

NCG Complaints & Compliments Policy

<u>Policy Title</u>	NCG Complaints & Compliments Policy	
<u>Policy Category</u>	Compliant	
<u>Owner</u>	Chief Operations & Compliance Officer	
<u>Group Executive Lead</u>	Chief Operations & Compliance Officer	
<u>Date Written</u>	April 2023	
<u>Considered By</u>	Executive Board	
<u>Approved By</u>	Corporation	
<u>Date Approved</u>	July 2023	
<u>Equality Impact Assessment</u>	See Separate Assessment	
<u>Freedom of Information</u>	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.	
<u>Review Date</u>	July 2025	
<u>Policy Summary</u>	The NCG Complaints policy serves to provide a consistent process applicable to all colleges and professional services. It is designed to be simple and accessible and promotes a successful and timely resolution of the complaint at the earliest possible stage.	
<u>Applicability of Policy</u>	<u>Consultation Undertaken</u>	<u>Applicable To</u>
Newcastle College	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form College	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
Carlisle College	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
Kidderminster College	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
Lewisham College	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
West Lancashire College	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
Southwark College	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
Professional Services	<u>Yes</u>	Yes
<u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u>		
<u>Previous Approval Date</u>	<u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u>	
June 2019	Removal of the need to have an underpinning college procedure; various changes to text (tracked changes, but not significant)	
January 2023	Removal of informal stage 1 measures and general policy update (including the introduction of electronic collection).	
<u>Linked Documents</u>		
<u>Document Title</u>	<u>Relevance</u>	
Whistleblowing and Disclosure Policy	It may be more appropriate for some complaints to be handled via the Whistleblowing and Disclosure Policy. Where this is the case the WB&D policy should be followed.	

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Equality Impact Assessment

	Judgement	Explanatory Note if required
EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy / procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in Section 2?	Yes	
EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy / procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below?		
Age	No	
Disability / Difficulty	No	
Gender Reassignment	No	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No	
Race	No	
Religion or Belief	No	
Sex	No	
Sexual Orientation	No	
EIA3 - Does the proposed policy / processes contain any language / terms / references / phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals?	No	
EIA4 - Does the policy / process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals?	No	
EIA 5 - Does this policy / process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals?	No	
EIA 5 - Does this policy / process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals?	No	
EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct?	The policy has passed through Executive Board for prior consultation.	

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1. Scope and Purpose of the Policy

NCG is committed to creating inclusive communities of excellent learning and teaching which benefit from sharing best practice developed across the seven learning organisations. As with all businesses however, we are aware that occasionally our learners, students, apprentices, parents, employers, clients, or stakeholders may wish to raise with us instances where, for whatever reason, we have failed to meet our usual high standards.

This policy therefore sets out how complaints of this nature should be submitted, how we aim to resolve them and the timescales that will apply.

In addition this policy also covers Compliments and provides an overview of how compliments can be provided and when received are actioned.

2. Policy Statement

NCG therefore commits to the following:

- Attempt to resolve complaints within this established policy.
- Investigate all complaints in a formal, fair, and non-confrontational manner.
- Ensure that confidentiality is observed as appropriate throughout the procedure.
- Produce an annual report for Local College Boards and to the NCG Corporation Board to ensure governors remain informed in relation to the matters being dealt with.
- Monitor and respond to any trends identified from the data.
- Report stage 3 complaints, and any compliments, at least quarterly to local College Boards and to Quality Curriculum Performance Review (QCPR) meetings.
- Publish this policy via the NCG Policy Intranet as well as on NCG and all college websites.
- Formally assemble any compliments.

3. General Arrangements

- NCG will only respond to a complaint when it is made in line within procedures as set out in this policy.
- NCG will not accept or act upon anonymous complaints until we can substantiate the alleged facts.
 - Where more appropriate we may also direct the complainant to the Whistleblowing & Disclosure Policy.
- Malicious complaints are not acceptable at any time. Where complaints are investigated and found to be malicious or mischievous, appropriate action will be taken, extending to discipline measures for students and staff.

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4. Legal Claims

- The Complaints and Compliments Policy should be exhausted prior to bringing a legal claim against NCG.
- All legal claims against NCG must be reported to the Chief Operations & Compliance Officer via complaints@ncgrp.co.uk.
- The Group reserves the right to refuse to investigate or suspend any investigation underway where it becomes aware that legal, court or tribunal proceedings have been initiated in relation to the grievances imbued in the complaint.

5. Guidance and Links on when to use this policy and related policies.

This policy is broadly to be used when an individual wishes to make a formal complaint, about a person, system or process associated with NCG, based on perceived unfairness, or conduct.

It should not be used when an alternative policy is more appropriate. For example:

- Issues relating to safeguarding must first follow the Safeguarding Policy.
- Issues associated with learner conduct (including alleged bullying and harassment) should first be referred to NCG's Positive Behaviour Policy.
- Issues associated with staff conduct should first be referred to the NCG Discipline Policy.
- Where an individual raises a concern associated with alleged fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff and officers of NCG and subcontractors, they should follow the NCG Whistleblowing & Disclosure Policy.
- Where an individual has a concern around any aspect of their employment, they should follow the NCG Grievance Policy.

