Complaints Procedure

Date approved: October 2019
Approved by: Principalship
Review date: October 2021
Responsible Managers: Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum
Group Executive Lead: N/A
Accessible to Learners/Customer: 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 the highest standards of education, training and service principles, for all our College Community and understand that occasionally our learners, learners, apprentices, parents, employers, clients and stakeholders may wish to express their formal dissatisfaction with our services and therefore we set out in this Policy a consistent method of receiving, responding to and learning from such instances Taking account of users’ views enables the College to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement.

The College operates a four staged complaints procedure through which it aims to resolve concerns quickly and courteously in line with the Group’s core values. 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 learners, 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

The complaints policy applies to Newcastle College and to its learners, learners, apprentices, parents, employers, clients and other NCL customers or stakeholders. Its purpose is to ensure a positive experience for those who learn with us, or use our services.

4.1 Newcastle College will work within a four stage complaints procedure agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and approved by NCG.

4.2 The final stage the complaints procedure whereby complaints received made by an external funding body or arbitration service will be referred to the Group Chief Executive for investigation (e.g. ESFA, DWP etc.) For HE learners this is review by the validating partner and thereafter the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, OIA;

4.3 Newcastle College will investigate all complaints in a formal, consistent, systematic and non-confrontational manner and ensure that learners will not be treated less favourably following their complaint. If this is found to be the case, staff disciplinary procedures may be followed.

4.4 Newcastle College will identify actions from complaints received to improve and develop its services.

4.5 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.

4.6 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 and must be completed with the consent of the complainant. We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.

4.7 College Staff must send formal complaints to the Complaints Department to record on the Complaints Log.

4.8 On receipt of a formal complaint by the Complaints Department, Newcastle College will designate a single senior manager who will have responsibility for ensuring full implementation of the procedure and will be allocated within two working days of receipt.

4.9 The College’s decision will be communicated to the complainant by the College using the complainant’s preferred method of contact.

4.10 The College’s Complaints Department will continuously monitor the progress of a complaint investigation until the issue has been resolved.
4.11 The complaint will be closed on the Complaint Log only when the issue has been resolved and outcome communicated to the complainant.

4.12 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.

4.13 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.

4.14 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.

4.15 If a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the College Principal, then this should proceed directly to Stage 2 by addressing it to the NCG’s Chief Executive’s Office, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.

4.16 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.

4.17 Newcastle College will ensure that the procedure:
   - is regularly monitored, evaluated and reviewed annually;
   - is accessible to learners, clients, staff, employers, visitors and the general public via the Divisional website;
   - ensure that it is straightforward to make a complaint, without bureaucratic or complex language, processes, forms or systems;
   - contributes to quality assurance and to the constant improvement of services provided by the Division.

5. Links to Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Whistleblowing (Disclosure)

5.1 Newcastle College has definitive policy for specific concerns associated with health and safety, safeguarding and whistleblowing (disclosure). A concern or complaint associated with either category should follow the relevant policy and procedures defined.

6. Monitoring of Complaints

6.1 The College monitors complaints carefully to ensure that confidentiality is observed as appropriate throughout the procedure. A termly report on complaints is produced and shared with Principalship, 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.

6.2 Complaints relating to Higher Education provision are also reported to the HE Quality & Standards Committee.

7. Responsibility

7.1 Overall responsibility for this policy and procedure lies with the Vice Principal for Quality and Curriculum.
7.2 Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this procedure lies with the Complaints Department.

7.3 All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve informal complaints prior to invoking the Complaints Procedure.

7.4 All staff have a responsibility to forward formal complaints to the Complaints Department, including copies of correspondence issued in response to the complainant.

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.

8. Linked Policies

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy (Group)
- Disclosure Policy (Group)
- Single Safeguarding Policy (Group)
- Staff Disciplinary Policy (Group)
- Student Behaviour Management and Disciplinary Policy

9. Linked Procedures

N/A

10. Location and Access to the Policy

The Complaints Policy is located as follows:-

- NCG/NCL Website: Media Centre: Guide to Information: Our policies & procedures

11. Person Responsible for the Policy

- Vice Principal for Quality and Curriculum

12. Variations

There are no variations to this policy. Group procedures may, however, vary according to the needs of the business.
NEWCASTLE COLLEGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
Please see Appendix 2 - Complaints Procedure Summary

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 after its occurrence.

