

Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure

This procedure is applicable to **all** students and should be read in conjunction with **the [Student Complaints and Resolution Policy](#)**. It sets out what a Student Complainant can expect if they make a complaint about the service or treatment they have experienced from an Academic Unit, Service or staff member.

Please note that you will not be academically disadvantaged by submitting a complaint, and the University will consider whether any reasonable adjustments or support arrangements need to be put in place for you while your complaint is being considered.

INTRODUCTION

Newcastle University has a [Student Charter – Rights and Responsibilities](#) that sets out the University's expectations for the standards of conduct of ALL of its students. These behavioural values are essential to the proper functioning of an academic community.

The Complaints and Resolution Procedure is used to investigate all complaints made by a student about the service of treatment they have experienced from the University or a staff member. It is **not** used for:

- Academic misconduct (i.e. cheating). Reports of academic misconduct are investigated under the [Procedure for Assessment Irregularities](#).
- Reports about the non-academic conduct of other Newcastle University students. Reports about other students are dealt with under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).
- Academic Appeals. These complaints are considered through the [Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure](#).
- Accommodation Complaints. Complaints of this nature should be directed to either [Universities UK](#) (for private accommodation) or to the [University accommodation service](#) (for Newcastle University-owned accommodation).

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

We understand that submitting a complaint can be a stressful experience. You may find it helpful to seek support and advice via the following services:

- [Student Health and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Student Progress Service](#)
- [Student Advice Centre of the Students' Union](#)

If you are required to attend any meetings throughout this process, you may choose to be accompanied by a friend or supporter. Please see the [guidance on the role of a friend or supporter](#). We strongly encourage you to access this support.

STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

There are four levels at which your complaint may be considered:

- **Level 1: Local Resolution**

We encourage you to raise your issue with a member of staff in your School, Academic Unit or relevant service in the first instance.

- **Level 2: Formal Investigation**

Complaints which have not been resolved at Level 1 of this procedure, or which are more serious (for example, complaints relating to sexual misconduct, discrimination, bully or harassment), may be directed to Level 2 of the Complaints and Resolution Procedure.

- **Level 3: Case Review**

Where the Complainant is dissatisfied with the Level 2 decision, they may request a review of the case on the grounds of one or more of the following: procedural irregularity; new material evidence; or that the decision was one which no reasonable person would have reached on the available evidence.

- **Complaint Committee**

Where the Academic Registrar determines that a case is sufficiently serious, the case will be referred to a Student Complaint Committee for further consideration.

To ensure there is no conflict of interest, each Level of the procedure is handled by a Case Officer or member of staff who has no prior involvement in the case.

For complaints at either Level 1 or Level 2, the Academic Registrar may liaise with colleagues in the Student Health and Wellbeing Service to assess whether early resolution by the University's Mediation Service would be appropriate for your complaint. If mediation is suggested and you agree to participate, your complaint will be put on hold until this process is complete.

Level 1: Local Resolution

To lodge a complaint formally under Level 1 of this procedure, you should write to the relevant Head of Academic Unit or Service, normally within 3 months of the issue arising.

The University will consider your complaint and a decision, with reasons, will be provided to you in writing within 30 days.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can submit a Level 2 [complaints form](#) and any supporting evidence to casework@ncl.ac.uk.

Level 2: Formal Investigation

If you think that the University's Level 1 response has not resolved your complaint, or if your complaint is so serious that you cannot raise it directly with the relevant Academic Unit or Service, you should complete the Student Complaints Level 2 Application form, or email casework@ncl.ac.uk within 6 months of the matter arising (or within 3 months of the Level 1 response).

Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 7 days of receipt. In the acknowledgement, we will confirm that your concerns can be addressed under this procedure. Where this procedure is not appropriate for dealing with your complaint, we will direct you to a more suitable procedure.

A Case Officer will be appointed to investigate your complaint and you may be invited to a meeting to clarify any issues raised and discuss the resolution or remedy you seek.

The Case Officer will send your full complaint submission to relevant person/s within the Academic Unit or Service, requesting a response to the issues you have raised. They are normally given two

weeks to respond and their response will be forwarded to you so that you can make any further comments you believe are relevant. You will normally be given two weeks to provide any additional comments.

The Case Officer will then consider all the information available about your complaint to decide on a suitable outcome and, where appropriate, recommend a resolution. The final decision will be communicated to you in writing, setting out the reasons for the outcome reached.

Where the issues raised in your complaint are particularly serious, the Case Officer may refer the issue to a Level 4 Complaint Committee for consideration.

Level 2 complaints are usually determined within 60 days from the initial receipt of your complaint, although some circumstances may require a longer period of investigation and determination. We will contact you if an extension is required.

Level 3: Case Review

If you are dissatisfied with the Case Officer's Level 2 outcome, you can request a review of the decision based on one or more of the following:

- Procedural irregularity: you think that something was not done correctly and that this may have affected the decision reached;
- New material evidence: new evidence is available which may have an impact on the complaint outcome;
- Unreasonable decision: you consider that no reasonable person could have reached the same decision based on the available evidence.

If you would like to request a case review, you should submit your request in writing to the Academic Registrar (via casework@ncl.ac.uk) within 14 calendar days of the date of the Level 2 decision. The Academic Registrar will decide whether to undertake a review of your complaint case.

If the Academic Registrar considers that your review request is legitimate/eligible, they will do one of the following:

- Offer you an alternative resolution;
- Arrange for the complaint to be reconsidered under Level 2 by a different Case Officer who has no previous involvement in your case;
- Where the issues raised in your complaint are particularly serious, refer the issue to a Complaint Committee for consideration.

At the end of case review, you will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL), which confirms that the University's internal procedures have been completed.

Complaint Committee

If your complaint is referred to a Complaint Committee for consideration, you will be informed in writing of this decision and given the opportunity to respond.

A Chair for the Complaint Committee will be appointed by the Academic Registrar; the Chair is usually a Pro-Vice Chancellor with no previous involvement in the case. The Chair will be supported by a Complaint Officer from the Student Progress Service and may appoint other suitably trained colleagues to form the committee, as appropriate. The Committee may include a colleague from

People Services, a Students' Union Sabbatical Officer, and other senior colleagues who have had no prior involvement in the investigation and are not members of your School or Academic Unit.

The Committee will investigate the complaint based on the information already submitted, although they may request additional information from you and you will have the opportunity to submit evidence in support of your complaint.

If the Chair of the Committee deems it necessary, they may convene a complaint hearing. If a hearing is convened, you will be invited to attend, along with any other parties or witnesses they believe would help them to determine the case. You will be provided with the date of the hearing, usually at least 10 working days in advance of the proposed date, and you will be sent a full set of case papers together with details of the process to be followed at the hearing at least 7 days in advance of the meeting.

After consideration of all the available evidence, the Complaint Committee will make a decision on the case. The Case Officer will notify you in writing of the decision, setting out the reasons and any recommended resolution.

After the Complaint Committee's decision, you will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL), which confirms that the University's internal procedures have been completed.

What if you are dissatisfied with the final outcome?

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. The University subscribes to this scheme. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome offered by the University, you can seek an external review by submitting a complaint once you have received your Completion of Procedures letter via the [OIA website](#).

Complaints to the OIA must be submitted within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

Confidentiality (See [Student Complaints and Resolution Policy](#))

The Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure is an internal and confidential process. It is important that you - and any friend or supporter you choose to accompany you to meetings - should respect this confidentiality and treat all information as confidential.

In submitting a complaint, you should be aware that details will normally be shared with relevant staff members responsible for investigating and administering the complaint.

Quick guide: how will my complaint be handled by the University?

