

DN COLLEGES GROUP

The University Centre at **North Lindsey College**
University Centre **Doncaster**

Higher Education Student Complaints Procedure

2017-2018

1 What is it for?

This procedure provides a means for you to raise a complaint about any service either of the Colleges in the DN Colleges Group provides and to get that issue resolved.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B9 defines a complaint as the 'expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student's learning opportunities'. [QAA 2013]

Complaints can be about:

- concerns about academic programmes or services; or
- complaints about your student experience, including relationships with any member of staff

Examples of complaints include:

- misleading or incorrect information in promotional or other published information being provided by the University Centre at North Lindsey College (UCNL) or University Centre Doncaster (UCD)
- failure by the institution to meet obligations as outlined, for example, in programme handbooks, student handbooks or student charter
- concerns about the management of a programme or of the teaching or administration of a programme
- poor quality of facilities or learning resources

If you wish to complain about the standard of teaching and learning, you must make the complaint before the relevant Examination Board or Assessment Board has decided your result.

Please note that you cannot use the complaints procedure to appeal against an Examination Board or Assessment Board decision. Academic appeals are handled through a separate procedure. (Please refer to the appropriate academic regulations which govern your programme.)

2 Who can use this process?

You can pursue a complaint if you are a current student or if you attended your relevant University graduation ceremony, completed your programme of study or withdrew from your programme less than one year ago.

For students who are registered with one of our partner universities, once the College procedures are exhausted you have the right to pursue the complaint with the relevant University.

3 What is the complaints process?

It is in everyone's interest that if you feel the need to make a complaint you discuss this as early as possible. In almost all cases these situations can be resolved informally.

3.1 Early resolution

Before you begin formal proceedings we encourage you firstly to try and resolve the issue informally, either by speaking directly with those concerned or with your Academic Advocate, personal tutor or Programme Leader.

The University Centre Directorate Leadership Team members at both colleges also play a key role in the early resolution of concerns and differences. This is an effective mechanism which brings in a third party but also maintains the informal process. Please contact the Higher Education Curriculum Quality & Data Administrator for UCNL or Higher Education Quality and Data Officer for UCD who will refer you to a member of the team.

The Directors of Higher Education or any member of the University Centre management teams are usually able to deal with student concerns in a mutually satisfying way.

This could be through:

- being in a position to be able to provide further information or explanations
- understanding all parties' perspectives and being proactively solution-focused
- providing an apology where this is seen as appropriate
- recommending further assistance or support for the student(s)

Notes of these meetings will usually be taken to record the conversation.

If the relevant Director of Higher Education concludes that an informal approach cannot settle the issue only then should you begin formal proceedings.

3.2 Formal Procedure

To make a formal complaint you should refer to Appendix HE1 for the first step. Using the initial form (**SCP1**) you should clearly state:

- What your complaint is about and the perceived negative impact for you
- What you hope the resulting outcome of your complaint will be
- How you have followed the early resolution informal route
- Evidence for your complaint and all other relevant material which you feel should be taken into consideration.

Once your complaint has been received and recorded by the Senior Leadership Team Executive Secretary, it will be forwarded to the Assistant Principal for Higher Education or other senior manager as relevant for investigation into your case. Once that is completed you will receive a written report of the findings (**SM1**) as shown at Appendix HE2. If your complaint is upheld in whole or in part, then the response will set out how the issue will be resolved. A decision to reject the complaint at initial evaluation would also be communicated in writing.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, then you have 10 working days to request a review of the formal complaint. You can do this by writing to The Principal following the Appeals procedure and using the appropriate form (**RAS1**) as shown at Appendix HE3.

The review stage of the process, the Appeals procedure, would consider the previous procedural approaches, the reasonableness of the outcomes or where new material evidence presents which previously had not been available.

4 Closing the complaint at the review stage

If a complaint is not upheld by The Principal, a Completion of Procedures letter (see Appendix HE4) will be forwarded to the complainant(s) within 28 days. This will provide a clear explanation of the decision and reasons underpinning the decision.

The letter communicating the decision will advise on the right to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) for external review.

Where an appeal is upheld, the complainant will be provided with written confirmation of the outcome including an explanation of how any further action or remedy will be implemented.

5 Independent external review

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) is the independent ombudsman service of last resort which provides an independent Scheme to review student complaints against higher education providers. Any case should normally be submitted to the OIA within three months of the Completion of Procedures letter.

The OIA website, which contains comprehensive detail and documentation is accessible at: www.oiahe.org.uk

November 2017

Appendix HE1

DN Colleges Group

The University Centre at **North Lindsey College**
University Centre **Doncaster**

Higher Education Student Complaints Pro-Forma

Initial Investigation Stage Form SCP1

The Student Complaints Procedure provides a formal means through which students can pursue any complaint they have against the services provided by the University Centres or by either of the Colleges generally and through which the College can resolve these complaints fairly and openly. This form should be completed as clearly and succinctly as possible.

The Student Complaints Procedure is to be used for:

- (i) concerns about the provision and delivery of academic programmes and related services;
- (ii) complaints about a student's experience at the College, including relationships with any member of staff.

The Students Complaints Procedure **cannot** be used for:

- (i) representations against decisions of Boards of Examiners (governed by the awarding bodies academic review and appeals procedures)
- (ii) allegations of misconduct by students (governed by the Disciplinary Policy)

Before completing this form: Please remember that most issues are most effectively resolved through early resolution

You are advised to attempt to resolve any concerns either directly with those concerned or with your Programme Leader, Academic Advocate or personal tutor. You are then strongly advised to follow the early resolution phase through the relevant University Centre's Directorate Leadership Team.

