



## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

This policy is available on-line at: [www.tynecoast.ac.uk](http://www.tynecoast.ac.uk)

- We will consider any request for this policy to be made available in an alternative format or language. Please note that the College may charge for this. Please contact: Student Services
- We review our policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. We welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility or fairness of this policy.
- All our policies are subject to equality impact assessments\*. We are always keen to hear from anyone who wishes to contribute to these impact assessments. Please contact: Student Services

\*Equality Impact Assessments are carried out to see whether the policy has, or is likely to have, a negative impact on grounds of: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

| <b>Approved by:</b> | <b>Version:</b> | <b>Issue Date:</b>  | <b>Review Date:</b> | <b>Contact Person:</b>                               |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|--|
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**Equal Opportunities:      Impact Assessed**

**Review:                      3 years**

**POLICY NUMBER: 12**

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## 1 Policy Statement

The College welcomes comments and complaints from all members of the College community and from the general public. We use this process to improve services for learners and the wider community in which we exist.

Tyne Coast College is committed to the continuous improvement of the services it provides. We recognise that, occasionally, mistakes will be made or the service offered will not meet an individual's requirements or expectations. For these reasons it is College policy that all complaints should be:

- 1.1 Treated seriously and in an open manner
- 1.2 Acknowledged immediately, preferably in writing
- 1.3 Investigated
- 1.4 Resolved, wherever that is reasonably practicable, within no longer than 13 working weeks
- 1.5 Used as feedback to improve the service which the College offers

The College's Charter sets out the standards and services learners can expect us to provide, as well as the learner's responsibilities.

No complainant bringing a complaint under this Procedure will be treated less favourably by any member of staff. If there is evidence to the contrary, the member of staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

## 2 Scope

The Policy applies to all members of the College community but does not replace College procedures for, staff grievances, academic appeals and student disciplinary action: those procedures should be used where appropriate.

## 3 Legislation

The Human Rights Act 1998 applies to the operation of this policy.

## 4 Responsibilities

- 4.1 **All College Staff** have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedure set out below.

- 4.2 **Heads of Learning/School, Heads of Service, and the College Management Team (CMT)** have a responsibility for resolving a complaint, and leading or contributing to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate.
- 4.3 **The College Chief Executive** is responsible for resolving complaints which have not been resolved during the previous two stages. The decision made by the Chief Executive is final.
- 4.4 **The Governing Body** is responsible for ensuring that the Complaints Policy and Procedure are operating effectively and may become directly involved if a complaint is directed against the Chief Executive, the Clerk or members of the governing body.

## **5 Actions to Implement and Develop Policy**

### **5.1 Stage One**

The College expects complaints about courses to be made to their Head of School/Learning in the first instance. Where this is not possible or does not result in satisfactory resolution, the complaint should be submitted in writing on the **College's official comments form**.

The College usually expects complaints to be made by the person concerned. However it will consider complaints made by a learner's parent or advocate.

Anonymous complaints cannot be investigated.

All comments/complaints will be forwarded to Student Services who will acknowledge receipt within one working week. Student Services will then forward to the relevant College manager.

### **5.2 Stage two**

The relevant College manager will respond in writing within one working week, explaining what has happened as a result of the complaint. Where this involves a member of staff, specific detail of action taken will not be made available. This is to ensure that our employees are afforded appropriate dignity at work.

If the complaint requires further investigation that cannot be carried out within the week, the manager shall keep the complainant informed and specify a date when a response can be given.

### 5.3 **Stage three**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the relevant College manager's response then the complaint will be forwarded to a member of the College Management Team (CMT) to resolve.

The senior manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working weeks and a final reply will be completed within 8 working weeks to allow time for any formal investigations to take place.

### 5.4 **Stage four (final internal College stage)**

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response then the matter will be referred to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will respond within three weeks. The Chief Executive's decision is final.

The total comments/complaints procedure should be finalised in no more than 13 working weeks unless there are exceptional circumstances in which case the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

5.5 For complaints within a Higher Education programme, the final decision from the Chief Executive will be informed to the complainant via a "Completion of procedures letter". If the complainant is not satisfied with the College response they can contact the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA) via the weblink <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/how-to-make-a-complaint.aspx> or telephone 0118 959 9813. This appeal to OIA should be made within 12 months and should not include issues regarding admission, academic judgements, employment issues or where subject to an existing court proceeding.

### 5.6 **Complaints against the Chief Executive or Members of the Governing Body**

Complaints against the Chief Executive should be addressed to the Chair of the Governors c/o the Clerk to the Corporation. Complaints against the Governing Body should also be addressed to the Clerk to the Corporation.

## 6 **Monitoring & Evaluation**

6.1 Student Service will maintain a confidential record of complaints dealt with to feed into the College's quality improvement processes. The Assistant Principal will maintain a record of all complaints, appeals and outcomes and produce a termly report for analysis by the Senior Executive Group and subsequent submission to the Governors.

## **7 Related Policies**

- Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- Internal Assessment Appeals Policy
- Staff Grievance Procedure