



P981 Higher Education Complaints Process

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a need to ensure that learners have access to appropriate guidance on the informal and formal complaints process. The Office of Independent Adjudication (OIA) now oversees all formal complaints relating to the provision of higher education where the student is dissatisfied with the outcome. Annual reports will be published by the OIA and it is an expectation that the college complaints process adheres to the Good Practice Framework 2014 and demonstrates that it is:

- Accessible
- Clear
- Proportional
- Timely
- Fair
- Independent
- Confidential
- Improving

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that Peterborough Regional College (PRC) adheres to the requirements and expectations outlined by the OIA. It also recognises the demands of higher education and the importance of student experience and ongoing enhancement.

It is our policy to deal as quickly and fairly as possible with any complaint a student may have about their treatment by a fellow-student; or one of our employees, services or departments. The purpose of this procedure is to give students an opportunity to sort out any such problem. We will resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage in the procedure and make every effort to do so informally. However, some complaints may be difficult to deal with informally and you may wish to make a formal complaint. This should only be done once you have exhausted the informal route. Clear lines of communication are published in your student handbook.

3. SCOPE

All Higher Education provision offered by PRC under direct and franchise arrangements as defined by QAA (Quality Assurance Agency). This applies to both UK/EU and International students. It should be noted that students cannot 'twin track' i.e. undertake an academic appeal and also submit a formal complaint.

This procedure is complementary to the Academic Appeals Procedure. Its scope is therefore restricted to:

- Complaints in respect of a student's educational experience at Peterborough Regional College including relationships with any non-teaching department.
- Complaints concerning discrimination by Peterborough Regional College on grounds of gender, race, disability, creed or ethnic origin etc.
- Complaints on grounds of maladministration.

Matters which may be dealt with by means of Academic Appeals or other regulations relating to courses of study or the assessment thereof shall not be dealt with by means of this procedure.

This procedure, in consultation with the HE Academic Board has been designed to:

- Reflect the principles of natural justice
- Be transparent and involve timely resolution of the complaints
- Include procedures for independent review and decision making
- Encourage the resolution of the complaint at a local level.

Prior to making a formal complaint students must have made an attempt to resolve the issue informally.

At Stage 3, if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome and resolution then they will be directed to the OIA

The OIA will generally not look at:

- Admission issues
- Academic judgment
- Matters listed in a court or legal tribunal
- Student employment
- Cases previously dealt with by the OIA

Students will be required to submit their complaint within 3 months of the incident or within 12 months of receiving the Completion of Procedures Letter.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- **P800** Academic Appeals
- **P215** Assessment Policy
- **HE Policy on Assessment and Academic Regulation**
- **P809** Student Disciplinary Procedure
- **P816** Recruitment and Admissions Policy
- Awarding / Accrediting body guidance

- **P311 Refund Policy**

5. **RESPONSIBILITIES and time frames for response and action by the student.**

- **Quality Manager**- named correspondent for all OIA correspondence and student complaints submitted on the Stage 1 form (CS1).
- **Stage 1 -Deputy Director** of UCP (or nominee)- Investigate the informal complaint (allowance of 15 working days) (early resolution)
- **Stage 2 - UCP Academic Director and PRC Senior Leadership Team** – will undertake the Formal Stage(15 working days on receipt of CS2)
- **Stage 3- PRC Board of Governors (Curriculum and Quality)** will then hear the complaint and complete the review. (within 10 working days on receipt of CS3)

The Appeal Process will then be undertaken. It should be noted that the Stage 2, 3 and the Appeal must be heard within **90 calendar days** and a Completion of Procedures Letter must be issued after stage 3. This will be issued by the PRC Quality Team. Students can also request a Completion of Procedures Letter. Please see the appendix for guidelines on format and information to be enclosed.

6. **RISK ANALYSIS**

- **This policy is required to** ensure that correct procedures are in place and documented by all involved in the handling of complaints, both formal and informal, for higher education students.
- **Analyse risks of non-adherence to this policy**

Poor student satisfaction and impact on annual return from OIA. Poor external stakeholder perception and potential financial cost and compensation. Failure to demonstrate effective enhancement. Failure to achieve a positive outcome from a Higher Education Review and the likelihood of additional scrutiny.

- **Staff training needed**

Initial and refresher training to be made available to staff.

- **Compliance** reduces the risks described above.

7. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

All new policies must undergo an Impact Assessment. Failure to do so will result in the policy not being approved. A template Equality Impact Assessment form is available on SharePoint/policies

Section one: Screening for impact consists of three pages (this is mandatory and must be signed and dated and attached to the new policy)

Section two: Full assessment (this only needs to be completed if there are equality issues within the Policy)

8. **DATA PROTECTION**

As outlined in **Policy P215 – Assessment Policy.**

9. PROCEDURE AND EXPECTATION

Initial Complaint

The initial concern / dissatisfaction is dealt with locally by the course team or HE support team and record of meeting with student form completed. If a resolution cannot be found, a CS1 form should be completed by the student. This must be done within 3 months of the incident.

Stage 1 (CS1 form submitted by the student)

This will be investigated by Deputy Director UCP (unless they are cited within the complaint) and findings presented with 15 working days. If a resolution cannot be found, the student / representative (who must have permission from the student to act on their behalf) must also follow the stated timeline. Please see Appendix 1

Stage 2 (CS2 form submitted by the student)

This will be investigated by the Academic Director UCP and/or Senior Leadership Team (unless they are cited within the complaint) and findings presented with 15 working days. If a resolution cannot be found, the student / representative (who must have permission from the student to act on their behalf) must also follow the stated timeline. Please see Appendix 2

Stage 3 (CS3 form submitted by the student)

This will be investigated by the Board of Governors and findings presented within 10 working days. The student / representative (who must have permission from the student to act on their behalf) must also follow the stated timeline. At this stage the PRC Quality Unit will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. The student will have the right to appeal the decision.

If a resolution cannot be found after appeal the complainant will then access the Office of Independent Adjudication (OIA). The student has 12 months from receipt of the Completion of Procedures letter to raise a complaint with the OIA. It is a requirement that this information is included within the Completion of Procedures letter. Please see Appendix 3.

*At any of the stages above, students can request to attend meetings or interviews with a representative from the student body, parent or guardian. Due to data protection we do however communicate only with the student / complainant.

Appendix 1 – Complaints Stage1 (CS1) Form

CS1

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL COLLEGE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Before completing this form you should read our student complaints procedure as contained in the HE Complaints Policy for Students.

This procedure is complementary to the Academic Appeals Procedure. Its scope is therefore restricted to:

- Complaints in respect of a student's educational experience at Peterborough Regional College including relationships with any non-teaching department.
- Complaints concerning discrimination by Peterborough Regional College on grounds of gender, race, disability, creed or ethnic origin etc.
- Complaints on grounds of maladministration.

Matters which may be dealt with by means of Academic Appeals or other regulations relating to courses of study or the assessment thereof shall not be dealt with by means of this procedure.

This procedure, in consultation with the HE Academic Board has been designed to:

- Reflect the principles of natural justice
- Be transparent and involve timely resolution of the complaints
- Include procedures for independent review and decision making
- Encourage the resolution of the complaint at a local level.

Prior to making a formal complaint you must have made an attempt to resolve the issue informally and you will be required to enter the details of this attempt on this form.

1. YOUR DETAILS

Title Forenames.....

Address..... Surname..... Correspondence.....

.....Postcode.....

Daytime Tel..... Mobile Tel.....

Email address.....

Student Identification Number..... Year of Study.....

Course.....

Date of submission of this form.....

2. DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT

Please provide clear and concise details of the complaint below.

What would you like as an outcome?

3. DETAILS OF ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE COMPLAINT INFORMALLY

Please provide details of your attempt(s) to resolve your complaint informally.

Who did you discuss the complaint with?.....

.....

Post title (*if appropriate*).....

Date discussed.....

What was the outcome and why are you still dissatisfied?

4. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I confirm that the information provided on this form is true and correct and in submitting this form I consent for the information provided in this form to be used as detailed below and I understand that Peterborough Regional College;

- will not accept complaints from third parties or anonymous sources;
- will deal with any complaint that it believes to be malicious and unfounded under the provisions of its Student Disciplinary Policy;
- will hold some elements of the information I have provided on an electronic database;
- may need to share the information I have provided with other persons or organisations as part of any investigation to resolve my complaint.

Signed.....

Date.....

We would welcome your feedback in relation to the Complaints procedure. If you would like to make any suggestions/comments once the procedure has been completed, please submit these to: Quality Manager, Peterborough Regional College, Park Crescent, Peterborough, PE1 4DZ

Once completed, please return this form by email to Peterborough Regional College Quality Manager (EMAIL REQUIRED) or please send this form to: Quality Manager, Peterborough Regional College, Park Crescent, Peterborough, PE1 4DZ

You should keep a copy of your submission.

