

POLICY STATEMENT**TITLE:**

Higher Education Complaints

**INTRODUCTION/
OVERVIEW:**

The College welcomes comments and complaints from higher education students on Pearson validated programmes. It will use this process to improve its service and to enhance the student experience.

Warwick University and the University of Northampton students should refer directly to their University's procedure and processes.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Northampton College is committed to the continuous improvement of the services it provides.

It is also recognised that there are many instances where we deliver exceptional service and compliments are welcome. Good practice will be shared across the College teams.

We recognise that, occasionally, mistakes will be made or the service offered will not meet an individual's requirements or expectations. For these reasons it is College policy that all complaints made against the College or the services it offers should be:

- treated seriously and in an open manner
- acknowledged within five college working days in writing
- investigated by a manager
- resolved, wherever it is reasonably practicable, within three teaching weeks.
- used as feedback to improve the service which the College offers

This policy applies to all higher education students of Northampton College.

QUALITY STATEMENTS:
LINKED POLICIES/ PROCEDURES:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College expects that every effort will be made to resolve the issue locally through discussion and agreed actions in the first instance. Where this is not possible or does not result in satisfactory resolution, the complaint should be submitted in writing • The College usually expects complaints to be made by the person concerned. However it will consider complaints made by a student's parent or advocate in exceptional circumstances • The relevant manager will respond in writing explaining what has happened as a result of the complaint. Where this involves a member of staff, specific detail of action taken will not be made available. This is to ensure that our employees are afforded appropriate dignity at work • Comments should be made in writing, either by a letter by e-mail. • All complaints will be fed into the Quality Improvement Plan system for discussion and actions if appropriate. • 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Grievance Policy • Safeguarding Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy and procedures • Admissions Policy and procedures

MONITORING PROCEDURE:

A report on complaints received will be presented to SMT termly.
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DATE FOR REVIEW AND NEXT DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT:
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April 2018

RESPONSIBILITY: Overall (Directorate/Dept): Implementation:
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Deputy Principal

APPROVED BY SMT: (Principal to sign)		(Signature)
	Principal	(Position)
		(Date)

Appendices:

Appendix A Complaints procedure

Appendix B Higher Education Complaints Process and Procedure

Appendix A: Complaints Procedure for Pearson Students only

Warwick University Students
Please follow link on NILE

University of Northampton Students
Please follow link on NILE

Remember – you should always talk to your Personal Tutor in the first instance.

Written complaint received by Quality Assurance Manager and acknowledged within 5 college working days



EARLY RESOLUTION Head of HE to investigate complaint and draft letter of response to the Quality Manager normally within three college working weeks (see additional process for University of Northampton and Warwick University students)



Quality Assurance Manager to send response to complainant normally within four* teaching weeks
** Some investigations may take longer to resolve*



Complaint resolved



Complainant not satisfied with response and further complaint received



Complaint resolved ←

FORMAL STAGE Quality Assurance Manager refers to mediation and conciliation. An impartial manager will help parties to resolve issues confidentially. New timescales will be set, agreed and confirmed in writing



Complainant not satisfied with response and further complaint received



REVIEW STAGE Student to complete formal paperwork providing full details and any associated documentation. The formal paperwork must be received within two weeks following mediation.



COMPLAINTS PANEL The College will, at this stage, undertake an initial evaluation to check that the complainant has met deadlines and in the required format. (The complaint can be rejected at this stage if deadlines and procedures have not been adhered to.)

The complaints panel will make a decision based on all the evidence available to them. The complainant will have the response within one teaching week of the panel sitting. The complainant will also be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter.

All Pearson HE students can, in exceptional circumstances, make an appeal directly to the Office of Independent Adjudicators. However we would encourage all Higher Education students to try to resolve issues directly with the College in the first instance.

www.oiahe.org.uk

Appendix B:

Higher Education Complaints Process and Procedure

What is a complaint?

For the purpose of this framework, a student complaint is defined as:

‘an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a university’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the university’

This embraces, but is broader than, the definition of a complaint within the UK Quality Code, which is limited to the ‘expression of specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student’s learning opportunities’

Examples of complaints include:

- failure by the College to meet obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks or a student charter
- misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the College
- concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration
- Group complaints (in such circumstances, the College will ask the group to nominate one student to act as group representative)

Some students may raise issues which do not neatly fall into complaints or assessment/academic appeal. Northampton College students will be advised and directed as to the appropriate procedure.

Complaints about staff:

When complaints about staff are raised they will be investigated by a Manager who is independent of the situation. This is normally undertaken by the Human Resource Department of the College.

Making a complaint

A complaint must be made in writing either by email or on line completing the appropriate form. Students may appoint a representative to submit the claim for them.

Complaints must be set out clearly and succinctly and provide evidence (where it exists) to substantiate the student’s claims.

All complaints will be managed in a confidential and sensitive way.

The complaints policy clearly sets out deadlines (see flowchart) for making complaints; however, the College will exercise discretion where there is a good reason, supported by evidence of a late complaint submission.

Early resolution

It is envisaged that most complaints will be resolved quickly at local level. This can include discussions with the student or a holding a focus group with more than one student with the same complaint. This will always be followed up by a letter informing the student/s of the outcome from the Head of HE. The student will be directed to Student Services or Student Union who can provide support if necessary.

The formal stage

This is used by a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of early resolution (some complaints may be too serious or complex to be dealt with at the early resolution stage). If a group complaint has been received – it is at this stage that a group representative should be nominated to take the complaint further. The formal stage will be dealt with by people who have not already been involved and may include mediation or conciliation if appropriate. New deadlines will be agreed between all parties and the Head of HE informed. The student will be provided with a written outcome.

The review stage

If the student is still dissatisfied with the outcome from the complaint he/she can appeal to the Complaints Panel which will hold a review of the process of the formal complaint. The Complaints Panel will consist of Head of HE, Quality Assurance Manager and the Vice Principal. This will be to ensure that the correct procedures were followed and that the decision from the formal stage was reasonable. At this stage the complaint is signed off by a senior member of staff to demonstrate that the complaint has been taken seriously and this is the definitive response of the College.

The student will receive a written outcome of the panel within one College teaching week of the Complaints Panel sitting. The student will also receive a 'Completion of Procedures Letter'.

If a student remains dissatisfied he/she may contact 'The Office of the Independent Adjudicator'

All complaints will be recorded in sufficient detail, to enable that causes and training opportunities can be identified and improvements made to the course/programme if appropriate. Student details will be anonymised. Complaints will be input into the College Quality Review system to track changes made as a result of any complaints.

Students from the University of Warwick or the University of Northampton will follow their University's procedure and process.