

Student Complaint and Resolution Procedure

Applicable to ALL students

This procedure is applicable to all students, and sets out the student version of the University's Complaint and Resolution policy.

If you are unhappy with the service or treatment you have received from a School, Service or staff member, the University has a [Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#) for you to use. The procedure is explained below to help you understand what to expect.

We understand that it can be a stressful experience to submit a complaint, so you may find it helpful to seek support and advice beforehand. Support services available to you include your Personal Tutor, the [Student Wellbeing Service](#) or the Students' Union [Student Advice Centre](#).

Also, throughout this process, and at any meetings, you may be accompanied by a [friend or supporter](#). It is your choice whether you wish someone to accompany you and, if so, who you ask to attend. Any friend or supporter that accompanies you has no formal role, although they will be invited to state their name and relationship to you and may be asked to contribute a comment. We strongly encourage you to access this support.

If you choose to submit a complaint, you will not be academically disadvantaged in any way and the University will consider whether reasonable adjustments, or other support arrangements, need to be put in place for you while the complaint is being considered. All complaints are treated seriously and handled sensitively.

Please note that the *Student Complaint & Resolution Procedure* requires you to identify yourself. If you do not wish to be named (for example, if you would like to report something so that the University knows about it and can take action), you can request the Student Progress Service treat your complaint confidentially in writing to casework@ncl.ac.uk and this will be taken into consideration and discussed with you.

We recommend you read this procedure carefully to understand what will happen and what to expect. If you have any questions you can contact casework@ncl.ac.uk.

When to use this Student Complaint & Resolution Procedure

The University has various different complaint procedures to cover all circumstances. You should check below that this procedure is the right complaint procedure for your circumstances. If you need help to decide, you can contact casework@ncl.ac.uk.

Is this the right procedure for my complaint?

Yes, for the following types of complaint:

- A complaint about the service or treatment provided by the University, which has impacted on your learning experience;
- Dignity and Respect issues, including issues relating to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. The University's Student Charter – Rights and Responsibilities outlines the high standards of

personal conduct and respect expected of all members of the University community ([Student Charter](#));

- Staff misconduct: If you wish to report misconduct committed by a member of staff;

No, for the following (you should use a different procedure from the list below or ask for help):

- Student misconduct: if you wish to report misconduct committed by another student; Reports of student misconduct are considered under the [Student Discipline Procedure](#). You should write to casework@ncl.ac.uk.
- Academic Appeal (if you wish to appeal against an academic decision, the outcome of a Personal Extenuating Circumstances, Board of Examiners or any decision taken by your Degree Programme Director); these complaints are considered through the Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure. You should complete the [Academic Queries and Appeals Level 2 Application Form and Guidance](#) .
- Accommodation complaints; These should be directed to either:
<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/accommodation/current-students/feedback/> for University accommodation
or
<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/> for private accommodation (contact the UUK Code Management Committee)

Student Complaint and Resolution Procedure

This procedure is applicable to **ALL** students. Within this procedure, there are four levels at which complaints may be considered.

Level 1: Local resolution

We encourage you to raise your issue with a member of staff at your school, unit or service. To lodge this complaint formally, you should write to the Head of the School or service normally within three months of the issue arising.

What happens next?

The University will consider your complaint and a decision, with reasons, will be provided to you in writing within 30 days. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you will be given details of how to make a Level 2 complaint.

If you feel that resolution at Level 1 is inappropriate for your complaint, you may consider submitting a Level 2 complaint instead. Examples include complaints relating to sexual misconduct, harassment, bullying or discrimination.

Level 2: Formal investigation

If you think the University's Level 1 response has not resolved your complaint, or your complaint is so serious that you can't raise it directly with your local school or service, you should complete the

Student Complaints Level 2 Application Form, or email casework@ncl.ac.uk within six months of the matter arising, or within three months of receipt of the Level 1 response.

