



Complaints Procedure

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Complaints Procedure

North Kent College, which incorporates Hadlow College hereinafter collectively called “the College”, aims to provide all its students and clients with a high-quality service. 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.

1. Application and Scope

The College will thoroughly investigate any complaint, whether informal or formal, relating to the day-to-day operation of the College and the standards of service it provides.

1.1. Areas excluded from the policy are:

1.1.1. curriculum content, or examination results where other forms of redress are more appropriate, such as the examining body or the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and, in these cases, complainants should be referred to the appropriate body;

1.1.2. non-progression of students to a higher level of academic study;

1.1.3. staff employment issues;

1.1.4. any matter which is the subject of legal action;

1.1.5. anonymous complaints as they cannot be investigated, and/or

1.1.6. any complaint which has been deemed to be vexatious or malicious following investigation.

1.2. Higher Education students are to refer to the College’s HE Complaints Procedure, which is available from the College’s website:

[Complaints Procedure Advice -HE Students](#)

2. Resolving a Complaint

Complainants must endeavour to resolve a complaint informally before commencing with the Formal Complaints Procedure. Please see “Stage One”.

The complainant should attempt to resolve the matter informally, as soon as possible and no later than three calendar months after the event or problem has occurred.

Where no informal resolution can be achieved within fifteen working days of the initial complaint being raised, the complainant may choose to escalate their concerns – please refer to “Stage Two” detailed below.

3. The Procedures

3.1. Informal Complaints (Stage One)

These complaints are dealt with by the College's Tutors/Middle Managers. The process for this is as follows:

- 3.1.1. for those individuals who are unsure as to whom to contact in the first instance, they should contact the Reception of the Campus/College and it will be directed to the relevant Head of Curriculum or Support Area Manager;
- 3.1.2. concerns should be discussed initially with a member of the teaching/administrative staff, such as a Course Tutor/Finance Officer;
- 3.1.3. if this discussion does not resolve the matter, or if it is not appropriate to discuss a situation with a member of the staff with whom the complaint is directed, then the complaint should be made to the person responsible for the particular area or service;
- 3.1.4. in most instances, informal complaints will not receive a formal written response but nevertheless will be dealt with promptly; and
- 3.1.5. responsibility for the prompt follow-up of informal complaints will lie with the relevant manager. The manager should endeavour to resolve the complaint but may refer it to the Senior Leader responsible for their area if it is evident that a resolution is not likely to be met. This then escalates the complaint to Stage Two.

If you wish the complaint to be escalated, please advise the tutor/manager who will forward the complaint to a member of the College's Senior Leadership Team. At this point, the complaint will become a formal complaint and be centrally logged as part of Stage Two.

3.2. Formal Complaints (Stage Two)

At this stage the complaint is dealt with by a member of the senior leadership team.

- 3.2.1. Formal complaints must be made in writing, by, letter to:

Complaints
North Kent College
Oakfield Lane
Dartford
Kent DA1 2JT

Alternatively, a formal complaint can be submitted on-line, via the College's website:

[North Kent College - Complaints](#)

- 3.2.2. All correspondence submitted should clearly set out the circumstances of the complaint, any individuals or witnesses involved and all relevant dates and/or times.
- 3.2.3. Complaints must be submitted in a timely fashion, no later than three calendar months after the concern/event.
- 3.2.4. Complaints received after this period will not be investigated, as they will be considered to be out of time.
- 3.2.5. A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within five working days of receipt of the complaint unless the matter can be dealt with within the first five working days without the need for an acknowledgement letter.
- 3.2.6. Complaints will be investigated fairly and robustly by a member of the College's Senior Leadership Team.
- 3.2.7. The College will respond in writing within fifteen working days from the date of the letter of acknowledgement, detailing the outcome of their investigation.
- 3.2.8. If the investigation is going to take more than fifteen working days, a further letter to this effect will be sent.
- 3.2.9. Where complaints are received within fifteen working days of a holiday period, or during a holiday period, it is expected that the complaint response will take longer than fifteen working days due to the absence of appropriate staff to investigate. This will be confirmed in writing.

3.3. Appeals (Stage Three)

- 3.3.1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied or in disagreement with the decision made and/or the reasons given, they may appeal against the decision. A complainant has ten working days from the date of the response letter in which to submit an appeal. The reason for the appeal should be clearly stated in writing and sent to:

Rhiannon Hughes
Deputy Executive Principal - Teaching, Learning & Improvement
North Kent College
Oakfield Lane
Dartford
Kent DA1 2JT

Alternatively, an appeal request, with any accompanying information, can be submitted to:

principalsoffice@northkent.ac.uk

- 3.3.2. A letter of acknowledgement will be sent within five working days of receipt of the appeal letter.
- 3.3.3. The Deputy Executive Principal – Teaching, Learning and Improvement will consider all the documentation available relating to the issues raised and will respond within fifteen working days from the date of the acknowledgement letter.
- 3.3.4. If the appeal process is going to take more than fifteen working days, a further letter will be sent.
- 3.3.5. The decision at the end of this stage is final.
- 3.3.6. If the College cannot settle the complaint to the satisfaction of the appellant, the complainant can refer the matter to The Education and Skills Funding Agency. The contact details of which are:

complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Customer Service Team
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT

- 3.3.7. Adult Learners (learners 19+ at commencement of their programme), studying on a Greater London Authority (“GLA”) funded program can appeal directly to the GLA if:
 - 3.3.7.1. they are residents of a London Borough and
 - 3.3.7.2. the course is funded by the GLA. (Those funding through an adult learner loan should follow steps 3.3.6).

To escalate a complaint to the GLA, please use the following email address:

Skillscomplaints@london.gov.uk

4. Data Protection

When the College receives a complaint from a person, a file is created containing the details of the complaint. This normally contains the identity of the complainant and any other individuals involved in the complaint.

If a complaint is raised on behalf of another person, the complainant must seek a written form of authority from the person on whose behalf the complaint is being raised to the College. This authority must be sent to the College by the person for whom the complaint is being made on behalf of.

Failure to do so will mean that the College is unable to respond to any such third party.

However, for students aged 16-18 or Educational Health Care Plan holders to the age of 24, if the third party raising the complaint is recorded on the College's Management Information System as the provided student contact, then the College will respond.

The College will only use the personal information collected to process the complaint and to check on the level of service it provides. The College does compile an annual report detailing the number of complaints and compliments received for overview by the Board of Governors; however, all data contained within this report is submitted in an anonymised basis.

The College may have to disclose the complainant's identity to whomever the complaint is about, in order to conduct a robust investigation. The College will keep personal information contained in complaint files. This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for five years from closure. It will be retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted according to the "need to know" principle.