

Hull College Group Policy	Procedure Status: Approved	
Title: HE Complaints Policy	Ref: HE 1.14	
Brief: Policy to outline Complaints for Hull College Group Higher Education Students		Next review date: July 2020

Policy introduction

Purpose

Hull College Group (HCG) appreciates complaints and feedback from its students and stakeholders as they provide the opportunity to make improvements, where appropriate, and to improve the service offered in the future. As such, they are regarded as an important part of the quality improvement process.

This policy is specifically designed for higher education students at the College and explains the arrangements that exist for students to make a complaint, should they have concerns relating to any aspect of the Group. Recent graduates/award holders may raise a complaint under this policy **up to 90 days** from when the event occurred. This policy is also applicable to students or groups of students who have co-signed a complaint.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) good practice framework for handling student complaints has been used in the drafting of this policy. The OIA deem it "essential for good governance that concerns are dealt with fairly, transparently and in a timely way." This policy is also compliant with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Quality Code principles for Concerns, Complaints and Appeal.

1. Responsibility, definition and implementation

Students should use the Complaints Policy:

- a) If they are unhappy with any service provided by HCG.
- b) If they would like to suggest how that service might be improved.

A complaint is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a provider's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider." (OIA)

The College will **not** record or investigate:

- A decision where the correct procedures/ processes/ regulations have been followed.
- Anonymous communication.
- Something outside the control or responsibility of the College.
- An event or an incident that happened more than 90 days ago.
- Something involving an employee's personal life.
- A liability claim or other litigation matter.

- A complaint regarding an academic judgement on HE work (e.g. the grade awarded for a piece of work or the final classification awarded to a student).

Examples of issues that could be considered complaints are:

- Poor quality of equipment, other learning resources or facilities.
- Misleading information published by the provider.
- Failure of the provider to meet obligations stated in student handbooks.
- Concerns about the administration of an academic programme.

2. Policy details

2.1 Confidentiality

All complaints are dealt with in accordance with current General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and good practice guidance. Information, documents or other information relating to a complaint, investigation or resolution of a complaint will be treated in confidence and shall be disclosed to only those persons involved in the complaint. An exception to this is where disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint, with permission from the complainant.

2.2 Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints **cannot** be accepted by the Group. Students must be made aware that they will not be disadvantaged in any way by bringing a complaint and feel confident that they are protected by the College's Complaints Policy.

2.3 Information and advice relating to the Complaints Policy

Information and advice relating to the Group's Complaints Policy is available from the HE Quality and Registry team that covers all campuses.

2.4 Incidental expenses

Where a complaint is upheld, the complainant shall be entitled to payment of legitimate expenses necessarily incurred in relation to their complaint. This would not extend to expenses incurred in producing or copying evidence relating to the complaint or the obtaining of any evidence, advice or instruction relating to the complaint. The Group Head of Student Services will determine the level of any expenses to be paid following the upholding of a complaint in line with the HE Refund and Compensation Policy.

2.5 HCG Complaints Procedure for Higher Education Students

There are a number of ways for students to feed back or raise an issue including:

- Module surveys.
- National Student Survey.

- Meetings at programme level.
- HE Student Experience Committee.