This link [Student Complaints Level 2 Application Form and Guidance](#) provides you with the form and guidance to help you complete it.

What happens next?

i) Appointment of Case Officer

Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within seven days of receipt. In the acknowledgement, we will confirm that your concerns can be considered under this procedure. If this procedure is the wrong one for you, we will refer you to a more appropriate procedure. A Case Officer will be appointed to investigate your complaint and may invite you to a meeting to clarify any issues raised and discuss the resolution or remedy you seek.

At this meeting, or any other, you may be accompanied by a [friend or supporter](#). It is your choice whether you wish someone to accompany you and, if so, who you ask to attend. Any friend or supporter that accompanies you has no formal role in the meeting, although they will be invited to state their name and relationship to you and may be asked to contribute a comment at the end of the meeting. We encourage you to access this support.

Where your complaint relates to sexual misconduct, harassment, bullying or discrimination by *employees* of the University, the Complaint Officer may refer your case to be investigated in line with the University's [Dignity and Respect Policy](#). For complaints against *students*, the [Student Discipline Procedure](#) and relevant investigation protocol will be used.

ii) Mediation

For complaints at either Level 1 or Level 2, it may be that mediation is the best way to resolve the issues. The Academic Registrar will 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. Mediation is a way to resolve disputes by voluntary participation of all the involved parties in discussions. Sessions are conducted under the guidance and supervision of a trained intermediary.

If mediation is suggested, and you agree to participate, your complaint will be put on hold until this process is complete. If mediation is not successful, consideration of your complaint will resume via a formal investigation process.

iii) Formal investigation process

If the issues in your complaint are particularly serious (for example, where there may be legal implications), your complaint may be referred directly for consideration by a Complaint Committee.

In all other cases, the following process will be used. First, the Complaint Officer will send the full complaint submission to relevant staff within your school or service, requesting a response to the issues you have raised. Normally they are given two weeks to respond and the response is forwarded to you so that you can make any further comments you believe are relevant. You will usually be given two weeks to provide these additional comments.

Next, all the information about your complaint will be considered by the Complaint Officer who will make a decision and, where appropriate, consider a resolution. This final decision will be communicated to you in writing, setting out the reasons for the outcome reached.

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

At the end of the formal investigation process, unless your complaint is being referred to Level 3, you will be sent a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL). This letter confirms the completion of the University's internal procedures.

Level 3: Case Review

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

- *procedural irregularities* - if you think something was not done correctly and this may have affected the decision reached;
- *new evidence* – if this exists and it may have an impact on the complaint outcome;
- *unreasonable decision* – if you consider that no reasonable person could have reached the same decision on the available evidence.

If you would like 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.

What happens next?

The Academic Registrar will determine whether to undertake a review of your complaint case. If they consider your review request is valid, they will:

- offer an alternative resolution;
- arrange for the complaint to be reconsidered under Level 2 by a different Complaint Officer (with no previous involvement in your complaint); or
- if the issues are particularly serious, refer the issue to a Complaint Committee for reconsideration.

At the end of the case review, you will receive a Level 3 final outcome and a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL). This letter confirms the completion of the University's internal procedures.

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 (lead person with responsibility) for the Complaint Committee will be appointed; normally this is a Pro-Vice Chancellor with no previous involvement in the case. The Chair will be supported by a Complaint Officer and may appoint other colleagues to form the committee, as appropriate. The committee members will have had no prior involvement in the complaint investigation and will not include members of your school or academic unit. The committee may also include the Welfare Officer, or another independent officer of the Newcastle University Students' Union (NUSU).

What happens next?

The committee will investigate the complaint based on the information already submitted. You will be given the opportunity to provide additional information if you wish and you may be requested to do so by the committee.

If the Chair of the Complaint Committee determines that they require further clarification on the issues raised, they may convene a complaint hearing. If a complaint hearing is convened, the Chair will invite you to attend. They may also invite any other parties/witnesses whom they believe would help them determine the case. If you choose to attend the hearing you may be accompanied by a friend or supporter.

