

# Higher Education Complaints Policy & Procedure

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# Policy

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## 1. Aims of the Policy

To outline a transparent and fair system for capturing feedback, logging and responding to complaints, to provide appropriate means to bring concerns and complaints to the attention of Confetti, with the aim of reaching a satisfactory resolution.

- Encourage local resolution to complaints in as many cases as possible;
- Be simple, open and accessible;
- Be accountable;
- Be non-adversarial;
- Be fair to all parties involved and avoid allocating unnecessary blame to individuals;
- Lead to prompt resolution;
- Lead to service improvement.

## 2. Scope of the Policy

Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies (Confetti) makes a clear distinction between:

- **Appeals against assessment board decisions** – these are managed by the Head of Learning and Development following Nottingham Trent University processes. Any complaint which appears to be an academic appeal will be referred to the Head of Learning and Development. Email [appeals@confetti.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@confetti.ac.uk)
- **Expressions of dissatisfaction about service provision**, which are dealt with in accordance with the complaints procedure outlined in this document.

The Confetti complaints procedure is available to all Higher Education students, Higher Education alumni, Higher Education applicants or Higher Education visitors (referred to as 'service users' in the rest of this document) to enable them to raise any concerns about service provision.

Confetti will not communicate with any third party about a complaint, unless written permission has been provided by the service user to whom the complaint relates.

The policy of Confetti is that no service user is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of their age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation. No person should be discriminated against for making a complaint.

Complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to confidentiality. Any person named in a complaint will be informed of the substance of the complaint and will have the right to reply as part of any investigation. Information contained within the complaint will be made available only to those members of staff involved in its resolution, and appropriate senior managers.

Unless with evidenced mitigating circumstances, it is expected that a complaint enquiry will be initiated within 10 working days of the incident it references. This includes any circumstances where a complaint is escalated. For example, after a resolution is offered at stage 1. (below), an appeal needs to be made within 10 working days of the solution being determined. Complaints beyond these time frames will not be recognised.

The receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged and logged at the appropriate stage for action or investigation. An appropriate member of staff will be appointed to lead the process.

Complaints, at whatever stage they are logged, will be investigated and a response offered within 10 working days, wherever possible. If the complaint cannot be resolved within this time frame the complainant will be informed and a new timeframe will be set by the manager leading the process.

The outcome of a complaint will be determined as either unsubstantiated, part substantiated or substantiated, dependent on the findings of the process. As a result, appropriate and proportionate action or actions will be taken, as approved by the manager leading the process.

No complainant bringing a complaint under this procedure, whether substantiated or otherwise, will be treated less favourably by any member of staff, than if the complaint had not been brought.

Any student making a malicious complaint must be made aware that this could lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Anonymous complaints cannot be investigated.

### **Successful Resolution**

A successful resolution at any stage of the procedure should:

- Be honest;
- Be fair to all parties;
- Include an apology and/or other form of recompense if appropriate;
- Include corrective and/or preventive action or provide a clear and honest explanation of what has happened and why further action is not appropriate.

## **3.Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Tutor**

Tutors should be the first point of contact for any queries whilst on programme. At the local resolution stage, most complaints can be addressed to the Tutor. Stage 1

### **Course Leader**

When it is not appropriate to discuss local resolution issues with the Tutor (e.g. the complaint involves them), the Course Leader can also be contacted to discuss concerns. Stage 1

### **Curriculum Area Leader**

When a resolution cannot be reached at Stage 1 complaints can be escalated to Stage 2 for resolution by Curriculum Area Leader.

### **Student Services Manager**

In a small number of cases, the Course Leader may also be the Tutor, and in this instance it may be more appropriate to discuss concerns with the Student Services Manager. The complainant may also prefer to speak to the Student Services Manager if the content of the complaint is personal.

### **Nottingham Trent University Link Staff**

As detailed in the complaints procedure, these are key staff based at Nottingham Trent University who may handle a complaint if escalated beyond the Confetti process.

