



A Dynamic College for Aspiring Communities

## Complaints Procedure

### 1 WHAT IS THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The complaints procedure can be used by any student, parent, employer, member of staff, visitor or member of the community who is unhappy with any College service. Most complaints can be resolved at the first “informal” stage of the procedure. If your complaint cannot be resolved at the informal stage, then there are up to three further “formal” stages. The College is committed to achieving high standards of service and welcomes views on its services from its customers. These include both good service comments and complaints.

### 2 WHAT DOES THE PROCEDURE COVER

This procedure describes how the College will respond to a complaint in order to resolve it to the satisfaction of the complainant, prevent recurrence and improve the quality of service.

This procedure shall apply to complaints made by any student, parent, employer, member of staff, visitor or member of the community using or affected by the College’s services or facilities. It covers all complaints unless your complaint is covered by its own special procedure. For example Disciplinary matters and dealing with harassment and bullying.

All comments, positive and negative are welcomed. The reception points of each of our main College sites display “Customer Comments Cards” inviting feedback, as well as forms for completion in the case of a Formal Complaint. The College’s website [www.wnc.ac.uk](http://www.wnc.ac.uk) also provides a Complaints link on the home page

### 3 IF I WANT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT WHERE SHOULD I GO FIRST

This is **STAGE ONE** of the procedure. Many issues or problems can be resolved informally within teaching or corporate services areas through approaches to the member of staff involved, a supervisor or manager, via Personal Tutors and support teams such as Learner Advisers and Learner Coaches

The College encourages leadership at every level in the organisation, and empowers staff to take whatever action is appropriate within the scope their responsibility.

You should first approach the member of staff who seems best able to deal with the matter immediately. You can either speak to them or put your complaint in writing. If you are not sure who to complain to, ask your Course Tutor, or someone in Student Services.

If your complaint is not about your course but about one of the support services (eg, catering, library, finance, student records etc) try to contact a member of staff from that department. Alternatively, contact Student Services, who will advise you how best to make your complaint. The Students’ Union can also advise you about making a complaint.

The person you spoke to will try and resolve matters informally. They will investigate your complaint, and then contact you again, usually within five working days, to see if a solution can be found.

The College also encourages feedback from Students via a number of mechanisms, including Learner Voice meetings, Review & Evaluation processes including service users, and structured surveys both cross College and local to specific sites or areas. If you are a student you will find information on these processes in the Student Handbook and on the College StudentNet

## **4 WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE INFORMAL STAGE**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal Stage One of the complaint you can take your complaint to **STAGE TWO**, which is the first 'formal' stage of the complaints procedure.

### **4.1 MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT**

Complaints Forms are available at all College receptions. You may contact or be directed to Customer Services who will post or otherwise provide a Complaints Form for completion. Alternatively, a complaint can be received by letter or over the telephone. If taken over the telephone, a Complaints Form will be completed on your behalf by a member of the Customer Services team. The College's website [www.wnc.ac.uk](http://www.wnc.ac.uk) also provides a complaints link on the home page, to enable you to make a formal complaint on-line or download.

The Customer Services staff will provide guidance on how to complete the form if requested. If the complaint is by letter, the document will be attached to a complaints form for processing.

### **4.2 COLLEGE RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS**

On receipt of a formal complaint, the Team Leader for Customer Services will:

- Acknowledge the complaint in writing within 2 working days;
- Take up the complaint with the manager responsible for the College provision, or
- Decide that the complaint is of a serious nature and send written details of the complaint to the Associate Director for Customer Services, who will direct the complaint to the appropriate College member of staff for response.

The Manager or Director, upon receipt of a written complaint form or letter, will:

- Provide a response to the Team Leader for Customer Services addressing the issue raised, within 10 days;

The Customer Services Director / Manager / Team Leader (as appropriate) will:

- Send a written response within 15 working days of receiving the original complaint / letter

## **5 WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM STILL NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF STAGE TWO**

The complainant has the right to appeal against the formal stage two decision in writing, within 15 working days of receiving the original response letter, to the Deputy Principal. This is **STAGE THREE** of the procedure.

Upon receipt of an appeal the Deputy Principal shall acknowledge the appeal within 2 working days. A formal response will be made within 15 working days that could in exceptional circumstances include a requirement for further investigation.

## 6 WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM STILL NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF STAGE THREE

Should the complaint not be resolved at this stage, the Deputy Principal will provide the complainant with information on any further steps which may be taken in an attempt to gain satisfaction. This is **STAGE FOUR** of the procedure. The Principal and Chairman of the Corporation Board will be advised of the details of the complaint.

Where appropriate, a complaint may be referred to an external funding body. For example the Learning & Skills Council or HEFCE.

Note:

*External bodies will not generally accept receipt of a complaint until the College procedure has fully run its course*

## 7 TIME LIMITS

The College will endeavour to resolve complaints as expeditiously as possible and the time limits set out within this procedure offer a general indication of timescale; however it may not always be practicable to adhere to a particular time scale e.g. because of holidays or illness or other intervening causes, in which case complainants will be given a written progress report and an estimate of the revised timescale.

A complaint should be initiated within one month of the event or circumstances which are its cause.

## 8 REPRESENTATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

A complainant may be accompanied by a friend (which term includes a representative of the Students' Union or Trades Union Representative) at any stage in the procedure. The friend may speak on behalf of the complainant. The person presiding over the relevant level of complaint (e.g. Head of School) must be notified of the name of the friend, not less than 5 working days before the friend's first involvement

In general, those about whom complaints have been made have a right to know what is being claimed and who is making the complaint. Where a complaint becomes formal and is made in writing therefore, a copy will normally be supplied to the person who is being complained about and that person will have the right to be accompanied by a friend in any related investigation. The person presiding over the complaint (as specified above) must be notified of the name of the friend not less than 5 working days before the friend's first involvement. If complainants are concerned about protecting their anonymity they are advised to contact either their course tutor, someone in Student Services or in Human Resources who may be able to make initial enquires on their behalf.

## 9 RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The responsibility for implementing this procedure shall lie with the Associate Director: Customer Services and with the Deputy Principal, acting on behalf of the Principal, at Appeal.

The Customer Services Manager shall ensure that students are made aware of this policy and procedure through a variety of promotional literature and methods.

## PATHWAY FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS



