

# NCG Complaints & Compliments Policy



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|---|--|-----------------------------|
| <b><u>Policy Title</u></b>                | NCG Complaints & Compliments Policy  |                             |
| <b><u>Policy Category</u></b>             | Compliant  |                             |
| <b><u>Owner</u></b>                       | Executive Director of Quality  |                             |
| <b><u>Group Executive Lead</u></b>        | Executive Director of Governance and Risk  |                             |
| <b><u>Date Written</u></b>                | May 2021   |                             |
| <b><u>Considered By</u></b>               | Executive Committee  |                             |
| <b><u>Approved By</u></b>                 | Corporation  |                             |
| <b><u>Date Approved</u></b>               | June 2021  |                             |
| <b><u>Equality Impact Assessment</u></b>  | The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics   |                             |
| <b><u>Freedom of Information</u></b>      | This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.  |                             |
| <b><u>Review Date</u></b>                 | June 2023  |                             |
| <b><u>Policy Summary</u></b>              | The purpose of the NCG Complaints policy is to provide for a consistent process across all college and professional services. It is designed to be simple and accessible, and to promote the successful and timely resolution of the complaint at the earliest possible stage. |                             |
| <b><u>Applicability of Policy</u></b>     | <b><u>Consultation Undertaken</u></b>  | <b><u>Applicable To</u></b> |
| Newcastle College                         | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| Newcastle Sixth                           | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| Carlisle College                          | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| Kidderminster College                     | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| Lewisham College                          | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| West Lancashire College                   | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| Southwark College                         | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| Professional Services                     | <u>Yes</u> / No  | Yes                         |
| <b><u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u></b> |  |                             |
| <b><u>Previous Approval Date</u></b>      | <b><u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u></b>  |                             |
| June 2019                                 | Removal of the need to have an underpinning college procedure; various changes to text (tracked changes, but not significant)  |                             |
| <b><u>Linked Documents</u></b>            |  |                             |
| <b><u>Document Title</u></b>              | <b><u>Relevance</u></b>  |                             |
| Whistleblowing and Disclosure Policy      | Makes clear the differences between general complaints and whist blowing   |                             |



## 1. Scope and Purpose of Policy

Despite being an organisation committed to the highest standards of education, training and service standards, NCG understands that occasionally our learners, students, apprentices, parents, employers, clients or stakeholders may wish to express their formal dissatisfaction with our education, training or business services. We therefore set out, in this policy, a consistent method of receiving, responding to, and resolving such complaints. learning from such instances.

The single policy covers all Colleges and Professional Services – there is therefore no need for a local procedure.

Through this complaints policy, NCG will aim to resolve concerns in timely, fair and courteous manner, in line with the Group's core values. We will periodically review the nature of complaints as potential learning points to support continuous improvement activity.

NCG also values recognition of good services and believes that staff will be recognised and rewarded. In doing so, this policy sets out a basic expectation that formal compliments and commendations are gathered and relevant staff and students are duly recognised.

## 2. Policy Statement

### 2.1. Overview

The complaints and compliments policy applies to each College within NCG and also Professional Services. It is intended to safeguard the entitlement and experiences of the Group's learners, students, apprentices, staff, parents, employers, clients and other customers or stakeholders of NCG. Its purpose is to ensure a positive experience for those who learn with us, or use our services. Each of NCG's Colleges and Professional Services will therefore:

- Work within this four stage complaints procedure.
- Formally collate any compliments.
- Investigate all complaints in a formal, consistent, systematic and non-confrontational manner.
- Designate a senior leader who will have responsibility for ensuring full implementation of the procedure.
- Ensure that confidentiality is observed as appropriate throughout the procedure.
- Produce an annual report to Local and Corporation Board identifying the number of complaints at stages 2, 3 and 4 and highlight any general issues that have required wider resolution.
- Monitor and respond to any trends pertaining to historic issues, or complaints relating to certain groups, including those considered monitories or protected characteristics.
- Report stage 3 and 4 complaints, and any compliments at least quarterly to Board and QCPR meetings.



- Ensure that this policy is accessible to students, clients, staff, employers, visitors and the general public via the NCG Policy Intranet and all NCG and college websites.
- 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 College and Group.

