

**POLICY STATEMENT****TITLE:**

Higher Education Complaints

**INTRODUCTION/  
OVERVIEW:**

The College welcomes comments and complaints from Higher Education students, in order to improve its service and to enhance the student experience.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

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

It is 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 also 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 within three working weeks, wherever it is reasonably practicable
- used as feedback to improve the service which the College offers

This policy applies to all HE students of Northampton College.

**QUALITY STATEMENTS:**

- 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 will be submitted in writing to the Quality Office
- The procedure to be followed is given in the Appendix and will be made available to all HE students at the start of their programme
- 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 Quality Office will respond in writing to the complainant, 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
- All comments should be made in writing, either by a letter or by e-mail
- All complaints will be fed into the Quality Improvement Plan system for discussion and actions, as appropriate
- The procedure will strive to meet the expectations of professional behaviour whenever applicable i.e. accessibility, clarity, proportionality, timeliness, fairness, independence and confidentiality

**LINKED POLICIES/ PROCEDURES:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Grievance Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• HE Assessment Policy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy and procedures</li> <li>• Admissions Policy and procedures</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

**MONITORING PROCEDURE:**

A report on complaints received will be presented to SMT termly.

**DATE FOR REVIEW AND NEXT DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

April 2021

**RESPONSIBILITY: Overall (Directorate/Dept): Implementation:**

Deputy Principal

**APPROVED BY SMT:**  
(Principal to sign)

<b>(Signature)</b>
<b>Principal (Position)</b>
<b>(Date)</b>

Appendix: Higher Education Complaints Procedure

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

**Please follow the procedure below**

<b>Start</b>		
Discussion with Personal Tutor	→	<b>Complaint resolved</b>
↓		
Complainant not happy with the response		
↓		
Written complaint sent to the Quality Office (Northampton College) and acknowledged within 5 College working days. Access to Student Services for support is available		
↓		
<b>EARLY RESOLUTION</b>		
Director of HE to investigate complaint and draft letter of response to the Quality Office, normally within three College working weeks		
↓		
Quality Office to send response to complainant normally within four* working weeks <i>* Some investigations may take longer to resolve</i>	→	<b>Complaint resolved</b>
↓		
Complainant not satisfied with response		
↓		
<b>FORMAL STAGE</b>		
Quality Office refers student to mediation and conciliation. An impartial manager will help parties to resolve issues confidentially. New timescales will be set, agreed and confirmed in writing.	→	<b>Complaint resolved</b>
↓		

Complainant not satisfied with response and further complaint received		
<b>University of Northampton or Pearson student</b> ↓	<b>University of Warwick student</b> →	<b>Contact the University to access their Complaints Procedure (links given below)</b>
<b>REVIEW STAGE</b>  Student to complete formal paperwork providing full details and any associated documentation. The formal paperwork must be received within two weeks following mediation.		
↓		
<b>COMPLAINTS PANEL</b>  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.		→ <b>Complaint resolved</b>
↓		
Complainant not satisfied with response:  If the complainant still feels that there has not been a satisfactory resolution, a Pearson student will be referred to Pearson’s feedback and complaints process at <a href="https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html#tab-Learners">https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html#tab-Learners</a> .  HE students can, in exceptional circumstances, make an appeal directly to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA): <a href="http://www.oiahe.org.uk">www.oiahe.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.oiahe.org.uk/rules-and-the-complaints-process.aspx">http://www.oiahe.org.uk/rules-and-the-complaints-process.aspx</a>  We encourage all Higher Education students to try to resolve issues directly with the College in the first instance.		

**University of Warwick Complaints:**

<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/feedbackcomplaint>

## 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 college or university's action or lack of action or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of, the college or 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 or University 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 or University
- 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. 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.

### Making a complaint

A complaint must be made in writing either by letter, email or the appropriate online 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 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 Director of Higher Education. The student will be directed to Student Services or the Student Union who can provide support if necessary.

## **The formal stage**

This is used by a student who 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 Director of Higher Education informed. The student will be provided with a written outcome. University of Northampton and University of Warwick students, if not satisfied with the outcome will now use the appropriate University's Complaints Procedure.

## **The review stage (Pearson and UoN programmes)**

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 the Director of Higher Education, the Quality Assurance Manager and the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality. 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 Pearson student remains dissatisfied he/she may contact Pearson, to access their feedback and complaints process or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

All complaints will be recorded in sufficient detail, to enable causes and training opportunities to 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 will follow the University's procedure and process at this Review Stage.

## Appendix A

### EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This form should be used by managers and policy authors within their area of responsibility to carry out Equality & Diversity Impact Assessments (E&DIAs) in relation to protected characteristics, specifically: Age, Sex, Disability, Gender reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy & Maternity and Marriage & Civil Partnership.

The word 'policy' is taken to include strategies, policies, procedures and guidance notes; formal and informal, internal and external.