Learners

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 Curriculum Leader for the department. 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 Curriculum’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 within 3 months of exhausting stage 1.

Formal complaints are submitted to the Complaints Department 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:

Complaint Department
Principalship
Newcastle College
Armstrong House
Rye Hill Campus
Scotswood Road
Newcastle Upon Tyne
Tyne and Wear
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 acknowledge within five working days to you and/or to your representative.

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

**Curriculum Areas within the College - Academic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Areas</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to HE</td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeships</td>
<td>Art &amp; Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Learning</td>
<td>Automotive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Tech</td>
<td>Digital Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Energy Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Maths</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair and Beauty</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>Music &amp; Performing Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail and Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 curriculum areas. This will help inform your writing of any complaint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Services/Safeguarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Support Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, Planning and Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Partnerships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 within one month of exhausting stage 2. You should put your appeal in writing, detail the reason for your dissatisfaction, and why the response to the formal complaint (stage 2) was deemed inadequate, and what has been done to try to remedy the complaint. 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 from receipt of the complaint. If we are not able to do so within this timescale, we will write to you and let you know.
The address for written appeals is:
Tony Lewin, Principal
Newcastle College
Armstrong House
Rye Hill Campus
Scotswood Road
Newcastle Upon Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE4 7SA

Via Email:
NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk

**Stage 4***

**Learners, General and Employers**

**FE Learners**

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 1 month 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 Learners**

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 within 1 calendar year of receiving a ‘letter of completion’ and 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
If you are on a course validated by another awarding body/university have the right to appeal to the awarding body/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 organisation.
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
Rutherford Building
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Student ID Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Code and Title</td>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner/Parent/ Employer/Other</td>
<td>Mode of Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address and post code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
<td>Mobile Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
<td>Mobile Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which age group do you belong to?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your gender?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What would you describe your ethnic origin as?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White – any other background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian British – Pakistani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Black British Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed – White and Black African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What would you describe your religious beliefs as?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Prefer Not To Say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Prefer Not To Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Complaints Form

**Details of my complaint**

*Please clearly identify the nature of your complaint, and what has been done to attempt to resolve the complaint so far*

### Please contact me/my representative by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>In Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please forward your completed form to:

**Postal:**
Principalship, Newcastle College, Armstrong House, Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 7SA

**E-mail:** [NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk](mailto:NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk)
Appendix 2 - Complaints Procedure Summary

Introduction
At Newcastle College, we aim to offer a high quality education service in a safe environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

If you are unsure and need further help or advice at any stage or require a copy of this guide/form in an alternative format/language, please contact Central Support Service by email centralsupport@ncl-coll.ac.uk or by telephone 0191 2004189.

The College has a staged Complaints Policy and Procedure through which we aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible, this should be read in conjunction with this guide.

Complaints Timeline

---

**Stage One** (Informal)
- Concerns should be raised as soon as possible but no later than **3 months** after its occurrence.

**Stage Two** (Formal)
- Concerns should be raised using the Complaints Form within **3 months** of exhausting Stage One.
- Written acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be sent within **5 working days**.
- A written response following investigation will be sent within **15 working days** from receipt of complaint, where not possible you will be contacted.

**Stage Three** (Internal Appeal)
- If you are dissatisfied with the response at stage 2 you have the right to appeal in writing within **1 months** of receiving the final outcome letter.
- Written confirmation of receipt of the appeal will be sent within **5 working days**.
- A written response following investigation of the appeal will be sent within **15 working days** from receipt of the complaint, where this is not possible you will be contacted.

**Stage Four** (External Appeal)
- You may evoke this stage within **3 months** of receiving the final ‘Letter of Completion’ and exhausting all three stages of the complaints procedures (1 calendar year for HE).