### **Confetti Executive Management Team**

Monitor and review content and regularity of complaints and evaluate and update systems based on any outcomes from this process. Review the Confetti Higher Education Complaints Policy annually.

## **4. Raising a Concern**

There are many ways for users to raise concerns and give feedback about any aspect of Confetti's services. Feedback does not have to be restricted to negative comments, we welcome any feedback that identifies how we might improve and are keen to know what it is doing well, so the quality of our services can be maintained.

Throughout the year, students have the following opportunities to take part in constructive criticism:

- Course Committee Meetings and Student Focus Groups – these are small group discussions, usually attended by Course Representatives, and a forum to speak directly to the Curriculum Leaders, the Head of Learning and Development and Student Support Services, about general concerns shared by the student body. Minutes will be taken at these meetings and details of the topics covered are circulated to students after the meetings.
- 'Customer Comments' Forms – these are available from reception and can be used anonymously. Specific responses are possible, but only if personal details are provided.
- Electronic Surveys – there are usually five survey points during the academic year where students are required to submit graded responses and comments in answer to directed questions about the quality of provision. These are administered internally, and in some cases, externally for audit requirements of partner institutions.

Data gathered from the above are regularly reviewed by Course Leaders and the Senior Management team, and can result in the updating of services.

## **5. Making a Complaint**

If the complaint is considered formal, the following procedure should be utilised:

This process for Students raising a concern or making a complaint is also outlined in the course handbook and on the Confetti website <http://confetti.ac.uk/policies/>

Staff can use this procedure but only to Stage 1. If resolution is not found the concern/complaint should be immediately referred to a member of the Executive Management Team or Human Resources.

## Procedure

### **Stage 1: Local Resolution – Tutor or Course Leader**

Most issues are best resolved by raising concerns with the Tutor or Course Leader who is working in the relevant curriculum area. Local resolution is an informal and flexible way to resolve complaints quickly and simply. The member of staff will work with the complainant on an informal basis to find a solution to the issue. This could be as straightforward as having a discussion with a tutor or the course leader who will hold a meeting to mediate between those involved. This may often result in a satisfactory solution. If a complaint has been dealt with by local resolution it is usual that the response will also be informal, although the complaint and outcome will be logged.

### **Stage 2: Formal Resolution – Curriculum Area Leader**

If stage 1. does not lead to a satisfactory outcome, the next step is to raise the complaint with the Curriculum Area Leader or the Student Services Manager. An investigation will be conducted to find a formal resolution. The concerns or complaint/s and the proposed resolution/s will be documented, for example by email, or entering notes into the relevant monitoring record and the response will be sent by email and will be followed up with a formal letter to the complainant, within the designated time frame. The scope of the investigation will be planned and documented by the manager leading the process and human resources will be informed if the complaint involves a member of staff.

### **Stage 3: Appeal- Formal Investigation – Executive Management Team**

If stage 2. does not lead to a satisfactory outcome, the next step is to make a formal appeal to a member of the Executive Management Team (the Head of the area in which the complaint has been raised). The complaint appeal needs to be made in writing (preferably sent by email), and receipt of the complaint appeal will be acknowledged within 3 working days. An impartial investigation into the points raised will be conducted, the scope of which will be documented, with the aim of ensuring the policy guidelines have been followed by the investigating manager at stage 2. We will provide a formal written response within 10 working days of the acknowledgement. Notification will be provided if there are any anticipated delays during this process. If it is found that the process has not been followed correctly. The investigation will be started again by a different and impartial investigator.

### **Stage 4: Complaint to the Awarding Institution Nottingham Trent University**

If your complaint cannot be resolved through the Confetti process, you can escalate your complaint using the Nottingham Trent University process. You should complete the relevant form which can be obtained from Student Services and forward to the appropriate personnel at Nottingham Trent University. This form should be received within 10 working days of the most recent local resolution response. The partner university institution is available to act as an objective third party to investigate complaints.

