and factors may vary:

- **refusing** to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance with this from the Italia Conti's staff;
- **refusing** to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- **refusing** to accept that issues are not within the remit of a complaints procedure despite having been provided with information about the procedure's scope;

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- **insisting** on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- **making** what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaints and seeking to have them replaced;
- **changing** the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or denying statements made at an earlier stage;
- **introducing** new information which the complainant expects to be considered and commented on;
- **electronically** recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved;
- **adopting** a 'scattergun' approach: pursuing a complaint or complaints with the academy and, at the same time, with a Member of Parliament /a councillor / the authority's independent auditor/ the Local Authority / local police / solicitors / the Ombudsman / Ofsted / ISA;
- **re-submitting previous complaints** with additions or variations made to them in order to present them as new complaints.
- **refusing** to accept the final decision reached in the process, repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.

The decision to restrict access to Italia Conti will be taken by the CEO and will normally follow a warning to the complainant. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options we are most likely to consider are:

- requesting contact in a specific form (for example, letters only) ;
- requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff;
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times, and/or
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future contacts with us.

In all cases where we decide to treat someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant, we will write to tell the complainant why we believe their behaviour falls into that category, what action we are taking and the duration of that action. We will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it. If we decide to carry on treating someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant and we are still investigating their complaint six months later, we will carry out a review and decide if restrictions will continue.

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Where a complainant whose case is closed persists in communicating with us about it, we may decide to terminate contact with that complainant. In such cases, we will read all correspondence from that complainant, but unless there is fresh evidence which affects our decision on the complaint, we will simply acknowledge it or place it on the file with no acknowledgement.

New complaints from people who have come under the unreasonably persistent complainant's policy will be treated on a case-by-case basis.

END