### 2.2. General Arrangements

- Please note where a complaint is submitted via Social Media, the College/Professional Services will respond advising the complainant to follow NCG's Complaints and Compliments Policy.
- NCG will not accept or act upon anonymous complaints until we can substantiate the alleged facts – we will therefore take measures to encourage complainants to provide additional information to enable the complaint investigation to progress. We will also direct the complainant to the Whistleblowing Policy (see below)
- Malicious complaints are not acceptable at any time – they waste valuable time and result in unfairness to those individuals involved. Where complaints are investigated and found to be malicious or mischievous, appropriate action will be taken, extending to discipline measures for students and staff.

### 3. Guidance and Links on when to use this policy and related policies

This policy is broadly to be used when a student or member of staff wishes to make a formal complaint, about a person, system or process associated with NCG, based on perceived unfairness, or conduct. To help signpost other relevant policies the complainant should consider if any of the following apply:

- Issues relating to safeguarding must first follow the Safeguarding Policy .
- Issues associated with learner conduct (including alleged bullying and harassment) should first be referred to the NCG Positive Behaviour Policy .
- Issues associated with staff conduct should first be referred to the NCG Discipline Policy.
- Where an individual raises a concern associated with alleged fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff and officers of NCG and subcontractors, they should follow the NCG Whistleblowing and Disclosure Policy.

**4. Stages of Complaint**

NCG operates a four stage complaints procedure:

| Stage                      | Timescale   | Reporting  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Stage 1<br>Informal        | No later than 30 working days after its occurrence  | <p>Concerns will be brought by the complainant to the attention of the person who in the opinion of the complainant, is responsible. (For example a tutor, course leader, curriculum or service manager).</p> <p>Whilst this is an informal stage, the designated leader must ensure that the issue is recorded in a simple log or similar broadly indicating the nature of complaint, date it was raised, outline resolution and date closed.</p>   |
| Stage 2<br>Formal          | No later than 10 working days of exhausting Stage 1 | <p>If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage, or the complainant feels that the issue has not been dealt with appropriately, then this will progress to Stage 2.</p> <p>Formal complaints are submitted to the college or NCG Professional Services designated lead for enquiry and resolution.</p> <p>The complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.</p> <p>The complaint will be assigned to a named manager who will take responsibility to fully investigate the matter.</p> <p>NCG will work to a formal response within 15 working days, from receipt of the complaint.</p> <p>Where this is not possible, due to complexity for example, the complainant must be informed in writing.</p> |
| Stage 3<br>Internal Appeal | No later than 10 working days of exhausting Stage 2 | <p>If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response to the Stage 2 complaint, then they have the right to appeal by escalating to Stage 3.</p> <p>The complainant will put their appeal in writing, detail the reason for the dissatisfaction and why they consider the response to the formal complaint (stage 2) to be inadequate.</p> <p>Stage 3 appeals will be sent to the Principal in a college, or the Executive Director &amp; Secretary to the Board for NCG Professional Services.</p>  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   |  | <p>The Principal / Executive Director &amp; Secretary to the Board (or appointed deputy leader) will review the appeal, fully investigate the matter and provide a formal response within 15 working days from receipt of the stage 3 appeal.</p> <p>Where this is not possible, due to complexity, the complainant must be informed in writing.</p>   |
| <p>Stage 4<br/>Group<br/>Appeal</p>     | <p>No later than 15 working days of exhausting Stage 1</p>           | <p>If the concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and the complainant remains unsatisfied, then a final appeal can be made to the CEO's office in writing (if at college level).</p> <p>Before the process proceeds, the complainant must have exhausted all stages above.</p> <p>The CEO, or delegated member of the Group Executive, will work to a formal response within 15 working days from receipt of the stage 4 complaint. Where this is not possible, due to complexity, the complainant must be informed in writing.</p> <p>End of Process.</p>  |
| <p>Stage 4<br/>Higher<br/>Education</p> | <p>Within 1 calendar year of receiving a "Letter of Completion".</p> | <p>If the concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and the complainant remains unsatisfied, then a final appeal can be made to the CEO's office in writing.</p> <p>Before the process proceeds, the complainant must have exhausted all stages above.</p> <p>The CEO, or delegated member of the Group Executive, will work to a formal response within 15 working days from receipt of the stage 4 complaint.</p> <p>If the issue cannot be resolved through the CEO's office, then the complaint can be referred to the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The complainant will be informed in writing that this is the next stage and that it has been actioned.</p> <p>End of process.</p> |

### **4.1. Complaints about senior leaders**

The procedure will make clear that:

- Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Principal, then this will proceed directly to Stage 4 by addressing it to the NCG's Chief Executive's Office, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.
- Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Chief Executive, then this should be sent directly to the Executive Director and Secretary to the Board, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.

