

Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure

Effective from 1 September 2025

Introduction

1. The Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure (**'the Procedure'**) is applicable to all students and should be read in conjunction with the Student Complaints and Resolution Policy (**'the Policy'**). For the avoidance of doubt, if there are any conflicts between the Procedure and the Policy, the Policy will take precedence.
2. It sets out what current and former students can expect when they make a complaint about Newcastle University.
3. The Procedure is used to investigate all complaints made about University facilities or the level of service or treatment they have experienced from a University employee, Academic Unit or Service.
4. This procedure is **not** used for:
 - **Academic misconduct** (for example, cheating or plagiarism). Reports of academic misconduct are investigated under the [Student Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).
 - **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 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).
5. Students will not be academically disadvantaged by submitting a complaint.

Support and guidance

6. We understand that submitting a complaint can be a stressful experience. Support and advice can be obtained via the following services:
 - [Student Health and Wellbeing Service](#)
 - [Registry and Education Services](#)
 - [Student Advice Centre of the Students' Union](#)
7. If students are required to attend any meetings throughout this process, they 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 students to access this support.

8. Where a complainant requires any specific adjustments or support arrangements to be put in place while their complaint is being considered, they should email casework@newcastle.ac.uk.

Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure

See: [Fig.1: Quick Guide – How will my complaint be handled by the University?](#)

A: At all levels

9. All submitted complaints will be considered under one of the following three levels:
 - Level 1: Local Consideration
 - Level 2: Formal Investigation
 - Level 3: Case Review (Appeal) or Complaint Committee
10. The most appropriate Level for investigation of the complaint will be selected and does not necessarily need to commence at Level 1.
11. To ensure that there is no conflict of interest, each of the three Levels of the procedure will be handled by a Complaint Officer who has had no prior involvement in the case.
12. If the complaint relates to a decision made by the University, the decision will stand until the complaint has been fully considered.

B: Level 1: Local Consideration

13. If a complainant has a concern about University facilities, the level of service or treatment received from an Academic Unit or Service, or about the conduct of a University employee, they are encouraged to write to the relevant Head of School or Service within 3 months of the issue(s) arising.
14. The University will consider the issues raised and will write to the complainant within 30 calendar days of the concern(s) being raised, informing them of any decisions that have been made or actions taken, and the reasons for this.

C: Level 2: Formal investigation

15. If the University's Level 1 response has not resolved the complaint, or if the complainant feels they cannot raise the complaint directly with the relevant Academic Unit or Service, they can request a Level 2 Formal Investigation by emailing casework@ncl.ac.uk.
16. Formal complaints should be submitted within 4 months of the matter arising, or within 1 month of the Level 1 response, where relevant.

17. Complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 7 calendar days of receipt.
18. If the Complaints and Resolution Procedure is not considered appropriate to examine the issues raised, the complainant will be directed to a more suitable procedure.
19. A Complaint Officer will be appointed to investigate the complaint and will offer the complainant the opportunity to meet to clarify any points raised within their complaint. The Complaint Officer may also meet with School or Service colleagues who are the subject of the complaint.
20. The full complaint submission will be sent to relevant colleagues within the Academic Unit or Service, and a response to the issues raised will be requested within 14 calendar days.
21. The Unit/Service response will be forwarded to the complainant. The complainant will then be given 14 calendar days to provide any additional comments they believe are relevant.
22. Once they have received all submissions, the Complaint Officer will then consider all information available about the complaint to decide on a suitable outcome and, where appropriate, recommend a resolution. The final decision will be communicated in writing, setting out the reasons for the outcome reached.
23. Level 2 complaints are usually determined within 60 calendar days from the initial receipt of the complaint, although some circumstances may require a longer period of investigation and determination, for example if the issues raised are particularly complex or if there is a large volume of evidence to review. Wherever possible, the complainant will be kept informed of any actual or anticipated delays in the investigation or conclusion of their complaint.

