

Policy Number	
Issue Number	2
Issue/ Approval Date	September 2017
Originator	Charlotte Scheffmann
Responsibility	Assistant Principal

Higher Education Student Complaints and Appeals Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

All college enrolled students on prescribed higher education programmes have the right to complain to the college and to have their complaint taken seriously.

A student cannot complain about the process or results of the assessment of academic work, this must be referred to the HE Academic Appeals process at the relevant validating HEI.

SCOPE

A complaint is the expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student's learning opportunities. This includes;

- Failure by the college to meet obligations including those outlined in the course handbook
- Misleading or incorrect information in public information (i.e. prospectus) provided by the college
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration
- Quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided by the college

Anonymous or third party complaints will not be accepted.

The college expects that students will not engage in frivolous or vexatious complaints. Students who do submit such complaints may be subject to Student Disciplinary proceedings. The college reserves the right to end consideration of a complaint if it is deemed to be frivolous or vexatious. The decision to end consideration of a complaint will be taken by the Head of Division for Higher Education (or nominee).

A group of students can use this procedure to make a collective complaint. However the following criteria must be met before the complaint will be accepted:

- One member of the group must be identified as the main contact for purposes of communication
- Each member of the group must submit their consent in writing and agree to abide by the procedure
- The college will assume that any discussion or agreement with the main contact will be with the consent of the rest of the group
- If this option is taken the whole group must accept or reject the outcome. A student that has entered into a group complaint may not then decide to make the same complaint as an individual

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The complaints procedure operates on the principles of **natural justice**;

- There are two sides to every dispute

- All parties are given the opportunity to provide evidence to substantiate their version of the issue / incident
- Full disclosure of any allegations or evidence will be made to those parties involved in the complaint
- All parties involved in a complaint have the right to be accompanied by a representative at each stage of the procedure. Neither party can be accompanied by legal representation.

At all stages of the procedure disabled students have a right to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Other students may be provided appropriate support depending upon availability.

The effective resolution of complaints depends upon all those involved (staff & students) engaging in a way which recognises the interest and concerns of each other, and approaching the matter with objectivity and respect. The college therefore encourage students to recognise that an outcome which is not the one they might have been seeking is nevertheless valid, provided the investigation has been fair and based on the consideration of relevant available evidence.

Where a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 3 process they have the opportunity to appeal to the appropriate partner university or other external body (Edexcel). Where stipulated for some universities the student has the right to escalate their complaint to the university directly at Stage 3 (please see university complaints procedure and/or student programme handbook).

University of Bolton:

<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Everything/StudentInfoPolicyZone/2017-18-Documents/Student-Complaints-Procedure-2017-18.pdf>

Buckinghamshire New University:

<https://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/resolving-problems/complaints>

Liverpool John Moores University:

<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/public-information/student-regulations/appeals-and-complaints>

University of Huddersfield:

<https://www.hud.ac.uk/registry/regulations-and-policies/studentregs/>

Edexcel:

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html>

If the student after seeking resolution with the partner university is still not satisfied, the student has the opportunity to seek adjudication from the Office of Independent Adjudication (OIA). The student will be required to obtain a Completion of Procedures letter from the partner University in order to enter independent adjudication with the OIA.

Office of Independent Adjudication – www.oiahe.org.uk

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

All HE staff should attempt to resolve issues that arise to the satisfaction of the student/complainant. HE Programme Leaders are responsible for receiving and investigating Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints and responding to the complainant within a prescribed timescale. The responsibility for dealing with Stage 3 complaints rests with the Head of Division for Higher Education. The monitoring of compliance, including timescales, rests with the HE Office in the Division of Higher Education. The HE Office are responsible for offering advice & guidance, regarding complaints processes, to students.

To this end college will: -

- Investigate a complaint in a timely, objective and thorough manner. Any judgement shall be based upon the evidence provided.
- The college will NOT accept complaints straight to the formal stage (Stage 2). There MUST be an attempt to resolve issues locally prior to escalation.
- If dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal complaint (Stage 1) the complainant must submit their formal complaint in writing by completing a Stage 2 form.
- Acknowledge the receipt of a formal/Stage 2 complaint within 5 working days.
- Respond to complaint within 20 working days using the Investigation Report template.
- Where a complaint is not resolved at Stage 2 the complainant may progress this to Stage 3 in writing within 10 days of receiving the Investigation Report. It is essential that this contains the reasons for why this was not satisfactory resolved.
- The response to a Stage 3 complaint will be provided within 20 working days using the template for investigation feedback (as above).
- Ensure that outcomes and feedback from the resolution of a complaint contribute to the enhancement of learning opportunities and improvement in processes for maintaining the academic standards of awards.
- The number, nature and outcome of complaints received forms part of HE KPIs and are reported as part of the Strategic Annual Review & Evaluation of Higher Education.
- Dependent upon the nature of the issue/incident recorded as a complaint the college may seek advice from the validating HEI at any stage.
- For further action please see above or contact the HE Office

