

## 1. Overview

<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Complaints and Compliments</b>
<b>Who does the policy apply to?</b>	All staff and anyone with a relationship with Northern College who wishes to make a formal complaint or register a compliment.
<b>Aims</b>	To provide an open and transparent process in which complaints and compliments can be responded to in a fair and equitable manner, and within agreed timescales.
<b>To be read in conjunction with</b>	Northern College Mission Statement
<b>Further advice may be sought from</b>	Head of Student Services, Quality Officer
<b>Review arrangements</b>	<p>This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure its continuing relevance and effectiveness.</p> <p>The College may review the policy prior to this date should operational and/or legislative/guidance matters require it.</p> <p>Further details regarding revisions and review cycle can be found at Section 11.</p>

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Mission of Northern College is to inspire positive change through adult education. We hope you will find that this is so throughout your time at Northern College. We value and encourage all kinds of feedback. Anyone who has a relationship with Northern College can compliment a member of staff, a team or the organisation. If there are areas of our provision which concern you, or about which you wish to complain, these pages tell you how to go about it.
- 2.2. Please note this policy does not cover academic appeals or complaints by students relating to the behaviour of other students. If you are a student with a concern or complaint of this nature, please speak to your tutor or contact Student Services.
- 2.3. This Policy is based on the following principles:
  - 2.3.1. active promotion of equality of opportunity throughout all Northern College activities and the learning experience;
  - 2.3.2. provision of an open and transparent process;
  - 2.3.3. resolution of complaints in a fair and equitable way within agreed timescales;
  - 2.3.4. continuous service improvement.

## 3. Scope and Purpose

- 3.1. This policy deals with situations relating to compliments, concerns and complaints by students, partners and members of the public. The College welcomes positive comments and suggestions for the improvement of its services and has established a variety of mechanisms to ensure that students can provide feedback. It is hoped and expected that students will take full advantage of these processes and address comments and suggestions to an appropriate member of staff, will lead to a more immediate, informal response.
- 3.2. The College clearly distinguishes between a concern (which is an opportunity for an individual to bring a matter that they are unhappy about directly to the individual concerned within the area which

they are studying) and a complaint (which is a formal statement by an individual to the College, which must be formally investigated and responded to).

- 3.3. Any individual who thinks that they have a justified cause for concern or complaint should feel able to raise the matter without fear of subsequent discrimination as should any individual providing supporting evidence or representation. Students should note that raising a vexatious or malicious complaint may lead to disciplinary action. A complaint that is categorised as vexatious may be rejected by the College; in such instances the student will be notified in writing 10 days after the decision to reject has been made, with reasons as to why the decision has been made.
- 3.4. This policy can only be applied by the complainant themselves and not by someone acting on their behalf (although this does not prevent an aggrieved student obtaining advice and/or support in the preparation of their complaint).
- 3.5. Whilst the College will endeavour to investigate and address any issues raised anonymously as far as it is possible to do so, such issues are not covered by the provisions of these regulations.

#### **4. Monitoring**

- 4.1. The College produces an annual report setting out all compliments and complaints received in the academic year, the areas of praise or concern, the outcomes and any changes that have been made in response.
- 4.2. In all circumstances the College is committed to expediting a concern or complaint in the most efficient way possible and in a manner that is appropriate to the level of investigation required. All concerns and complaints are treated with appropriate seriousness in a fair and understanding manner.
- 4.3. The Quality Officer, or equivalent, will act as the contact point, they will acknowledge each compliment or complaint, and ensure the approved process and timescales are followed.
- 4.4. A member of the College Leadership Team will be assigned to the complaint as an Investigating Officer.

#### **5. Compliments**

- 5.1. Compliments are passed on to staff and their line manager, and are used to identify areas of good practice that the College can learn from and further develop. Compliments can be submitted verbally to any member of staff who will record and share this or can be submitted, via email to [studentservices@northern.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@northern.ac.uk) or in writing addressed to the Quality Officer. Compliments are used to enable service development and as part of individual performance development.

#### **6. Raising a Concern or Complaint**

- 6.1. It is expected that, where a complainant is dissatisfied with the general provision of a service at the College, they will normally first raise their concern informally with the appropriate department at the College. If a concern is not resolved through informal means or the concern is of a serious nature, staff members will advise as appropriate. It is expected that the concern will then be raised as a formal complaint through the complaints process.
- 6.2. If the complainant is unsure who to speak to in order to raise their concern they can enquire via Reception or Student Services.