6. Complaints Procedure

When you submit a concern or complaint to us, it will be considered under one of the following three stages:

- Stage 1: Formal Complaint and Investigation
- Stage 2: Internal Appeal
- Stage 3: Executive Appeal

Please note – NCG operates an informal process within its colleges through which it is expected that most low-level concerns will be addressed. To access this please liaise directly with your normal contact within any of the NCG Colleges / NCG Professional Services who will initially attempt to address any concerns raised.

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6.1 Stage 1: Formal Complaint and Investigation

Stage	Action	Deadline of Response
<p><u>Stage 1</u> Formal Complaint & Investigation.</p> <p><u>Note</u> Submissions must be made via the online form.</p> <p>See Annex A.</p>	<p>If the concern has not been successfully resolved via informal means, the complaint will be referred to Stage 1 where it will be considered by the relevant Head of Department / Curriculum Area.</p>	<p>The Complainant will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.</p> <p>A response will be provided in writing no later than 15 working days after receipt of the complaint.</p> <p>If it has not been possible to respond to the complaint within this time, progress updates will continue to be provided on a weekly basis until we are able to provide you with a response to your complaint.</p> <p>Should the complaint not have been responded to within 6 weeks of receipt of the Stage 1 complaint, the complainant is able to request that the complaint progresses to Stage 2 of this process.</p>

6.2 Stage 2: Internal Appeal

Stage	Action	Deadline for Response
<p><u>Stage 2</u> Internal Appeal</p> <p><u>Note</u> Submissions must be made via the online form</p> <p>See Annex A</p>	<p>If the concern has not been successfully resolved during Stage 1, the complaint can be referred to Stage 2 where it will be considered by a Member of Principalship / Director of Service.</p>	<p>The Complainant will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.</p> <p>A response will be provided in writing no later than the 15 working days after receipt of the Internal Appeal.</p> <p>If it has not been possible to respond to the Internal Appeal within this time updates will continue to be provided on a weekly basis until we are able to provide you with a response to your complaint.</p> <p>Should the Internal Appeal not have been responded to within 6 weeks of receipt, the complainant is able to request that the complaint progresses to Stage 3 of this process.</p>

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6.3 Stage 3: Executive Appeal

Stage	Action	Deadline for Response
<p><u>Stage 3</u> Executive Appeal.</p> <p><u>Note</u> Submissions must be made via the online form.</p> <p>See Annex A.</p>	<p>If the concern has not been successfully resolved during Stage 2, the complaint can be referred to Stage 3 where it will be considered by the Chief Operations & Compliance Officer.</p>	<p>The Complainant will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.</p> <p>A response will be provided in writing no later than the 15 working days after receipt of the Executive Appeal.</p> <p>If it has not been possible to respond to the Executive Appeal within this time updates will continue to be provided on a weekly basis until we are able to provide you with a response to your complaint.</p> <p>Should the Executive Appeal not have been responded to within 6 weeks of receipt, the complainant is able to raise the complaint with the ESFA (Further Education) / Office of the Independent Adjudicator (Higher Education).</p>

7. Complaint Outcome

Where a complaint is upheld at any of the above stages, the complainant can expect the following from us:

- An apology.
- An explanation of what went wrong.
- A practical action to correct the problem.

Where a complainant has utilised all stages of the complaint procedure (up to Stage 3) and is unhappy with the final decision, they are able to refer their complaint by raising it with the ESFA (Further Education) / Office of the Independent Adjudicator (Higher Education).

8. Complaints about Senior Leaders

Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Principal or member of the NCG Executive (including the CEO), then this complaint will be reviewed by the Chief Operations & Compliance Officer. In these circumstances complaints should be sent to: NCG's Chief Operations and Compliance Officer, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.

Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Chief Operations & Compliance Officer, then this should be sent directly to NCG's Chief Executive at NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.

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9. Compliments

It is important to recognise and value the achievements of learners and staff, and as such college leads should collate the type and nature of compliments to recognise good work and achievement. This aspect of the policy is less formal and prescribed and as such the recognition could take the form of college newsletters, social media, principal's briefing / reports and external media where appropriate. College leads will identify any significant themes in the QCPR meetings, so that Group-based colleagues can identify any common areas of good practice and achievement.

10. Location and Access to the Policy

The Complaints and Compliments Policy is located as follows:

- NCG Intranet.
- NCG Website.
- College Websites.

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Annex A – College Procedural Arrangements

This section highlights the complaint submission details and appropriate levels of staff, who will receive and handle the complaints.

College	Stage 1 – Formal Complaint and Investigation	Stage 2 – Internal Appeal	Stage 3 – Executive Appeal
Carlisle College	VP for Quality and Curriculum. Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form Carlisle	Principalship	Chief Operations & Compliance Officer Note – Where the complaint relates to the Chief Operations and Compliance Officer the complaint will be handled by the Chief Executive Officer.
Kidderminster College	Quality Co-ordinator. Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form Kidderminster	Principalship	
Lewisham College	Head of Quality Improvement Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form Lewisham	Principalship	
Newcastle College	Nominated leader submit to: Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form Newcastle College	Director / Principalship	
Newcastle Sixth Form	Nominated Senior Leader Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form Newcastle Sixth Form College	Principalship	
Southwark College	Nominated leader submit to: Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form Southwark	Principal	
West Lancashire College	Head of Quality Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form West Lancashire	Principal	
Professional Services	Submit to: Stage 1 Formal Complaints Form Professional Services This will then be passed on to the appropriate service lead.	Professional Services Lead	

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ANNEX B – Complaints Escalation Flowchart