Anonymous complaints will only be admitted in exceptional circumstances.

Part A – PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Name:	
2. Enrolment Number: Campus location:	
3. Programme:	
4. Level of Study:	
5. Address for Correspondence:	
6. Address for Correspondence:	
7. Email Address:	
8. Phone Number:	

Part B – DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT

<p>1. Please describe how you have pursued the early resolution options as described in the Complaints Procedure document. Please include details with all those you have spoken to/communicated with</p> <p>If you have not sought to resolve your concerns informally, please state why not</p>	
<p>2. Please summarise the precise details of your complaint. It is <u>your</u> responsibility to identify, clearly, all the points of your complaint</p> <p>Your statement should include (as appropriate) details of the events complained of, to whom or what your complaint relates, relevant dates and an explanation of the negative impact on you</p> <p>You must provide documentary evidence to support your complaint (as appropriate) and append it to this form</p> <p>Please note that any senior person conducting an investigation will conduct an interview with you and take detailed notes</p>	
<p>3. Without prejudice, please indicate what you hope the result will be</p>	

Student Declaration

I can confirm that I have read the Student Complaints Procedure and that all information given on this form and documentary evidence attached is a true statement of facts to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date:

Signed: _____

IMPORTANT: PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM AND ANY EVIDENCE YOU SUBMIT AS YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE IT IF YOUR COMPLAINT PROGRESSES TO FURTHER STAGES IN THE PROCEDURE

Office Use Only

Date Received:		Date forwarded and name of Senior Manager to investigate:	
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Appendix HE2

DN Colleges Group

The University Centre at **North Lindsey College**
University Centre **Doncaster**

Student Complaint Investigation Report

SM1

The senior manager assigned to the complaint must carry out a thorough, robust and impartial investigation, ensuring that all of the evidence relating to the complaint is examined.

The investigation will normally be concluded within 20 working days. This form is to be completed as the formal record of meetings held and the summary for recommendations.

PART A – COMPLAINT OUTCOME

1. Name of Complainant	
2. Please state if the complaint is substantiated, in whole or in part in your view	
3. If the complaint is wholly or partially upheld, please state the remedy (ies) recommended to the student together with any actions which need to be taken (immediately or for the future)	

Part B – SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION

4. Please summarise the main points arising from your investigation, your assessment of the evidence submitted, the meetings you have conducted which have led you to the formal decision	
5. Please list the documentation and evidence presented; any additional evidence you gathered and from whom; dates and times of all meetings held/ visits made NB all of the above must be formally documented and evidence submitted with this report.	

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Office Use Only

Date received by Executive Secretary:		Date forwarded to the complainant:	
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Appendix HE3

DN Colleges Group

The University Centre at **North Lindsey College**
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Student Complaints Pro-Forma

Review and Appeal Stage – RAS1

This form is designed for students requesting a review of a complaint which has already been considered by a designated senior manager as part of the formal procedure stage.

Before completing this form:

You should have received a letter following investigation of your complaint through the formal procedure stage. This form must be completed and submitted to the **Executive Secretary to the Principal of North Lindsey College or the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive at Doncaster College** within 10 working days from receipt of your letter.

Please ensure that you append a copy of your original SCP1 form together with any documentary evidence. Please note that you cannot, at this stage, add any further concerns or issues to your complaint.

Part A – PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Name of Student:	
2. Enrolment Number: Campus location:	
3. Address for Correspondence:	
4. Email Address:	
5. Phone Number:	

Part B – REASONS FOR REQUESTING A REVIEW

6. Please provide a statement as to why the decision of the senior manager who investigated your complaint was not satisfactory (your reasons must be clearly stated and relate to an objective factor such as a procedural issue, failure to consider the evidence presented or over the reasonableness of the outcome).	
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7 Please cite the evidence you are submitting to support your review request.

Note: you may not introduce at the Review and Appeal stage any evidence which was available to you but had not been submitted at the earlier stage.

Student Declaration

I can confirm that I have read the Student Complaints Procedure and that all information given on this form and documentary evidence attached is a true statement of facts to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

IMPORTANT: PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM AND ANY EVIDENCE YOU SUBMIT AS YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE IT IF YOUR COMPLAINT PROGRESSES TO FURTHER STAGES IN THE PROCEDURE

Office Use Only

Date Received:		Principal Review Scheduled:		Principal's Decision:	
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Appendix HE4

Completion of Procedures Letter Template

Please note - the format may be adjusted to meet the individual circumstances of a complaint provided that the key points below are included.

Dear [*Name of complainant*]

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of this, the DN Colleges Group, in relation to your Complaint have now been completed.

The issue(s) that you raised were: [*brief details*]

The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your complaint was / were*: [*brief summary of the complaint etc.*].

The final decision of is* [*detail*] because [*reasons*].

The procedure applied was as required in the DN Colleges Group for complaints relating to Higher Education.

North Lindsey College and Doncaster College both subscribe individually to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you may be able to apply for a review of your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form **must be received by the OIA within 12 months** of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA **on or before** [*insert date - e.g. if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 9 July 2017, this date should be 9 July 2018*].

[*Include here any factors of which the provider is aware which mean that it is particularly important for the student to bring the complaint promptly.*]

You can fill in the OIA's complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website. <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/oia-complaint-form.aspx>. The OIA also publishes *An Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students*, which can be downloaded from http://oiahe.org.uk/media/42715/oia_intro_leaflet_16pp.pdf. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. **You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Complaint Form.**

Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia.aspx>.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

Yours sincerely

[Authorised signatory]