The Impact Assessment may be carried out on any policy, service, function or plan you are engaged in, or are about to commence. All policies should be clearly stated. However, in reality, some policies are built into everyday procedures and customs, therefore not all policies are open to inspection and review. Any assessment of a policy should include these customs and practices as well as the formal written policy. 'Functions' means your duties and powers and includes internal and external functions, including service delivery.

#### 1. Name of policy

HE Complaints Policy

#### 2. What is the aim(s), objective(s) and/or purpose of the policy?

To allow students to identify aspects of their College experience which may have a detrimental effect on their progress and success and have not been resolved locally.  
To ensure that necessary action is taken by the College.

#### 3. Who is the policy lead?

Julie Teckman

#### 4. Which of the following groups could be affected by this policy? (Tick all that apply)

Learners

Staff

Wider community

#### 5. Team

Names and position of Impact Assessment Team (min of 3 preferably from areas across the College):

Name	Position
JulieTeckman	Director of HE
Anne Douglas	Teacher in HE/Teacher Education
Stephen Ratcliffe-Jones	Curriculum Manager Media

Date E&DIA undertaken: \_\_\_\_\_ 17 10 18 \_\_\_\_\_

E&DIA undertaken as a result of:

Renewal / Revision of Policy / Procedure **YES**

New Policy / Procedure

SAR process

Other  Please state \_\_\_\_\_

Date of last E&DIA (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Complaints?

Have complaints been received from anyone with one or more protected characteristic about the service provided? If yes then please give details. **No**

## 7. The Impact

Four possible impacts should be considered as part of the assessment:

1. **Positive impact** – Where the policy might have a positive impact on a particular protected characteristic.
2. **None or little impact** – Where you think a policy does not disadvantage any of the protected characteristics.
3. **Some impact** – Where a policy might disadvantage any of the protected characteristics groups to some extent. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that where the negative impact on one particular group of individuals with protected characteristics is likely to be greater than on another.
4. **Substantial impact** – Where you think that the policy could have a negative impact on any or all of the protected characteristics. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that the negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

Using the guidance provided above, complete the following table:



Sex/Age	Positive impact	No or little impact	Some adverse impact	Substantial adverse impact
Women		√		
Men		√		
Age		√		

Disability	Positive impact	No or little impact	Some adverse impact	Substantial adverse impact
Visually impaired		√		
Hearing impaired		√		
Physical disability		√		
Specific Learning difficulties		√		
Global learning difficulties		√		
Autistic Spectrum Disorder		√		
Any other disability - various		√		

Race	Positive impact	No or little impact	Some adverse impact	Substantial adverse impact
White		√		
Other minority groups		√		

Other Protected Characteristics	Positive impact	No or little impact	Some adverse impact	Substantial adverse impact
Religion and Belief		√		
Sexual Orientation		√		
Gender Reassignment		√		
Pregnancy & Maternity		√		
Marriage & Civil Partnership		√		

Please comment on any areas where some or substantial impact is indicated. Any resulting actions must be added to the attached action plan.

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**8. Is there anything that cannot be changed?**

What cannot be changed?	Can this be justified?	If so, how?

Please list the main actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment in your area of responsibility (continue on separate sheets as necessary)

DISTRIBUTION: Copies of the final E&DIA should be sent to:

- Jan Hutt - Director of HR
- Patrick Leavey - Deputy Principal – Teaching, Learning & Success
- Quality Improvement Team Administrator

**And** to those whom this Impact Assessment will cause to have further work to do in either changing processes or re-writing the policy(s) concerned.

All actions recorded here should be carried forward into your QIP, so that actions can be monitored and evaluated to measure the impact. There will be random sampling of action plans through the Equality & Diversity Forum.

**APPENDIX B**

**COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

<b>TITLE OF COLLEGE POLICY:</b> HE Academic Misconduct	<b>DATE APPROVED BY</b> Policy & Strategy Group Or Corporation  <b>Date:</b>
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<b>AUDIENCE (select appropriate with √)</b>			
Managers	√	Curriculum teams	√ Business Support teams
All staff	√	Suppliers	Partners
Other (please state)	√	HE Students	

<b>CHANNEL (select appropriate with √)</b>			
<b>Policy &amp; Strategy Team (PST)</b>		<b>Quality Improvement Network (QIN)</b>	<b>Marketing team</b>
e.g. Meeting Email	√	e.g. Meeting Email	e.g. NC Update Managers' Update Intranet Website
<b>Individual team</b>		<b>Suppliers</b>	<b>Partners</b>
e.g. Document Library Noticeboards Team meeting Email	√	e.g. Letter or email Meeting	e.g. Letter or email Meeting
<b>College Management Team (CMT)</b>		<b>JCNC</b>	<b>CORPORATION</b>
e.g. Meeting Email		e.g. Meeting Email	e.g. Meeting Email

<b>COMMUNICATIONS PLAN ACTIVATED BY:</b>		
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Job title:</b>	<b>Date:</b>