#### **7. Formal Complaint**

- 7.1. The formal complaint stage can be initiated if:
  - 7.1.1. following raising of a concern, the student does not feel satisfied with the informal resolution and therefore initiates the formal stage of the process;
  - 7.1.2. the issue has not previously been raised as a concern but the student wishes to raise a formal complaint based on the seriousness of the issue;
  - 7.1.3. the issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation, for example where a complaint relates to the conduct of staff members or covers a number of different incidents.

- 7.2. A complaint must be raised by the individual complainant using the Complaints Form. The Quality Officer, or equivalent, shall acknowledge the complaint in writing within 10 days of its receipt. This is available from reception or Student Services.
- 7.3. A formal investigation will consider the context of the complaint and the evidence provided. Where a complaint is upheld, the response will determine the outcome and actions taken. The outcome of a formal complaint will normally be provided to the complainant within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. If it is going to take longer to investigate, the complainant will be informed. The complaint will automatically be closed within 10 working days where there is no further response.
- 7.4. The complainant has a right to be accompanied to meetings called by the College as part of the complaint process. This may be a friend or family member, but not a lawyer acting in a professional capacity. There is no equivalent right to be accompanied where a complainant is raising a concern informally, although the member of staff to whom the concern is addressed may agree to the complainant being accompanied if they believe this will help resolve the issue.
- 7.5. Complaints may be raised individually or collectively. In the case of a group complaint, each complainant must complete a separate form, although these may refer to a common statement regarding the matter(s). The College may clarify which individuals are associating themselves with a submitted complaint before responding to it. Individuals who have not associated themselves with the complaint at that point will not normally be permitted to do so subsequently.
- 7.6. Student complaints will only be received when the complainant is an enrolled student of the College or on an approved break in learning. The definition of student extends one month beyond withdrawal from the programme of study.

## **8. Formal Complaints Higher Education Students**

- 8.1. Higher Education students studying at the College who wish to make a formal complaint should do so using the individual Higher Education Institution Complaints policy.
- 8.2. For Huddersfield university students further details can be found at <https://www.hud.ac.uk/policies/registry/regs-pgr/section-12/>
- 8.3. The College subscribes to the OIA student complaints scheme and complies with published rules and guidance. For more details please see <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

## **9. Formal Complaint Appeal Stage**

- 9.1. A formal appeal must be made in writing to the Quality Officer within 10 days of receiving the outcome of a complaint investigation. This will be acknowledged in writing within 10 days of its receipt. The appeal will be investigated by a member of the Executive Leadership Team and a response will normally be made within 20 days of receipt. Where the investigation is going to take longer than 20 days, the complainant will be informed.
- 9.2. The appeal will only be heard where based on either:
  - 9.2.1. the College did not follow its own complaint processes correctly; or
  - 9.2.2. there is new evidence which could materially change the outcome of the investigation which was not provided earlier in the process.
- 9.3. The appeal will not involve further investigation or reconsideration of the original evidence; only new evidence will be considered at the appeal stage.
- 9.4. If the appeal is upheld, the Investigating Officer will write to the complainant and explain the conclusion and actions taken. If the appeal is not upheld or the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complainant will be informed of their rights to complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
- 9.5. Details of the ESFA process can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure#complain-about-a-post-16-training-provider-college-or-employer-we-fund>

#### 10. Policy sign off and ownership details

<b>Document Name:</b>	Complaints and Compliments
<b>Version Number:</b>	1.0
<b>Effective from:</b>	22 September 2020
<b>Next scheduled review date:</b>	August 2023
<b>Policy owner:</b>	Assistant Principal – Curriculum, Quality and Market Development
<b>Approved by:</b>	The Board of Governors

#### 11. Revision history

<b>Version No</b>	<b>Effective date</b>	<b>Revision description/summary of changes</b>	<b>Author</b>
1.0	22 September 2020	Complete re-write and inclusion of compliments.	AP – CQM (Emma Beal)

**APPENDIX A COMPLAINT FORM**

This is a double-sided form. Please attach any additional information securely.

**1. To be completed by the person making the complaint**

Complaint made by .....on .....  
(Please print your name) (Date)

Address

.....

..... Tel. no. ....

Are you a student at the college? Yes  No

Please state which course/event you are attending

.....

**Nature of your complaint**

**Signed.....**

**Complaint received by Investigating Officer on:**

..... (Date)

**3. To be completed by Investigating Officer dealing with the complaint**

**Action taken and outcome of complaint:**

**Complainant informed of action in writing (please attach a copy of the response)**

**by.....(Signed)**

**on ..... (Date)**

**APPENDIX B COMPLAINT APPEAL FORM**

I wish to appeal against the decision of \_\_\_\_\_ (Investigating Officer concerned) taken

on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

My reasons for appealing are:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date when form was sent \_\_\_\_\_

**You should send this to the Quality Officer.**