

Higher Education Complaints Procedure

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Approval/ review bodies	SLT
Frequency of Review*	36 months

** Procedures will be reviewed more frequently if legal changes or good practice require*

Review History:		
Date of review	Reviewed by	Reason for review
October 2017	Assistant Principal Sport & Care	Procedure devised.
October 2020	Deputy Executive Principal Strategy & Development	Periodic Review
March 2021	Deputy Executive Principal Strategy & Development	Update
August 2025	Deputy Executive Principal – Teaching, Learning & Improvement	General review to align with revised NKC Complaint's Policies.

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1. Statement

North Kent College (“the College”), aims to provide all its students with a high-quality service. The College also values its strong reputation with the local community. However, from time-to-time problems do occur. You have the right to pursue the resolution of any difficulties, and the College will undertake to respond to your complaint fairly and impartially, with care and concern. The College will also seek to learn from complaints which are upheld and make changes as necessary.

2. Initial Complaints Procedure

Depending on the specific nature of a concern, a complaint may be made in a variety of ways including the following:

- 2.1 discussing it with a member of the programme team;
- 2.2 contacting the Department Curriculum team;
- 2.3 speaking to Welfare & Safeguarding Team;
- 2.4 making a formal complaint by utilising the College’s online complaints system; and/or
- 2.5 submitting a complaint via the *MyVoice* confidential student platform.
- 2.6 discussing the issue with a class representative and asking them to raise this at a learner voice meeting or sooner.

If a student has exhausted the College’s complaints system and a “Completion of Procedures” letter has been sent, but they are still unhappy with the outcome, they are entitled to take appropriate further action.

3. Complaints procedures for Higher Education students taking qualifications awarded by their host universities

For students on qualifications awarded by the host universities, any complaints or concerns have to be reported to and investigated by the College, before a student may make a formal complaint to the University.

It should be noted that complaints about staff, facilities, buildings and services are the sole responsibility of the College. Complaints and concerns on academic issues need to be raised, in the first place, with the College.

If the student is still concerned after the final outcome of the College’s complaints’ process, then they have the right to make a formal complaint to the host university. In all cases, the College will carry out the investigation in accordance with its own regulations and timescales as set out in its

Complaints Policy.

Once a formal complaint has been considered by the College/University and a formal Completion of Procedures (“CoP”) letter has been issued, if the student feels that their complaint is still not resolved or that the outcome is unreasonable in relation to the evidence, then they are entitled to raise the matter for external and independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (“OIAHE”) within three months of the issue of a CoP letter by the College/University.

Information on the process may be obtained directly from the OIA at:

www.oiahe.org.uk

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Second Floor

Abbey Wharf
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
RG1 3AB
Telephone: 0118 959 9813

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org

4. Complaints procedures for Higher Education students taking qualifications awarded by Pearson

For students on qualifications awarded by Pearson, any complaints or concerns must be reported to and investigated by the College before a student may make a formal complaint to Pearson.

Pearson may take action when a learner considers that the College’s decision continues to disadvantage them, even after the outcome of its internal appeals procedure (e.g. a decision concerning assessment outcomes or reasonable adjustments). Pearson will only consider an individual learner’s enquiry or appeal after the College’s internal enquiries or appeals procedures have been fully utilised.

Where a learner considers the College’s internal enquiries or appeals policy to have failed to produce a satisfactory outcome, students are advised to make an enquiry or appeal, in writing, to the Pearson Vocational Quality Standards team within 14 calendar days of being notified of the outcome of the College’s internal appeals process. The team can be contacted on vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com.

Evidence of the College's appeal procedure having been utilised must be provided.

Once a formal complaint has been considered by the College and the complaints procedure has been exhausted, if the student feels that their complaint is still not resolved, or that the outcome is unreasonable in relation to the evidence, then they are entitled to raise the matter for external and independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education ("OIAHE") within three months of the issue of a CoP letter by the College.