Reviewing and monitoring of the policy

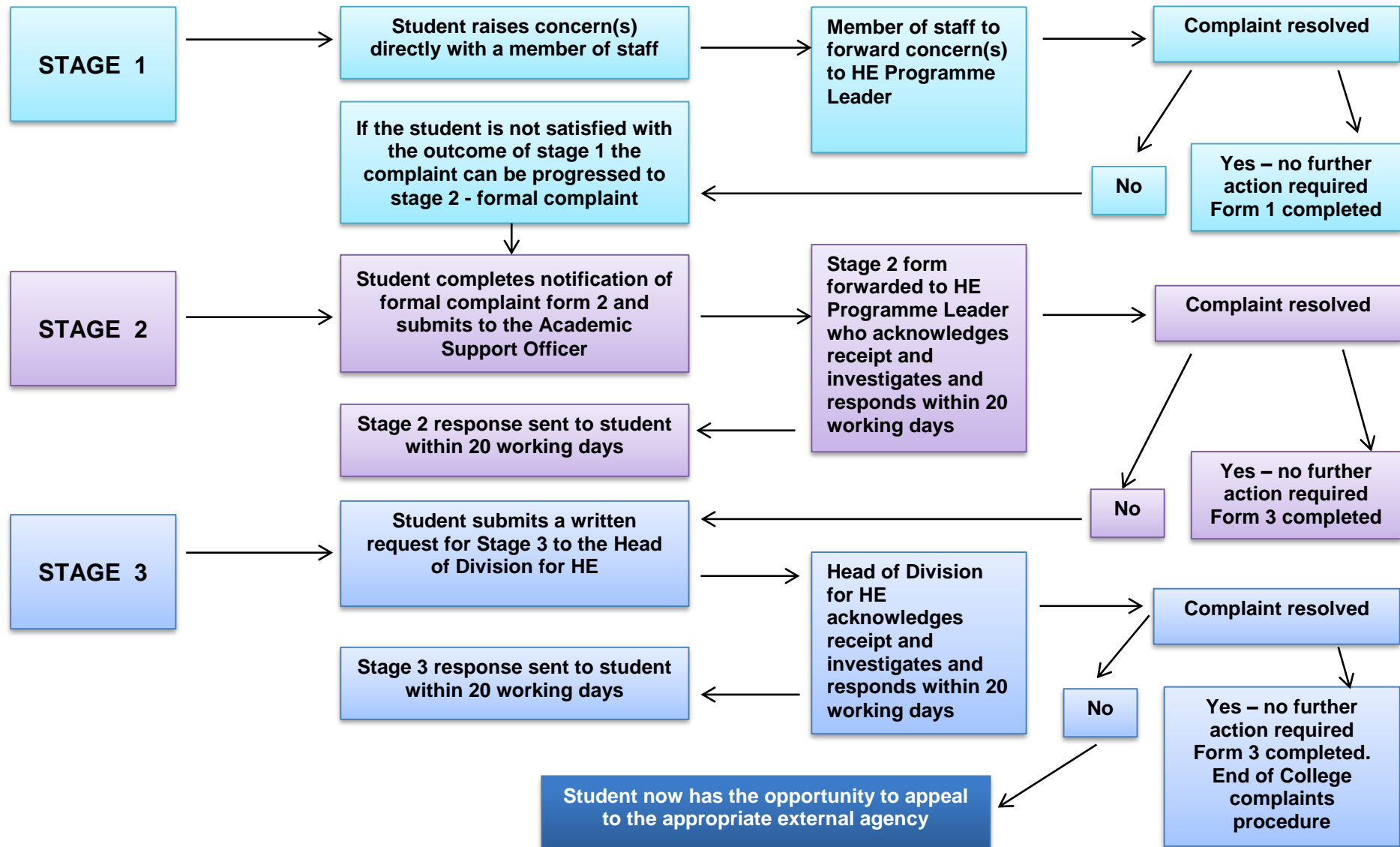
The Head of Division for Higher Education is responsible for ensuring this policy is fit for purpose and is implemented, monitored and regularly (annually) reviewed.