D: Level 3: Case Review (Appeal)

24. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the Complaint Officer's Level 2 outcome, they can appeal the decision by requesting a Level 3 Case Review. The Level 3 request should include one or more of the following grounds for appeal:
 - **Procedural irregularity**: something was not done correctly in the investigation of the complaint and this may have affected the decision reached;
 - **New material evidence**: new evidence is available, which was not reasonably available during the initial investigation of the complaint, and this may have an impact on the complaint outcome;
 - **Unreasonable decision**: no reasonable person could have reached the same decision based on the available evidence.
25. Requests for Level 3 Case Reviews should be submitted in writing to the Academic Registrar (via casework@ncl.ac.uk) within 14 calendar days of the date of the Level 2

decision and the Academic Registrar will decide whether to undertake a review of complaint case.

26. If the Academic Registrar considers that the review request is eligible, they will do one of the following:

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

E: Level 3: Complaint Committee

27. Most complaints can be investigated and concluded based on written submissions alone. However, there are instances where the issues raised in a complaint are particularly complex or serious and warrant further consideration before an outcome can be reached. In these circumstances, a complaint may be referred to the Academic Registrar to determine whether further consideration by a Level 3 Complaint Committee is appropriate.

28. If a complaint is referred to a Complaint Committee, the complainant will be informed in writing of this decision by the Complaint Officer.

29. 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 appoint other appropriate and experienced University employees or external advisors to form the Committee, and the Committee may include a member of People Services, a Students' Union Sabbatical Officer, and any other senior University employees with no prior involvement in the investigation or the complainant's education.

30. The Committee will investigate the complaint based on the information already submitted, although they may request additional information. The complainant will have the opportunity to submit further evidence in support of the complaint prior to the Committee's consideration of the documentation.

31. If the Chair of the Committee feels it is necessary, they may convene a complaint hearing. If a hearing is convened, the complainant will be invited to attend, along with any other parties or witnesses they believe would help them to determine the case.

32. The complainant will be provided with the date of the hearing, usually at least 10 calendar days in advance of the proposed date, and will be sent a full set of case papers together with details of the process to be followed at the hearing at least 7 calendar days in advance of the meeting.

33. After consideration of all the available evidence, the Complaint Committee will make a decision on the case. The Complaint Officer will notify the complainant in writing of the decision, setting out the reasons and any recommended resolution.
34. Level 3 decisions, both by Complaint Committees or as a result of a Level 3 Case Review, are final. After communication of the final decision, the complainant will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter to confirm that the University's internal procedures have been exhausted.

F: External review

35. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. The University subscribes to this scheme.
36. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome offered by the University, they can seek an external review by submitting a complaint via the [OIA website](#) once they have received a Completion of Procedures letter.
37. Complaints to the OIA must be submitted within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

Confidentiality

38. The Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure is an internal and confidential process. Complainants (and any friend or supporter they choose to accompany them to meetings) should respect this confidentiality and treat all information as confidential, including the outcome.
39. University investigations operate in line with the principles of natural justice. This means that any individual or service about which a complaint is made will have the right to be made aware of the details of the complaint and to provide a response to the issues raised.
40. The University will not normally investigate complaints made anonymously. If there is a reason the complainant does not want to be identified through their complaint, they should email casework@ncl.ac.uk for a discussion about whether the complaint can be investigated.
41. Full complaint details will normally be shared with relevant University employees responsible for investigating and administering the complaint.
42. Sometimes it is necessary to share details of the complaint investigation with other University employees so that appropriate processes can be followed and support can be offered to all affected parties. In these instances, case details will be limited and the information will be shared in confidence, in line with General Data Protection Regulations.

43. If the complainant is unhappy specific details of their complaint being shared with any specific person or service, they should clearly indicate this on their complaint form.
44. Complainants should not include any personal or sensitive information (relating to themselves or to others) within their complaint unless it is relevant to the matters about which the complaint relates.
45. Where the complaint contains any personal information relating to a person other than the complainant, it is the complainant's responsibility to ensure that they have their consent to disclose such information.

Document control	
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Fig. 1: How will my complaint be handled by the University?

