

Complaints Procedure

Date approved:	December 2020	
Approved by:	Principalship	
Review date:	November 2021	
Responsible Managers:	Director of Quality and Standards	
Group Executive Lead:	N/A	
Accessible to Students/Customers:	Yes, via College website	
Groups this procedure applies to:		
16-18 full time students	Yes	If no, refer to:
19+ full time students	Yes	If no, refer to:
19+ substantive part time students	Yes	If no, refer to:
19+ non-substantive part time students	Yes	If no, refer to:
Apprentices	Yes	If no, refer to:
Higher Education students	Yes	If no, refer to:
Employers	Yes	If no, refer to:
Other Newcastle College customers/stakeholders	Yes	If no, refer to:

1. Introduction and overview

At Newcastle College, we are committed to the highest standards of education, training, and service principles, for all our College Community. We understand however, that occasionally our students, apprentices, parents, employers, clients, and stakeholders may wish to express their formal dissatisfaction with our services. All complaints are taken seriously. The purpose of this Complaints Procedure is to ensure that the process to make a complaint is straightforward, without bureaucratic or complex language, processes, forms, or systems. It also serves to ensure complaints are recognised and dealt with in a fair, systematic, consistent, and non-confrontational manner, and 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.

The output of such activities will also contribute to quality assurance and support the constant improvement of services provided by the College. This procedure therefore describes the method of receiving, responding to, and learning from such instances.

The Newcastle College Complaints Procedure is compliant with the NCG Complaints Policy. The NCG Complaints Policy applies to each college within NCG. Its purpose is to ensure a positive experience for those who learn with us or use our services.

The NCG Policy requires the College to implement a four stage complaints procedure. Through the staged complaints procedure, we aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

College Staff

- Overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the procedure lies with the Director of Quality and Standards.
- Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this procedure lies with the Complaints Department; overseen by Principalship.
- All staff have a responsibility to try to resolve informal complaints prior to invoking the Complaints Procedure.
- Curriculum leaders / Heads of Curriculum are responsible for keeping local records of informal complaints using the Record Log for Stage 1 Concerns (Appendix 1).
- Staff must send formal complaints to the Complaints Department (NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk), including copies of communication issued in response to the complainant, to record on the Complaints Log.
- 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.

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 Curriculum Leader for the department. For apprentices it may be that the most appropriate person to raise the concern with is the allocated College Skills Trainer or where applicable the manager in the workplace 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.
- For students with a Special Educational need and/or disability, they can ask for an independent member of staff to support/advocate for them.

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. Only when you have raised your concern with the appropriate team and are not satisfied should you raise as a complaint.

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, or
- 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.

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.

3. Stages of Complaint

Newcastle College operates a four stage complaints procedure:

Stage	Timescale	Reporting
Stage One – Informal	Stage 1 concerns should be raised immediately and no later than three months after occurrence of the issue.	<p>Concerns should be brought to the attention of the person who in your opinion, is responsible (e.g., a teacher, tutor, Skills Trainer, or Curriculum Leader for the subject or service area concerned). We will try to resolve complaints at this stage.</p> <p>Whilst this is an informal stage, the College (Head of Curriculum) will ensure that the issue is recorded in a log indicating the nature of complaint, the date it was raised, outline resolution and date closed.</p>
Stage Two – Formal	Stage 2 concerns must be raised within three months of exhausting Stage 1	<p>If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage, or you feel that the issue has not been dealt with, then it will progress to Stage 2. Stage 1 must be completed before progressing to Stage 2.</p> <p>Formal complaints must be submitted to the Complaints Department (overseen by Principalship) using the complaints form (Appendix 2). Contact details are in Appendix 2.</p> <p>Complete the form with as much detail as possible, but most importantly full name, date of birth and contact details. 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>On receipt of a formal complaint by the Complaints Department, Newcastle College will designate a manager to take responsibility to fully investigate the matter. If the complaint is related to your course of study, the complaint will ordinarily be forwarded by the Complaints Department to the relevant Head of Curriculum.</p> <p>Complaints will be acknowledged within three working days.</p> <p>Newcastle College will work to providing a formal response within 10 working days* from receipt of the complaint. Where this is not possible, you will be informed in writing.</p>

<p>Stage 3 - Appeal</p>	<p>Stage 3 concerns must be raised within one month of exhausting stage 2.</p>	<p>If you are dissatisfied with the response to your Stage 2 complaint, you have the right to escalate your complaint to Stage 3.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Stage 3 appeals must be sent to Principalship: The address for written appeals is: Newcastle College Principal's Office, Newcastle College, Armstrong House, Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 7SA Or via email: NCLComplaints@ncl-coll.ac.uk</p> <p>We will contact you, acknowledging receipt of your appeal within three working days. We will normally write to you with the outcome of the investigation into your appeal 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.</p>
<p>Stage 4</p> <p>Group and External referral</p> <p>For Further Education complainants</p>	<p>Stage 4 concerns must be raised within one month of exhausting stage 3.</p>	<p>If the concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and you remain dissatisfied, then a final appeal can be made to the Chief Executive of NCG. Before you proceed, you must have exhausted all stages above.</p> <p>Stage 4 appeals should be sent to the CEO's office: NCG's Chief Executive's Office, Rye Hill House, Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7SA Or via email: clerk@ncg.co.uk</p> <p>Colleges/Group Services will work to a formal response within 10 working days* from receipt of the stage 4 complaint. Where this is not possible, you will be informed in writing.</p> <p>If the issue cannot be resolved through the CEO's office, then the Executive Director of Quality, will notify the Educational and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)**. The complainant will be informed in writing that this is the next stage and that it has been actioned.</p>

<p>Stage 4</p> <p>External</p> <p>For Higher Education complainants</p>	<p>Stage 4 concerns will be raised with the OIA within one calendar year of receiving a “Letter of Completion”.</p>	<p>If the concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and you remain dissatisfied, then a final appeal can be made to the Chief Executive of NCG. Before you proceed, you must have exhausted all stages above.</p> <p>Stage 4 appeals should be sent to the CEO’s office: NCG’s Chief Executive’s Office, Rye Hill House, Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7SA Or via email: clerk@ncg.co.uk</p> <p>Colleges/Group Services will work to a formal response within 10 working days* from receipt of the stage 4 complaint. Where this is not possible, you will be informed in writing.</p> <p>If the issue cannot be resolved through the CEO’s office, then the Director of HE, will notify 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>
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* Working days does not include College holidays

** ESFA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Education and regulates further education colleges, intervening where there is risk of failure or where there is evidence of mismanagement of public funds

*** OIA review unresolved complaints from students about their higher education provider. Where they find that the provider has done something wrong, they make recommendations for them to put things right.

Complaints made via Social Media

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

Anonymous Complaints

We regret that the College is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.

Malicious Complaints

Malicious complaints received in any form will result in disciplinary action where permissible by College policies and procedures, e.g. complaints that are not true or use of foul language in any communication sent to staff or the College.

4. Complaints about senior leaders

Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the College Principal, then this will 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.

Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Chief Executive of NCG, then this will proceed directly to Stage 2 by addressing it to the Executive Director Governance, Risk and Assurance, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA

5. Complaints about Group Services

Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about NCG Group Services, then this will follow the 4-stage process and should initially be addressing it to: Executive Director of Quality, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7SA.

6. Monitoring and reporting of Complaints

The College Complaints Department monitors the progress of complaints until the issue has been resolved. The complaint will be closed on the Complaint Log only when the issue has been resolved and outcome communicated to the complainant. The College Complaints Department also ensures confidentiality is observed as appropriate throughout the procedure.

A termly report on complaints is produced and shared with Principalship and Local Board, 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

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

The College will review complaints outcomes and actions from complaints received to improve and develop its services. This includes reviewing for any emerging Equality and Diversity concerns.

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

Newcastle College has definitive policies 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.

8. Linked Policies

- NCG Complaints Policy
- NCG Disciplinary Policy (*for staff*)
- NCG Disclosure by Learners/Customers in Work Placement Policy
- NCG Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- NCG Safeguarding Policy
- NCG Student Positive Behaviour Policy

9. Linked Procedures

N/A

10. Variations

There are no variations to this procedure.

This document is available in the following alternative formats:

- Large print
- Coloured paper
- Braille and Tactile diagrams
- Audio
- Subtitling
- Simplified document content

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:

CSS@ncl-coll.ac.uk

We review our policies and procedures regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. The implementation of this procedure is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics

Appendix 2 – Formal Complaints Form

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

Name		Student ID Number	
Course Code and Title		Date of Birth	
Student/Parent/ Employer/ Other?		Mode of Attendance	
Address and post code			
Telephone Number		Mobile Number	
Email Address			
Identify the Curriculum Area or Service Area the Complaint relates to			

Representative Details (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 –		Black/Black British – African	

		any other Asian background			
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. Describe what has been done to attempt to resolve the complaint so far noting which member(s) of staff have dealt with the concern and what the outcome has been</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: 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