



NPTC Group of Colleges

**Complaints procedure
for students**

1. Making a complaint to the College

Our aim is to get things right first time, so we value our learners' comments and suggestions. Although we have a range of stakeholder consultation and feedback mechanisms to help inform and improve our services, sometime our service may fall short of expectations. Therefore we value any complaints that we receive and take them seriously. This includes anonymous ones, providing we have sufficient information for us to make further enquiries.

The most effective way to resolve an issue is to deal with it straight away so we ask that in most cases you speak directly to a member of staff.

Requests for services or changes to services, comments and suggestions on service improvement and assessment/bursary/disciplinary appeals are not considered complaints and do not fall within this procedure

1.1 What you can complain about

- failure to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of service
- the admissions process
- the disciplinary process
- a request for a service or for information which has not been actioned or answered
- our policies
- wrong information about academic programmes or services
- the quality and availability of facilities and learning resources

- accessibility of our buildings or services
- the behaviour of a member of staff or contractor
- a student's behaviour
- treatment by, or attitude of, a member of staff or contractor
- disagreement with a decision where you can't use another procedure (such as an appeal) to resolve the matter
- our failure to follow the proper administrative process

Your complaint may involve more than one college service or be about someone working on our behalf, such as a contractor.

1.2 What you cannot complaint about

There are some things we cannot deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a disagreement with academic judgement
- a claim for compensation from the College
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court of tribunal
- disagreement with a decisions where a right of appeal exists, for example the academic appeals process or the bursary appeals process

- a Subject Access Request or Freedom of Information Request
- a grievance by a member of staff
- an attempt to have us reopen or reconsider a complaint we have concluded or given our final decision on.
- If we are aware of other procedures or rights of appeal which can help you resolve your concerns, we will let you know.

1.3 Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service as long as the individual complainant has given their consent. Please also refer to the section 'Getting help with your complaint.'

1.4 How do you complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, in writing, by email or by using our complaints form available from all our reception desks.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the College service concerned. So, please talk to a member of our staff in the School/Department you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining tell us

- your full name and address
- As much as you can about the complaint
- what's gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter

1.5 How long do you have to make a complaint?

Normally, you will need to make your complaint:

- within 6 months of the event you want to complain about, or
- within 6 months of finding out that you have a reason for complaint, as long as this is no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

1.6 What happens when you complain?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has 2 stages;

Stage 1 – front line resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 within 10 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. All attempts to resolve the complaint at this stage will take no longer than 10 working days from the date we receive the complaint.

If we cannot resolve your complaint at this Stage, we will explain to you why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage 2.

Stage 2 - investigation

This stage deals with complaints that have not been able to be resolved at Stage 1,

and those complaints that are complex and require detailed investigation. If an investigation is to be undertaken you will be asked to make a formal written record of your complaint. You can do this by email, letter or by completing our complaint form available at all reception desks Student Services will be able to help you complete the form. An investigator will be appointed who will provide you with their name and contact details as a single point of contact as soon as possible after a decision has been made to investigate. The investigator will give due regard to information that may be confidential, sensitive, restricted, or covered by data protection legislation and will obtain consent to access/share information where appropriate.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 working days.
- Discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- Give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 15 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 15 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress. The investigator will provide a full, objective and proportionate response endorsed by the Deputy Chief Executive that represents the Colleges definitive position and outlines any action that will be taken and when.

2. Unacceptable actions by students

We recognise that people may be angry and upset when making a complaint and that a person may act out of character in times of trouble and distress. However, we will not accept unreasonable behaviour towards staff and we record all incidents of unacceptable actions by complainants. The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse, or harassment towards staff is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact with the College and incidents may be reported to the police. Any appeal regarding restricted contact with the College will be heard by a senior member of staff who was not involved in the decision to restrict contact.

3. What if you are still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have dealt with your complaint, you may appeal to the Chief Executive. The appeal must be made in writing within 5 working days of receipt of receiving the Stage 2 decision in writing. The Chief Executive will consider the outcomes of the investigation, and his decision is final.

4. Complaints by Higher Education Students

Once internal procedures have been completed, the College will issue the student with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter within 28 days if the complaint or appeal is not upheld. If the complaint is upheld or partly upheld, the College will advise the student that they can request a Completion of Procedures letter if they remain dissatisfied. The letter will set out clearly the issues that have been considered and the College's final decision. The Completion of Procedures letter will:

- Confirm the date when the student completed the College's internal complaints procedures
- Clarify the issues considered by the College under those procedures
- Advise the student of the possibility of bring a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)
- Establish the timescale for bring a complaint to the OIA.

In all cases, the complaint must first have been considered by the College.

5. OIA contact details;

OIA

Second Floor

Abbey Gate

57-75 Kings Road

Reading

RG1 3AB

Telephone: 0118 95 9813

Website: www.oiahe.org.uk

6. Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself.

We accept complaints from the representative of a person who's dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a relative, friend or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

We are committed to making our services easy to use for everyone. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure we make reasonable adjustments to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in Welsh or in a different format, please tell us in person.

Quick guide to the complaints procedures.

Complaints procedure

You can make a complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing. We have a two- stage complaints procedure. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly, but if it's clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.



Stage One – frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, (within 10 working days if we can). If you are not satisfied with our response you can ask us to further consider your complaint at Stage Two.



Stage Two – investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage One. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage if it is clear that they are complex and need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and give you our decision as soon as possible within 15 working days.



Stage Three – appeals

If you remain dissatisfied, you may appeal to the Chief Executive Officer or their nominated representative within 5 working days of receipt of the written decision at Stage Two and their decision is final. Higher Education students however have the option to raise the matter with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator on receipt of a Completion of Procedure letter.