You will be provided with the date of the hearing in writing, usually no less than 14 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.

After consideration of all the available evidence, the Complaint Committee will make a decision on the case. The Complaint Officer will notify you (and other parties to the complaint) of the decision in writing, setting out the reasons and any suggested resolution.

After the Complaint Committee's decision, you will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL). This letter confirms the completion of the University's internal procedures.

What happens if you are unhappy 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 may be able to apply to the OIA for a review of your complaint via the [OIA website](#).

Record keeping & Monitoring

Confidential records of the details of your complaint will be kept on file in accordance with the University's Retention of Student Data Policy.

Confidentiality

This Student Complaint and Resolution Procedure is an internal, confidential handling process for student complaints. Confidential information relating to any complaint should not be disclosed, except where you are required to do so by the law. It is important that the University, you and any friend or supporter you choose to accompany you to meetings should all respect this confidentiality and treat all information as confidential. Where confidentiality is breached, the University's Disciplinary procedures may be invoked.

In submitting a complaint, you should be aware that your complaint will normally be shared with relevant staff members responsible for investigating and administering the complaint, and that the content of the complaint will, normally, also be disclosed to members of staff against whom a complaint has been made and managers responsible for that part of the University Business, such as Head of School/Service and Faculty Dean/Academic Registrar, to allow them an opportunity to respond to the allegations raised in the interests of fairness and where appropriate consider appropriate resolution.

The complaint may also form the basis of a separate disciplinary process and you may be asked to participate as a witness.

If there are elements of your complaint that you feel are particularly sensitive, or you have other concerns about confidentiality, please contact casework@ncl.ac.uk and we can discuss how disclosure can be minimised.

You should only disclose sensitive personal information (such as medical conditions etc.) if you feel that it is relevant to the complaint. You must avoid disclosing personal data of another person/s unless you have been given permission by them to do so, and this permission should also be submitted with the complaint.

The members of staff involved or investigated in the complaint will be informed of the outcome, in confidence, via their line manager who will be copied into the outcome of the complaint. Senior members of staff and representatives from the Students' Union may also receive a copy of the outcome, in confidence, in order for the University and Union to learn from issues identified through complaints, in order to bring about change where appropriate.

QUICK GUIDE TO THE STUDENT COMPLAINT AND RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Local resolution (Level 1)

We encourage you to raise your issue in writing with a member of staff at your school, unit or service within 3 months of the circumstance taking place.

You should receive an outcome within 30 days.



Formal investigation process (Level 2)

If you are dissatisfied with the local resolution or your circumstances are not appropriate for local resolution, you should submit a [Student Complaints Level 2 Application Form](#).

You will receive an acknowledgement within 7 days.

Your complaint will be investigated by a Complaint Officer and you will receive an outcome within 60 days.



Complaint committee

If the issues raised in your complaint are particularly serious the matter may be referred to a Complaint Committee.



Case review (Level 3)

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal investigation process you can request a case review by writing to: casework@ncl.ac.uk.

You will receive an acknowledgement within 7 days and an outcome within 30 days.

If appropriate your complaint may be reinvestigated by a new Complaint Officer or a Complaint Committee.



External Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome to your complaint, you can submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator via the [OIA website](#).

Points to Note

Use this procedure if you are unhappy with the service or treatment you have received from a School, Service or a staff member.

Seek independent Advice from your Personal Tutor or the Students' Union [Student Advice Centre](#) or the [Student Wellbeing Service](#).

We will only share the details of your complaint with those that need to know.

Attach appropriate evidence to your complaint.

Submit Complaint forms, queries or requests to casework@ncl.ac.uk.

Resources

[Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#)

[Student Complaints Level 2 Application Form and Guidance](#)

[Student Advice Centre](#)

[Student Wellbeing Service](#)

[Student Charter](#)