Information on the process may be obtained directly from the OIA at:

www.oiahe.org.uk

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Third Floor
Kings Reach
38-50 Kings Road
Reading
Berkshire RG1 1LX

Telephone: 0118 959 9813

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org

5. Concerns directed to the Quality Assurance Agency ("QAA")

If a student has a concern about the standards, quality or information that the College produces about its learning opportunities, they should initially raise their concerns internally at the College.

After raising their concerns and allowing time for the College to advise them on the progress and outcome of this, if they feel that the College fails to resolve the issue, it can be raised with the QAA. Depending on the circumstances, the QAA may make inquiries or investigate before the College has completed its own investigation. The QAA can investigate concerns where they think such concerns indicate serious systemic or procedural problems. The formal Expectations that providers are required to meet are set out in the QAA Quality Code (details of which can be located within the College HE Community Moodle Site).

Before contacting the QAA, students are encouraged to read their guide to check whether their concern is one that the QAA can investigate, and to find out how to submit it to them. The QAA do not investigate individual grievances. If a concern is of a personal or very specific nature, the student may need to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). If the issues raised by the same person are under investigation by the Office of the Independent

Adjudicator, the QAA may contact the OIA to collect relevant information about the case where it has already been compiled, under a formal information-sharing agreement. If the issues raised by the same person are related to ongoing legal proceedings or an Employment Tribunal, then those processes should be completed before the QAA will consider investigating.

5.1 A concern that QAA can investigate will relate to at least one of the following:

5.1.1 the academic standards at a higher education provider;

5.1.2 the quality of learning opportunities made available by a higher education provider; and/or

5.1.3 the public information that a provider makes available about its higher education programmes.

5.2 Examples of concerns the QAA can investigate include:

5.2.1 misleading information about the accreditation of a course by a professional body;

5.2.2 inadequate guidance to examiners on marking examination scripts;

4.2.1 inadequate support for placement learning; and/or

4.2.2 failure to follow assessment regulations;

5.2.3 the failure of a provider to make available information on the aims and learning outcomes of a course; and/or

5.2.4 the failure of assessment to be robust, valid and reliable.

5.3 Examples of concerns the QAA cannot investigate into include:

5.3.1 matters of academic judgement, such as examination results;

5.3.2 requests for institutions or external examiners to re-mark work;

5.3.3 grievances against individual staff;

5.3.4 issues surrounding visa rejection, tuition fees and/or refunds;

5.3.5 problems that the institution has already rectified; and

5.3.6 isolated mistakes or occurrences of bad practice.

6. Concerns Directed to the OIA:

Once the College and awarding body's internal complaints procedures have been exhausted, if a student still feels unsatisfied with the result, they are entitled to register a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator ("OIA").

6.1 Examples of complaints the OIA can investigate into include:

- 6.1.1 any final decision of the College;
- 6.1.2 a service provided by the College;
- 6.1.3 teaching and facilities;
- 6.1.4 welfare;
- 6.1.5 discrimination - race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation or religious belief;
- 6.1.6 bullying and harassment;
- 6.1.7 placements;
- 6.1.8 maladministration;
- 6.1.9 procedural irregularities;
- 6.1.10 unfair practices;
- 6.1.11 disciplinary matters, including plagiarism; and/or
- 6.1.12 fitness to practise issues.

6.2 Examples of complaints the OIA cannot investigate into include:

- 6.2.1 admissions;
- 6.2.2 academic judgment (i.e. accuracy of an assessment grade awarded to a student);
- 6.2.3 student employment;
- 6.2.4 matters which have already been considered by a court or tribunal and where the proceedings have been concluded;
- 6.2.5 matters which are being considered by a court or tribunal where the proceedings have not been stayed;

- 6.2.6 matters which the OIA consider have not materially affected the complainant as a student;
- 6.2.7 matters which the OIA has already dealt with; and/or
- 6.2.8 the OIA will not normally look at complaints where the main issues complained about took place more than three years before the complaint is received by the OIA.