



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Date approved:	August 2017
Approved by:	Senior Leadership Team
Review date:	July 2019
Responsible Managers:	Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum
Group Executive Lead:	N/A
Accessible to Students/Customers:	Yes

1. Consultation

Consultation undertaken with:-

Newcastle College:	Yes
West Lancashire College:	No
Intraining:	No
Rathbone:	No
Newcastle Sixth Form College:	No
Kidderminster College:	No
Group Services	No

2. Applicability of Policy to Organisation

This policy applies to:-

Newcastle College:	Yes
West Lancashire College:	No
Intraining:	No
Rathbone:	No
Newcastle Sixth Form College:	No
Kidderminster College:	No
Group Services	No

3. Introduction

At Newcastle College, we are committed to providing high quality services for all our College Community. Taking account of users' views enables the College to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement.

The College operates a staged complaints procedure through which it aims to resolve concerns as quickly as possible. This document details that Complaints Procedure. A complainant may be a student (from any provision delivered across NCL) prospective student, parent, employer, or any other interested party who indicates dissatisfaction with the current level of service. All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with impartially.

Academic Appeals are not a part of this policy or procedure. Please refer to the College's FE, Apprenticeship or HE Academic Appeals Policies.

Stage 1 of the procedure differs slightly for students, employers or complaints of a general nature.

Employees should use the College's Grievance Policy and Procedure. Further details and advice on this can be obtained from Human Resources.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 Newcastle College will ensure that students will not be treated less favourably following their complaint. If this is found to be the case, staff disciplinary procedures may be followed.
- 4.2 Newcastle College will identify actions from complaints received to improve and develop its services.
- 4.3 Newcastle College will ask for Equality and Diversity information, for example, Gender and Ethnicity, to help to ensure sure that all people are treated fairly.
- 4.4 The Complaints Form (appendix 1) should be completed with as much detail as possible, but most importantly full name, date of birth and contact details. If the form is completed on behalf of a complainant, then the form must include full contact details of the complainant's representative. ***We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.***
- 4.5 College Staff must send complaints to the Quality Unit to record on the Complaints Log.
- 4.6 On receipt of a formal complaint by the Quality Unit, an Investigation Lead will be allocated within two working days of receipt.
- 4.7 The College's decision will be communicated to the complainant by the College using the complainant's preferred method of contact.
- 4.8 The College's Quality Unit will continuously monitor the progress of a complaint investigation until the issue has been resolved.
- 4.9 The complaint will be closed on the Complaint Log only when the issue has been resolved and outcome communicated to the complainant.
- 4.10 Malicious complaints received in any form will result in disciplinary action where permissible by college policies (e.g. complaints that are not true or use of foul language in any communication sent to staff or the College).
- 4.11 In order to help us to investigate and resolve any area of dissatisfaction, the complainant must notify the College of their concern at Stage 1 immediately and no later than 3 months of its occurrence.
- 4.12 Complaints made at Stage 2 must be made within 3 months of exhausting Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure and complaints made at Stage 3 must be made within 2 months of exhausting Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.
- 4.13 Complainants should be aware that our staff have the right to work in a pleasant and safe environment and any violent or abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.

5.

Monitoring of Complaints

- 5.1 The College monitors complaints carefully. A termly report on complaints is produced and shared with Principalship/SLT, detailing issues raised, areas of study, timeliness of resolution and any subsequent actions. In addition, the College reports annually to the NCG Executive Board and annually to its Governing Body on the operation of the Complaints Procedure and the views of complainants.
- 5.2 Complaints relating to Higher Education provision are also reported to the HE Quality & Standards Committee.

6. Responsibility

- 6.1 Overall responsibility for this policy and procedure lies with the Vice Principal for Quality and Curriculum.
- 6.2 Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this procedure lies with the Quality Unit.
- 6.3 All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve informal complaints prior to invoking the Complaints Procedure.
- 6.4 All staff have a responsibility to forward formal complaints to the Quality Unit, including copies of correspondence issued in response to the complainant.
- 6.5 The Lead Investigator has a duty to maintain a central file for the complaint which contains a copy of the original complaint, records of meetings, correspondence and other evidence used to resolve the complaint at Stage 2.

NEWCASTLE COLLEGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 - Informal

In order to help us to investigate and resolve any area of dissatisfaction, you must notify the relevant College member of your concern at Stage 1 immediately and no later than 3 months of its occurrence.

Students

Rather than let an issue of concern or an area of dissatisfaction become a complaint, we hope that you will try to resolve your issue promptly by:-

- Raising your concerns as soon as possible, directly with the person who, in your opinion, is responsible, or directly with your assessor/lecturer/tutor, or directly with the Programme Leader or Curriculum Leader for your course. For apprentices it may be that the most appropriate person to raise the complaint with is the manager in the work place who will raise the complaint with their contact in the college.
- Using your student representative on the course team to take forward any concerns
- Raising concerns through your School's Learner Forum and/or Student Union

Once you have raised an issue of concern, the College will respond in a timely manner.

Employers

If you are dissatisfied, or have any concerns with the service provided by the College, you can raise the issue:

- Directly with the relevant Course Leader or Manager responsible

General

If you are a member of the public, parent, ex-student or general user of the College and you are dissatisfied or have concerns about the service provided, you should in the first instance:

- Raise the issue directly with the person who, in your opinion, is responsible
- Raise the issue with the supervisor or manager for the area/service concerned

If you do not know whom to contact, or are dissatisfied with the informal resolution, then the issue should be raised formally using the College's Complaints Form.

Stage 2 - Formal

If your concern is not resolved at Stage 1 or you feel the issue has not been responded to satisfactorily, you can take your complaint to Stage 2 of the College Complaints Procedure.