This policy was reviewed and impact assessed in December 2017 by: C Scheffmann

Addendum:

- **Complaints flow chart**
- **Form 1 Record of informal complaints**
- **Form 2 Notification of formal complaint**
- **Form 3 Investigation report**

Complaints flow chart



Stage 1 – Informal Record of informal complaint

Division		Programme	
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This form is to be completed by the employee directly responsible for the educational provision.

<p>Nature of complaint (summarise the main points, attach a copy of the original complaint to this form):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 	
Date issue raised:	Course/Year:
Student/Students concerned:	Student ID number/s:
<p>Summary of investigation and any recommendations: In the course of my investigation I <i>(add in details, including any meetings and witness statements. Attach as appendices and list them)</i></p> <p>Following investigation, my findings regarding the above points are as follows: <i>(response to each point raised in the complaint)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. etc. <p>I therefore find that the complaint is upheld / not upheld / partially upheld <i>(delete as appropriate).</i></p> <p>As a result of the above finding, I make the following recommendations: <i>(Add details of any recommendations and/ or redress to the student, and include who is responsible for carrying out the actions)</i></p>	

Additional comments

The complainant should sign below (or email) to confirm that the proposed actions and/or review of the issues has resolved the complaint:

Employee's name		Signature		Date	
Student/s Name/s:		Signature/s		Date	

N.B. Should the student remain dissatisfied then they may submit a formal complaint. The informal complaint investigator must ensure the student is directed to the Student Complaints Procedure, and given the contact details of the Academic Support Officer. The formal complaint must be submitted within 10 working days of having received this decision in accordance with the Student Complaints procedure.

Office use only: One copy of this form is to be given to the student/s; one copy to be given to the programme leader; one copy to the Academic Support Officer.

Stage 2 – Formal Notification of formal complaint form

This formal complaint form should only be used when you have tried to resolve the problem directly with the person or persons concerned and are dissatisfied with the outcome. **You MUST attach a copy of the Record of informal complaint form and any other relevant documents, if you have not had a form, attach copies of email correspondence etc.** Anonymous complaints will not be considered. The completed form and supporting evidence should be submitted either by hard copy, in which case it should be signed and dated below, or via email, in which case the signature is not essential.

Your Name:
Signature
Date:
Student ID number:
Your contact address including postcode: <i>(we will usually contact you by email, but please provide a postal address in case we need to send you some documents)</i>
Your current contact details Phone number/s: Email address:

Have you completed Stage 1 – informal stage?	Yes
	No
If yes, You MUST attach a copy of the Record of informal complaint form and any other relevant documents, if you have not had a form, attach copies of email correspondence etc.	
If no, please contact the Academic Support Officer (grogers@accross.ac.uk) or the HE Office, Room G210, before proceeding.	

Notification of formal complaint form – cont.

Please summarise the main points of your complaint below:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Etc.*

Please note that you cannot complain about academic judgement. If you wish feel there may have been a procedural irregularity in the marking of academic work you should submit an academic appeal, and not a complaint.

Details of your complaint: (continue on a separate sheet if necessary, please try to use clear language, use bullet points and use only factual information)

What outcome/s do you hope to achieve through this complaint?

Please list any supporting evidence:

(eg witness statements, emails, etc. please number and attach)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Completed forms should be sent to the Academic Support Officer by email: grogers@accross.ac.uk, or post it to The HE Office, Accrington and Rossendale College, Broad Oak Road, Accrington. Lancashire. BB5 2AW

For office use only

Date complaint received:

Student Complaint Procedures – investigation report

Investigation report prepared by (print name)		Date	
Complaint Manager (print name)		Name of student/s and student ID number/s	
Investigation report			
<p>A formal complaint was submitted on <i>(date)</i>. In summary the points raised in the complaint were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. etc. <p>In the course of my investigation I <i>(add in details, including any meetings and witness statements. Attach as appendices and list them)</i></p> <p>Following investigation, my findings regarding the above points are as follows: <i>(response to each point raised in the complaint)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. etc. <p>I therefore find that the complaint is upheld / not upheld / partially upheld <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>.</p> <p>As a result of the above finding, I make the following recommendations: <i>(Add details of any recommendations and/ or redress to the student)</i></p>			

Additional comments				
Signature:			Date:	