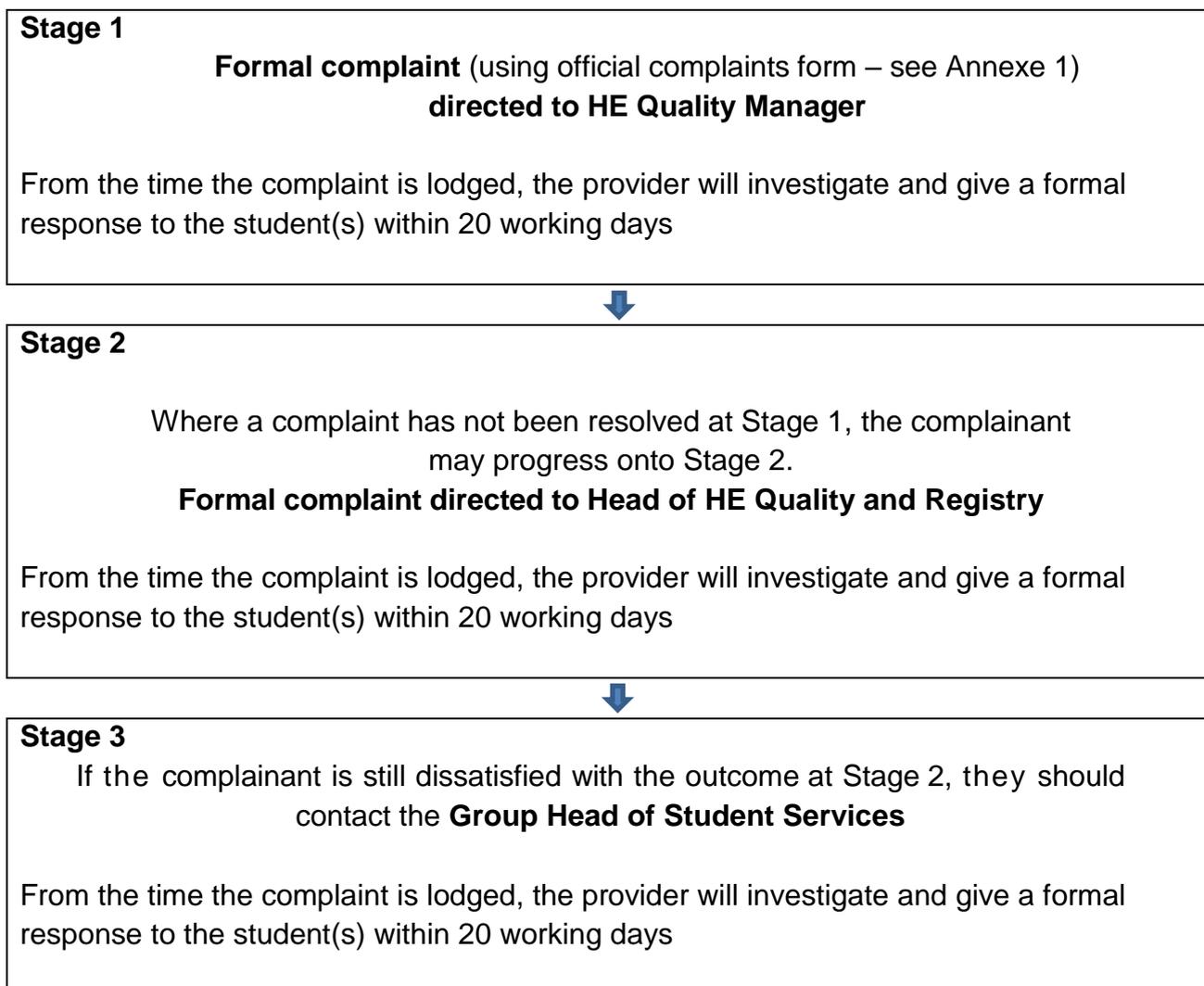
2.6 Early resolution

There should be an opportunity for early resolution of a complaint at local level on an informal basis, for example, at programme or Faculty level, before a student escalates the matter into a formal complaint. This could involve, for example, a face-to-face discussion with a student, or asking an appropriate member of staff to act as mediator. If appropriate, the provider should write to the student, documenting the outcome.

For a formal complaint, the procedure is as follows. (**Please note: only** the individual(s) directly affected by the issue are entitled to make a complaint, not for example, a friend or relative on their behalf) .

2.7 Formal complaints procedure

If a complaint has **not** been resolved through informal consultation, the complainant can progress onto formal resolution which potentially involves three stages. At this point, the student should be directed to the formal Complaints Policy. He/ she should be advised to complete the appropriate form to provide full details of the complaint and to provide any relevant documentation.



Where a complaint is deemed of a serious nature in the judgement of the Head of HE Quality and Registry or the Group Head of Student Services, it may be fast-tracked to Stage 3.

At the complaint hearing, the complainant may be accompanied by one person of his or her choosing provided that they do not speak for the complainant.

In exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the complainant and the Complaint Investigation Officer, a third party **may** be permitted to speak on their behalf.

The Complaint Investigation Officer will have authority to receive copies of any documentation and/ or receive evidence from any person that they deem to be relevant to the investigation. The investigation will gather evidence but it is reasonable to expect the student to obtain and provide evidence relating to the complaint.

The investigation of any complaint will be full and rigorous. Staff and students who are subject to a complaint will have the right to know who is making the complaint. Only in exceptional circumstances, for example where the safety and well-being of an individual is considered at risk, or that knowing such information could compromise the investigation, will this information be withheld.

Any outcomes of the complaint investigation will be known **within 20 working days of receiving the complaint**. The Complaint Investigation Officer shall provide the complainant firstly with an acknowledgement the complaint has been received, then with a written response once the investigation has been completed. This will include:

- A summary of the evidence gathered including details of any witnesses interviewed.
- A statement of conclusion including whether or not the complaint is upheld either in full or in part.
- Any recommendations stemming from the investigation of the complaint.
- Any details whereby the HE Refund and Compensation Policy has been enacted.

For courses validated by partner Universities, complaints will be progressed by applying the Hull College Group complaints policy and procedures in the first instance, as reflected in the agreements between the validating University and the Group. So in all instances, the complaint will always be investigated by Hull College Group when the complaint is first raised.

If individuals remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint once the Group's procedures and stages have been completed, complainants may be able to request further action or review from the validating University (in the case of programmes validated by other Higher Education Institutions), the Office of Independent Adjudicators (OIA) or the Office for Students (OfS).

2.8 Academic appeals

Students who wish to appeal against an academic decision affecting their progress

through an award, including a decision of a Board of Examiners, should contact HE Quality and Registry. They can provide information on appeals and provide support to access relevant regulatory processes. If an appeal is necessary, students will be directed towards the HE Academic Appeals Policy. Advice and support are also available from the Student Union.