## **5. Equality and Diversity Statement**

It is essential that complaints are reviewed to ensure that the basis of complaints is largely random and has no apparent trend of patterns. Specific consideration should be given to protected characteristics such as disability, ethnicity, gender equality or other. Should a pattern or trend be evident then the designated lead must raise with the Principal or CEO immediately.

## **6. Compliments**

It is important to recognise and value the achievements of learners and staff, and as such college leads should collate the type and nature of compliments to recognise good work and achievement. This aspect of the policy is less formal and prescribed and as such the recognition could take the form of college newsletters, social media, principal's briefing/reports and external media where appropriate. College leads will identify any significant themes in the Quality Curriculum Performance Review meetings, so that Group-based colleagues can identify any common areas of good practice and achievement.

## **7. Location and Access to the Policy**

The Complaints Policy is located as follows:-

- NCG Intranet.
- NCG Website.
- College Websites.

## NCG Complaints & Compliments Policy



### Annex A – College Procedural Arrangements

This section highlights the complaint submission details and appropriate levels of staff, who will receive and handle the complaints.

|                         | Stage 1 – informal            | Stage 2 – formal   | Stage 3 – Appeal | Stage 4 – Group Appeal |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|------------------|------------------------|
| Carlisle College        | Local Course Leader / Manager | VP for Quality and Curriculum.   | Principal        | CEO                    |
| Kidderminster College   | Local Course Leader / Manager | Quality Co-ordinator.  | Principal        | CEO                    |
| Lewisham College        | Local Course Leader / Manager | Head of Quality Improvement  | Principal        | CEO                    |
| Newcastle College       | Local Course Leader / Manager | Nominated leader<br>Submit to: NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk  | Principal        | CEO                    |
| Newcastle Sixth Form    | Local Course Leader / Manager | Deputy Principal   | Principal        | CEO                    |
| Southwark College       | Local Course Leader / Manager | Nominated leader<br>Submit to:<br><a href="mailto:Complaints@southwark.ac.uk">Complaints@southwark.ac.uk</a> | Principal        | CEO                    |
| West Lancashire college | Local Course Leader / Manager | Head of Quality  | Principal        | CEO                    |



## Annex B – Stage 2 Complaints Form

This form is to be used for all stage 2 (formal) complaints. Complainants (the person making the complaint) must first review the NCG Complaints and Compliments Policy before proceeding. Please complete all relevant questions.

**Q1: Has the complaint been raised at stage 1 (informally) in line with the NCG policy?**  
 Yes  No

If Not, please explain why [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

**Q2: Date you are submitting this complaint** [Click or tap to enter a date.](#)

**Q3a: About You (students)** - to be completed if you are a current student (then go to Q4)

|  |  |                          |  |
|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Name</b>  |  | <b>Student ID Number</b> |  |
| <b>Identify the Curriculum Area or Service Area the Complaint relates to</b> |  |                          |  |
| <b>Insert any recent changes to address or contact details</b>               |  |                          |  |

**Q3b: About You (other) – to be completed if you are not a student, but wish to complain, including on behalf of someone**

|                      |  |                         |  |
|----------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Name</b>          |  | <b>Telephone Number</b> |  |
| <b>Address</b>       |  |                         |  |
| <b>Email Address</b> |  |                         |  |
|                      |  |                         |  |

**Q4: Are you complaining on behalf of someone else?**  
 Yes  No  (then go to QX)

**Q5: Does the person know you are making a complaint on their behalf?**  
 Yes  No

**Q6: What is the relationship between yourself and the person you are representing?**  
[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