If you have any additional documents which you are unable to send via email, please send these, together with a copy of this form to the Peterborough Regional College Quality Manager, as above.

For Quality Office use only:

Date complaint received.....

CS2

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL COLLEGE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Prior to making a formal complaint you must have made an attempt to resolve the issue informally and you will be required to enter the details of this attempt on this form.

HAVING BEEN UNABLE TO RESOLVE THE COMPLAINT AT STAGE 1, I REQUEST THAT THIS MATTER BE REFERRED TO STAGE 2 OF THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE.

1. YOUR DETAILS

Title.....Forenames.....Surname.....

Correspondence

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Daytime Tel.....Mobile Tel.....

Email Address.....

Student Identification Number.....Year of Study.....

Pathway.....

Date of submission of this form.....Date of CS1 submission.....

2. DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT (including in particular why you feel the complaint had not been resolved at Stage 1 of the Complaints process)

3. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I confirm that the information provided on this form is true and correct and in submitting this form I consent for the information provided in this form to be used as detailed below and I understand that Peterborough Regional College;

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- will deal with any complaint that it believes to be malicious and unfounded under the provisions of its Student Disciplinary Policy;
- will hold some elements of the information I have provided on an electronic database;
- may need to share the information I have provided with other persons or organisations as part of any investigation to resolve my complaint.

Signed.....

Date.....

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You should keep a copy of your submission.

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For Quality Office use only:

Date complaint received.....

Office reference.....

Appendix 3 – Complaints Stage 3 (CS3) Form

CS3

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL COLLEGE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Before completing this form you should read our student complaints procedure as contained in the HE Complaints Policy for Students.

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- Complaints in respect of a student's educational experience at Peterborough Regional College including relationships with any non-teaching department.
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This procedure, in consultation with the HE Academic Board has been designed to:

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HAVING BEEN UNABLE TO RESOLVE THE COMPLAINT AT STAGE 2, I REQUEST THAT THIS MATTER BE REFERRED TO STAGE 3 OF THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE.

1. YOUR DETAILS

Title Forenames..... Surname.....

Correspondence Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Daytime Tel..... Mobile Tel.....

Email Address.....

Student Identification Number..... Year of Study.....

Pathway.....

Date CS1 submitted.....Date CS2

Date of submission of this form.....

2. DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT (including in particular why you feel the complaint had not been resolved at Stage 2 of the Complaints process)

3. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I confirm that the information provided on this form is true and correct and in submitting this form I consent for the information provided in this form to be used as detailed below and I understand that Peterborough Regional College;

- will not accept complaints from third parties or anonymous sources;
- will deal with any complaint that it believes to be malicious and unfounded under the provisions of its Student Disciplinary Policy;
- will hold some elements of the information I have provided on an electronic database;
- may need to share the information I have provided with other persons or organisations as part of any investigation to resolve my complaint.

Signed.....

Date.....

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You should keep a copy of your submission.

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For Quality Office use only:

Date complaint received.....

Office reference.....

Appendix 4 – Completion of Procedures Letter Template

Dear [*name of complainant*],

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal complaints procedures of this *University / College* in relation to *your complaint/the appeal/disciplinary procedures of this University / College** regarding [FFF.describeFF] have been completed.

The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your *complaint/appeal/The disciplinary procedures** was / were: [brief summary of the complaint, appeal or disciplinary matter]

The final decision of the *University / College* is* [FFFFdetailFFFF] because [reasons]

*The procedures / regulations applied were**: [details]

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you may be able to apply for a review of *your complaint/academic appeal/disciplinary matter** to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that that the complaint that you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

You will need to send to the OIA a Scheme Application Form within **three months** of the date of this letter. A Scheme Application Form can be obtained from [name of person / HEI office and/or the students' union] and also may be downloaded from the OIA website www.oiahe.org.uk (or you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form). You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your Scheme Application Form. Please note that the OIA will only review issues that have been dealt with through the University's internal complaints procedures.

The OIA's leaflet, ***Introduction to the Student Complaints Scheme***, is enclosed. If you do decide to take your complaint to the OIA [name of point of contact plus name of any alternate] will deal with the complaint on behalf of the University / College.

Yours sincerely,
[Authorised signatory] **delete/amend words in italics as appropriate*