Formal complaints are submitted to the Quality Unit and are overseen by the Vice Principal for Quality and Curriculum.

A formal complaint can be made in the following ways: By Email: Sending a completed College Complaints Form (downloadable from the Newcastle College Website and at the end of this document) as an attachment to NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk or in writing, completing the College Complaints Form (also available from the Student Services and Reception), and sending it to:

The Quality Unit,
Newcastle College
FREEPOST NT920
Rye Hill Campus
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7SA

You should identify both the nature of the complaint and, if appropriate, the individual against whom the complaint is being made. Any complaint against an individual will be dealt with in a confidential manner.

Upon receipt of the Complaints Form, we will write to you and/or to your representative within 5 working days, acknowledging receipt of your complaint.

If the complaint is related to your course of study, the complaint will be forwarded by the Quality Unit to the relevant School Senior Manager (see list below for the Schools within the College). The School Senior Manager will take responsibility to fully investigate the matter and provide you or your representative with a formal response within 15 working days. If we are not able to do so within this timescale, we will write to you and let you know.

Schools within the College - Academic

School/Unit
Creative and Digital Industries
Construction, Leisure and Sport
Health, Childcare, Business and Science
Engineering
Apprenticeships
Education Services

Senior Managers - Service Areas

If your issue is a matter not concerned with your course of study, the following table provides information on services that cross over Schools. This will help inform your writing of any complaint.

Service
Higher Education
Quality
Learner Services/Safeguarding
Central Support Services

IT
Accreditation
Finance, Planning and Resources (MI)
Commercial Services
Estates
Health and Safety
Marketing
International
Education Partnerships

Stage 3 - Appeal

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your Stage 2 complaint, you have the right to escalate your complaint to Stage 3. You should put your appeal in writing, detail the reason for your dissatisfaction, what you have done to try to remedy the complaint informally and what you would like us to do next. Any complaint against an individual will be dealt with in a confidential manner. Stage 3 appeals should be sent to the office of The Principal. We will contact you, acknowledging receipt of your appeal within 5 working days. We will normally write to you with the outcome of the investigation into your appeal within 15 working days of receiving the appeal. If we are not able to do so within this timescale, we will write to you and let you know.

Stage 4

Students, General and Employers

FE Students

If your concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and you are still not happy you can appeal to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for all courses.** Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all three stages of the College's Complaints Procedure. If your concern reaches this stage, we will give you full information on how to proceed. You should note that any complaint made to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) must be made in writing within 3 months of exhausting the above Complaints Procedure.

The address for the ESFA is:- Complaints Team
 Skills Funding Agency
 Cheylesmore House
 Quinton Road
 Coventry
 CV1 2WT

Complaints received by an external funding body or arbitration service (e.g. Education and Skills Funding Agency or Department for Work and Pensions) will be referred to the NCG Chief Executive for investigation.

HE Students

If your concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and you are still not happy, you can appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all three stages of the College's Complaints Procedure. If your concern reaches this stage, we will give you full information on how to proceed. You should note that any complaint made to the OIA must be made in writing within 3 months of exhausting the above Complaints Procedure.

The address for the OIA is: -

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 3AB

Tel: 0118 959 9813

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

**If you are on a course validated by Teesside University and, if after exhausting all three stages of the College's Complaints Procedure, you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to submit your complaint to the University.

<http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=student%20regulations&name=Student%20Complaints%20Procedure>

If you are a student, you may wish to take advice and support from the Students' Union during the complaints process.

The contact details for the Students' Union are: -

Students' Union Office
Newcastle College
Rye Hill Campus
Scotswood Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7SA

Complaints made via Social Media

Please note where a complaint is received via Social Media, the College will respond advising the complainant to follow the College's Complaints Procedure.

Appendix 1 - Complaints Form

Complainant Details (This section is to be completed by all complainants)

Name		Student ID Number	
Course Code and Title		Date of Birth	
Learner/Parent/ Employer/Other?		Mode of Attendance	
Address and post code			
Telephone Number		Mobile Number	
Email Address			

Representative Details (Please only complete if you are contacting us on behalf of the Complainant)

Name			
Address			
Telephone Number		Mobile Number	
Email Address			

If a representative is submitting a formal complaint on behalf of a complainant who is a student over the age of 19 – the complainant must sign below to confirm the College has permission to directly communicate with the representative

Signature		Date	
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Equality and Diversity Information (providing the following detail helps us to make sure that all people are treated fairly).

Which age group do you belong to?									
Under 16		16-18		19-25		25+		Prefer not to say	

What is your gender?				
Male		Female		Prefer Not To Say

What would you describe your ethnic origin as?					
White British		White Irish		White – Other European	
White – any other background		Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi		Asian/Asian British – Indian	
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani		Asian/Asian British – any other Asian background		Black/Black British – African	
Black/Black British Caribbean		Black/Black British – any other Black background		Mixed – White and Asian	
Mixed – White and Black African		Mixed – White and Black Caribbean		Mixed – Any other mixed background	
Chinese		Prefer not to say		Any other	

What would you describe your religious beliefs as?					
Christian		Muslim		Hindu	
Buddhist		Sikh		Jewish	
None		Other		Prefer Not To Say	

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?					
Yes		No		Prefer Not To Say	

Complaints Form

Details of my complaint
<p><i>Please clearly identify the nature of your complaint, and what has been done to attempt to resolve the complaint so far</i></p>

Please contact me/my representative by:					
Telephone		Email		In Writing	

Signed		Date	
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Please forward your completed form to:

Postal: Quality Unit, Newcastle College, FREEPOST NT920, Rye Hill Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7SA

E-mail: NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk