

**CATEGORY:** Quality Assurance and Improvement

**TYPE:** Procedure

**TITLE:** Complaints Procedure

**PERSON RESPONSIBLE:** Director of Student Engagement and Partnerships

**PURPOSE:**

The College is committed to providing an outstanding service to all its users. Most people coming to the College enjoy college life and do not experience any problems. However, sometimes things can go wrong. The College needs to know about these occasions and act upon them. The aim of this procedure is to give clear guidance on how complaints are made and dealt with.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Anyone who uses or has recently used the College's services or facilities can complain about any aspect of these services, which include teaching and training, support, advice and guidance and wider college facilities.
- 1.2 Students and users of the College's services may also complain if they feel they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately.
- 1.3 The College is committed to listening to the student voice as expressed through the class representatives system and the Student Union. It is in these ways that the College tries to avoid problems becoming complaints.
- 1.4 Before making a formal complaint students and College users should try to resolve the issue informally. This is outlined in Stage 1 below.
- 1.5 If students feel they lack confidence to make a complaint, they are encouraged to talk in the first instance to their Personal Tutor, a Student Welfare Officer or the College's Student Union. They will listen to the complaint and help the student deal with the matter in an appropriate manner.
- 1.6 Students on Staffordshire University programmes should also consult the University complaints procedure which is available on the HE Portal (for students studying at the NULC campus) and on the University website (can be accessed by students across NSCG).
- 1.7 Anyone wishing to lodge an appeal against academic assessment and progress decisions should consult the Academic Appeals Policy.

## **2.0 Stage 1 (Informal Discussion)**

- 2.1 Students may be able to resolve their concerns informally by talking directly to their Personal Tutor or a Student Welfare Officer. In addition, students may also want to discuss the matter informally with the Student Union.
- 2.2 Concerns, even when dealt with informally, will be taken seriously and appropriate action taken.
- 2.3 At this stage no written record will be made of the concern.

## **3.0 Stage 2 (Formal Complaint)**

- 3.1 If a student or College user feels that their concerns have not been resolved at the informal stage, they should complete an official Complaints Form which is available from and which should be returned to the Front of House Team.
- 3.2 Staff at the Front of House will log the complaint and acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days.
- 3.3 The complaint will be referred to the appropriate College manager who will investigate the complaint. This will involve discussing the complaint with all relevant people.
- 3.4 The College manager will investigate the complaint and respond directly to the person who made the complaint within 15 working days, sending a copy to the Front of House Team so that actions can be logged.
- 3.5 If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they can move onto Stage 3.

## **4.0 Stage 3 (Internal Review)**

- 4.1 In the event that the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, it can then be passed to an appropriate member of Senior Management Team for internal review.
- 4.2 A request for an internal review should be submitted within 15 working days of receiving the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation. Requests for reviews received after this will not normally be considered.
- 4.3 Requests for reviews will only be considered if there were procedural irregularities; fresh evidence has emerged; or the finding of the investigation was against the weight of the evidence.
- 4.4 If the member of Senior Management Team is satisfied that any of the above conditions apply, a further investigation will be undertaken, the result of which will be communicated to the complainant within 15 working days.

- 4.5 Appeals can be made to the College Principal, if the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome.
- 4.6 Higher Education students can then appeal to the Office of Independent Adjudicator for review. Guidance on this process, including timescales, is available on the OIA website.

## **5.0 Highly Sensitive Complaints**

- 5.1 Highly sensitive complaints will be dealt with directly by the College's Senior Management Team. The Front of House Team will pass any such complaints directly to the Principal's PA. The information will still be logged and all actions recorded.
- 5.2 Examples of highly sensitive complaints would be complaints against senior members of staff, issues linked to safeguarding and complaints linked to the College's Single Equality Scheme. These particular complaints will be referred to the Director of Human Resources.
- 5.3 If the complaint directly concerns the Principal, it should be recorded and referred to the Clerk to the Corporation.

## **6.0 Analysis**

- 6.1 The Front of House Team will produce a half-termly analysis of complaints for consideration by the College's Senior Management Team.
- 6.2 The Senior Management Team will make specific recommendations, where relevant.
- 6.3 The Front of House Team will produce an annual report of complaints, actions taken and recommendations.

## **5.0 Further Rights to Appeal**

- 5.1 If a student who has logged a complaint has exhausted the College internal process they have the right to further escalate the complaint to the relevant awarding organisation. After exhausting the awarding organisation's procedure they have the right to escalate to the relevant regulator.