[http://www4.ntu.ac.uk/current\\_students/document\\_uploads/93065.pdf](http://www4.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/document_uploads/93065.pdf)

[http://www4.ntu.ac.uk/current\\_students/resources/student\\_handbook/complaints\\_summary/index.html](http://www4.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/resources/student_handbook/complaints_summary/index.html)

Student Liaison Manager  
Nottingham Trent University  
Burton Street  
Nottingham  
NG1 4BU.

The Student Services Team at Confetti or a representative of the Nottingham Trent Student Union (NTSU) can assist you in your complaint;

### **What to Include in a Complaint?**

To help achieve a timely and effective resolution, it is strongly advised that as much relevant detail as possible is included with the complaint. This should include:

- The complainant's full name
- Contact address
- Email address
- Phone number
- Relationship to Confetti
- Course / group of person affected
- When the issue leading to the complaint occurred
- Circumstances leading to the complaint e.g.
  - o Who was involved
  - o What was said and done
  - o Any witnesses
  - o What the complainant thinks Confetti did wrong or failed to do
  - o The complaint should include what the complainant would like to have happen to resolve the issue.

### **What Happens Once a Complaint Has Been Investigated**

Following a thorough investigation by the leading manager the complainant will be advised of the outcome. The outcomes of a complaint will be determined as unsubstantiated, part substantiated or substantiated, dependent on the findings of the process. As a result, appropriate and proportionate action or actions will be taken, as approved by the manager leading the process.

Examples of possible action are:

- Complainant receives a letter of explanation and/or apology
- We may improve or change our procedures in light of the investigation
- Appropriate action will be taken where staff have acted inappropriately, as determined by their line manager and Human Resources
- In some cases, there may not be enough evidence available to take any action over the complaint
- There may have been factors of which complainants were unaware, which had an effect on the outcome, of which they will be made aware.

We will endeavour to safeguard the confidentiality of all information received, fully investigate concerns and inform complainants of our findings as soon as we are able.

## General Guidance for Staff

Concerns and Complaints should not be viewed negatively, but as an opportunity to review and improve practice and/or services. Staff should therefore encourage students and stakeholders to make their views known through a variety of methods as outlined above.

### Staff Complaints

Staff can also use this procedure but only to Stage 1. If resolution is not found the concern/complaint should be immediately referred to a member of the Executive Management team or Human Resources.

### Student or Stakeholder Complaints

If the student issue raised is of significant seriousness or involves the tutor, course leader or curriculum leader who would be expected to deal with it, early stages of the process may be missed out and the concern or complaint could go directly to the relevant member of the Executive Management Team (EMT) or Human Resources.

Remember your first response to a concern or complaint will have an impact on the final outcome. We aim to create an environment where students and their representatives, staff and external stakeholders should:

- Be encouraged to feel that concerns, complaints and compliments are welcome
- Know that they have a right to express a concern or make a complaint, that will be taken seriously and treated with respect.
- Believe that concerns and complaint will be dealt with effectively and lead to positive action which will drive improvements.
- Be able to raise a concern or make a complaint to a member of staff without being treated less favourably as a result.

Suggestions for staff when dealing with Concerns or a Complaint

- Listen, be courteous and calm
- Accept the person's right to raise a concern or make a complaint
- Clarify the procedure to be followed (as above)
- Explain what you are going to do about the Concern or Complaint

Is this a Safeguarding issue?

If the concern or complaint is a Safeguarding issue, or you think it may be, report it to the Student Services Manager, another designated Safeguarding Person or directly to the Head of Student Support Services. If the Safeguarding issue involves a staff member Human Resources will be notified. The concern or complaint will then be dealt with in line with the CICT Safeguarding Policy.

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months by the Executive Management Team.

## 7.Related Policies

- CICT Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- CICT Admissions Policy
- Nottingham Trent University Complaints Policy

Next review date: January 2020