



NCG Single Complaints Policy

Date approved:	December 2018
Approved by:	Corporation
Review date:	December 2019
Responsible Manager (s):	Nominated by Divisional Heads
Group Executive Lead:	Executive Director of Quality
Accessible to Clients/Students:	Yes

1. Consultation

Consultation undertaken with:-

- Newcastle College: Yes
- West Lancashire College: Yes
- Intraining: Yes
- Rathbone Yes
- Newcastle Sixth Form College Yes
- Kidderminster College Yes
- Carlisle College Yes
- Lewisham Southwark College Yes

2. Applicability of Policy to Organisation

This policy applies to:-

- Newcastle College: Yes
- West Lancashire College: Yes
- Intraining: Yes
- Rathbone Yes
- Newcastle Sixth Form College Yes
- Kidderminster College Yes
- Carlisle College Yes
- Lewisham Southwark College Yes

3. **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 and stakeholders may wish to express their formal dissatisfaction with our services and therefore we set out in this Single Policy a consistent method of receiving, responding to and learning from such instances.

This Group-level compliant policy is delivered via Divisional complaints procedures. Through the complaints policy and supporting procedures, the Group aim to resolve concerns quickly and courteously in line with the Group's core values

NCG also values recognition of good services and believes that staff should be recognised and rewarded. In doing so, Divisions are expected to run a concurrent procedure for gathering compliments and commendations of their staff, learners and the wider organisation.

4. **Policy Statement**

4.1 **Overview**

The complaints policy applies to each Division of NCG and to its learners, students, apprentices, parents, employers, clients and other NCG customers or stakeholders. Its purpose is to ensure a positive experience for those who learn with us, or use our services. Each of NCG's Divisions will therefore:

- develop and work within a four stage complaints procedure agreed by the Divisional Leadership Teams and approved by the Local Board;
- incorporate a final stage into their Divisional procedure whereby complaints received made by an external funding body or arbitration service are referred to the Group Chief Executive for investigation (e.g. ESFA, DWP etc.) For HE students this is review by the validating partner and thereafter the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, OIA;
- investigate all complaints in a formal, consistent, systematic and non-confrontational manner;
- designate a single senior manager who will have responsibility for ensuring full implementation of the procedure;
- ensure that confidentiality is observed as appropriate throughout the procedure;
- produce a termly report to the Divisional Leadership Team and Local Board;

- provide updates for inclusion in the annual report of complaints to Corporation;
- ensure that the procedure:
 - is regularly monitored, evaluated and reviewed annually;
 - is accessible to students, clients, staff, employers, visitors and the general public via the Divisional website;
 - 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 Division.

4.2 Links to Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Whistleblowing (Disclosure)

The Group has definitive policy 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.

These policies are listed in 6.0

4.3 Stages of Complaint

NCG operates a 4 – stage complaints procedure:

Stage	Timescale	Reporting
Stage One – Informal	Stage 1 concerns should be raised immediately and no later than three months after its occurrence	Concerns should be brought by the complainant to the attention of the person, in the opinion of the complainant, is responsible. For example a tutor, course leader, curriculum or service manager. Whilst this is an informal stage, Divisions 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.
Stage Two – form	Stage 2 concerns should be raised within three months of exhausting Stage 1	If the concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or the complainant feels that the issue has not been dealt with, then this should progress to Stage 2. Formal complaints are submitted to a designated manager for resolution. Divisional procedures must make clear a) who this is and b) how to refer.

		<p>The procedure should ensure that complaints are acknowledged within five working days.</p> <p>The complaint will be assigned to a named Senior Managers within the Divisional structure, who will take responsibility to fully investigate the matter and provide a formal response within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint.</p>
Stage 3 Appeal	Stage 3 concerns should be raised within one month of exhausting stage 2.	<p>If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response to the Stage 2 complaint, the divisional procedure should include the right to appeal by escalating to Stage 3.</p> <p>The complainant should put your appeal in writing, detail the reason for the dissatisfaction and why the response to the formal complaint (stage 2) was deemed inadequate. Stage 3 appeals should be sent to the office of the Divisional Head (i.e. CEO, Principal or managing director).</p> <p>The Divisional Head will review the appeal, fully investigate the matter and provide a formal response within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint.</p>
Stage 4 External For Further Education complainants	Stage 4 concerns should be raised within one month of exhausting stage 3.	<p>If your concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and the complainant remains unsatisfied, then an external appeal can be made to the Educational and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).</p> <p>Before a complainant proceeds, they must have exhausted all three stages above.</p> <p>Divisional procedures must include details on where to send this complaint.</p>
Stage 4 External For Higher Education	Stage 4 concerns should be raised with the OIA within one calendar year of receiving a "Letter of Completion".	<p>If the concern is not resolved at Stage 3, and the complainant remains unsatisfied, then for those studying on NCG awards an external appeal can be made to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Complainants studying on programmes validated through another awarding body/university have the right to appeal to the awarding body/university.</p>

		Before a complainant proceeds, they must have exhausted all three stages above and received a 'Letter of Completion.'
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4.4 Complaints about senior leaders

The procedure should make clear that:

- where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Divisional Head, then this should 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, then this should proceed directly to Stage 2 by addressing it to the Clerk to the Corporation, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.

5. Equality and Diversity Statement

Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken by each Division

6. Linked Policies

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy (Group)
- Disclosure Policy (Group)
- Single Safeguarding Policy (Group)
- Staff Disciplinary Policy (Group)
- Student Disciplinary Policy

7. Linked Procedures

Divisional complaints procedures

8. Location and Access to the Policy

The Complaints Policy is located as follows:-

- NCG Intranet: Group Services: Group Policies and Procedures
- NCG Website: Media Centre: Guide to Information: Our policies & procedures

9. Person Responsible for the Policy

- Executive Director Quality

10. Variations

There are no variations to this policy. Divisional procedures may, however, vary according to the needs of their business.