All students may access the validating partner University or awarding body directly, or the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education** or the **Office for Students** if they have been unable to achieve a satisfactory outcome once all regular, internal processes have been exhausted.

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>,

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>.

2.9 Monitoring of complaints

Reports detailing complaints and the outcome of those complaints are presented termly to the Group's Excellence Committee, Academic Quality and Standards Committee and the HE Academic Board, including the monitoring of complaints against protected characteristics.

Information gathered as a result of a complaint may be used to improve services for students and the student experience, where appropriate.

This policy is subject to review in accordance with the Group's arrangements to review all policies and procedures on an annual basis.

This document is available in alternative formats upon request to a Student Services Manager.

3. Related documentation

A link to the copy of this policy is available to students in the Student Handbook and will be also sent to students electronically to HCG email addresses after enrolment.

Staff referenced in this document can be contacted as follows:

Stage 1 - HE Quality Manager

Susan Jarvis
Hull College Queen's
Gardens Hull HU1 3DG
Susan.Jarvis@hull-college.ac.uk
Tel: 01482 329943 (int. 3491)

Stage 2 – Head of HE Quality and Registry

Paul Waltham
Hull College Queen's
Gardens Hull HU1 3DG
Paul.Waltham@hull-college.ac.uk
Tel: 01482 329943 (int. 3491)

Stage 3 - Head of Student Services

Zailie Barratt Hull College
Queen's Gardens
Hull HU1 3DG Zailie.Barratt@hull-college.ac.uk
Tel: 01482 598719 (int. 2019)

Student Union (SU)

For support or advice in raising a concern or forwarding an issue of praise, please contact the SU on the details below:

Hull College Student Union
Queen's Gardens Hull
HU1 3DG
mail@hcsu.co.uk
Telephone: 01482 381923 (int. 2223)

The Student Services teams can be consulted for information on making a complaint, and the support available to students. Letters can be passed on in person to any Hull College Group reception desk to be forwarded to the above staff.

1. Linked policies

Other policies linked to this Complaints Policy are:

- Fees Policy
- HE Fee regulations
- Student and Staff Behaviour policy
- HE Academic Regulations
- Student Protection Plan
- HE Refund and Compensation Policy
- HE Appeals Policy

2. Procedure Checklist Policy

Checklist

Senior manager responsible	Head of HE Quality and Registry
College Committee	Academic Board
Date of next policy review	July 2020
Date Equality Analysis agreed	September 2016



Student Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint

This form should be completed in accordance with Stage 1 of the Hull College Group HE Complaints Policy and be submitted electronically to Susan Jarvis, HE Quality Manager at Susan.Jarvis@hull-college.ac.uk.

Alternatively, you may print this form, complete it, and submit it to the HE Registry Office (QG302, third floor, tower block, Hull College) or email to he-registry@hull-college.ac.uk.

Please note: the Complaints Policy states that there should be the opportunity for early resolution of any issues on an informal basis at local level (e.g. at programme or Faculty level) before escalating the matter to the status of a formal complaint

In completing the form, please refer to the HE Complaints Policy available at: <https://www.hull-college.ac.uk/study/degree-level/regulations-office-for-students-and-policies-and-procedures>

The University will not normally accept complaints made more than 90 days after the events complained about. The Academic Registrar has discretion to extend this three month period where he/she considers that there are extraordinary and compelling reasons to do so.

From the time the complaint is lodged, the Hull College Group will investigate and give a formal response to the student(s) **within 20 working days**.

PLEASE NOTE:

- A complaint will **not** be investigated if this form has not been completed in full or if it is anonymous.
- Any person who is the subject of a concern or a complaint will be advised, and the concern or complaint normally copied to him/her, in order that s/he is given the opportunity to respond. It may also be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the concern or complaint and, in these circumstances, the parties concerned will be informed of such a disclosure

Section 1: Your details

First Name		Title	
Surname			
Correspondence address			
Telephone contact			
Email contact (please use Hull College email address where possible)			
Department or faculty			
Programme of study			
Year of study			

Section 2: Your complaint

2.1 Early informal resolution

The HE Complaints Policy states that there should be the opportunity for early resolution of any issues on an informal basis at local level (e.g. programme of Faculty level) before escalating the matter to the status of a formal complaint

Please explain the nature of your complaint		
Please tick to confirm that you have tried to resolve the issue(s) informally at local level	Tick ✓	Date
Please explain what steps you have taken to resolve your concerns at the previous stage	Please indicate the person who has responded to you and the date of the response	Please indicate why you are not satisfied after the last stage

--	--	--

2.2 Issues raised, preferred outcome and supporting evidence

(If your complaint or related concern involves more than one issue please number them and relate each issue to the preferred outcome you are seeking with the supporting evidence)

Please list specific issues which you would like investigated	Preferred outcome	Please list evidence you wish to submit (Please number the attached evidence clearly)

Section 3: Declaration

I declare that the information given in this form is true to the best of my knowledge and that I would be willing to answer further questions relating to it if necessary

Signature:
(Print name if completing electronically)

--

Date:

--

