

Barnsley College Complaints Policy and Procedure: November 2022 – November 2023

Scope and Purpose of the Policy

The complaints policy applies to all services Barnsley College or ITS ('The College') provides and is available to students, former students, apprentices, employers, and members of public.

The policy and its associated procedures are designed to define the college's open approach to praise and criticism of the full range of services it provides and to describe the procedures for reporting them.

This policy covers comments arising in relating to any of our services, except those concerned with academic assessment decision, for which there is a separate Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

The college defines a complaint as:

"An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the college's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the college."

Operational Conditions

Anonymous Complaints

The college does not normally accept or act upon anonymous complaints, due to the college not being able to collect all relevant information for investigating such complaints and respond accordingly. There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where the college deems it appropriate to investigate a complaint from an anonymous source, which identifies a risk to the college community or the public.

Confidentiality

Where possible, confidentiality will be observed, throughout the operator of this policy. Where a complaint relates to specific individuals, the college may seek permission to share such details with them. If permission is not given, it may not be possible for the college to fully investigate or resolve the complaint. The college will only disclose information to those who need to investigate the complaint, or to respond to any issues raised. The college Retention Period for information relating to complaints is 5 years after the complaint has been raised.

Vexatious and Malicious Complaints

A vexatious or malicious complaint is defined as a complaint which is deemed unreasonable or untrue, having been put forward to abuse the complaints procedure, or an attempt to defame the name or character of another person. In cases where a complaint is considered to be vexatious or malicious, the college reserves the right to terminate investigation of the complaint.

Permission to Disclose

If the complainant wishes for someone else to raise concerns with us on their behalf, the college has a legal obligation under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding

sharing information with third parties. The college will require written permission to share this information with them.

Before permission is given to share the information with others, the complainant must consider whether our response will include any sensitive information about them. The complainant is required to contact us in advance to tell us which sensitive information we can and cannot share.

Multi-Issue Complaints

If a complaint identifies issues which fall within the remit of other procedures, for example, an academic appeal or both, the content of such complaints will be reviewed. The complainant will then be notified and directed to the relevant policy and procedure. If appropriate, both will be investigated simultaneously.

Collective/group complaints

Collective/group complaints are expected to identify how everyone has been personally affected by the issues which are being brought to the attention of the college. Everyone named in the collective complaint must agree with the content of the complaint before it is submitted and individually sign to say that they agree of the same. Only the nominated spokesperson will receive communication/correspondence from the college.

Complaints by a third party

Complaints made by a third party (e.g. parent or guardian) on behalf of a student will only be considered if a signed statement is received from the student confirming their agreement.

Complaints about staff members

Where a complaint is made about a specific member of staff, the member of staff shall have the right to access and respond to any evidence provided. If it is determined that the matter should be investigated under staff disciplinary procedures, the complaints procedure shall be suspended until the disciplinary matter has been concluded.

The college operates a three-stage complaint procedure.

Complaints Procedure

The college strives to provide the best quality learning and services that meet or exceed the expectations of our students and users. The college promotes a culture that is responsive to feedback, whether complimentary or critical. Comments about our services are actively encouraged and acknowledged as a valuable source of information that we can evaluate and use to improve the quality of provision to students, other users, and partners/stakeholders. Students and users can bring their concerns to the attention of the college either informally or formally.

Stage 1: Informal Complaints (Early Resolution)

In the first instance complainants should attempt to resolve the matter informally by discussing their concerns with an appropriate member of staff or the relevant Head of Department

If a complaint is not resolved at this stage the complainant should be advised to progress their complaint through the college formal complaints procedure.

Stages 2 And 3: Formal Complaints

Complainants can make a formal complaint by submitting the college formal complaints form which is available on the college website:

[Complaints Procedure | Barnsley College](#)

A paper copy of the complaints form is also available at all college receptions and can be completed by hand and returned for processing. Complainants who are unable to access the web form or paper complaints form may call the number provided on the form for assistance.

All complaints will be formally acknowledged in writing upon receipt.

All formal complaints should be passed to the relevant Director of Assurance and Improvement/Director of Quality HE (Stage 2) who will then assign the complaint to the relevant Head of Department to complete an investigation and provide a report on actions taken to address issues raised.

The relevant Director of Quality will review the report and provide written feedback to the complainant to close the complaint or provide detail of further action to be taken.

We will aim to resolve all formal complaints within 10 working days of receipt or if this is not possible, the complainant will be advised on the progress made to address their concerns.

If at this point the complainant feels their complaint has not been addressed to their satisfaction, they can refer the complaint to the Vice Principal Quality for a formal review. This should be made in writing within 10 working days of when the Stage 2 response to the complaint was received.

If after due consideration by the Vice Principal Quality the complainant feels their complaint has not been addressed to their satisfaction, they can refer the complaint to the Principal (Stage 3). This should be made in writing within 10 working days of the formal review outcome of the Stage 2.

If after due consideration by the Principal or a Senior Post holder the complainant feels their complaint has not been addressed to their satisfaction they can refer the complaint to the funding agency, or independent review body; details of which will be provided by the college.

Following the Final Stage, students on Higher Education programmes will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter.

Independent Review Of Student Complaints

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) provides an independent scheme for the review of complaints from students on course validated by a qualifying institution. Barnsley College is a member of this scheme. For further information on the scheme see the OIA website: <http://oiahe.org.uk/>. Students have 12 months from the date of the Completion of Procedures letter to bring a complaint to the OIA.

Equality And Diversity

This policy and its supporting procedures apply equally to all students at the college, employers or work-placement providers of college students and other users of the

college's services any of whom have the right to representation by parents, guardians, carers, or other advocates on their behalf.

Linked Policies And Procedures

The Complaints Policy and Procedure is linked to:

- Student Attendance Policy.
- Code of Conduct.
- The Single Equality Scheme.
- Academic Appeals Policy.
- Behaviour Support Disciplinary Policy.

This policy has been reviewed with consideration of the following guidance:

Expectations for Quality – Core Practices

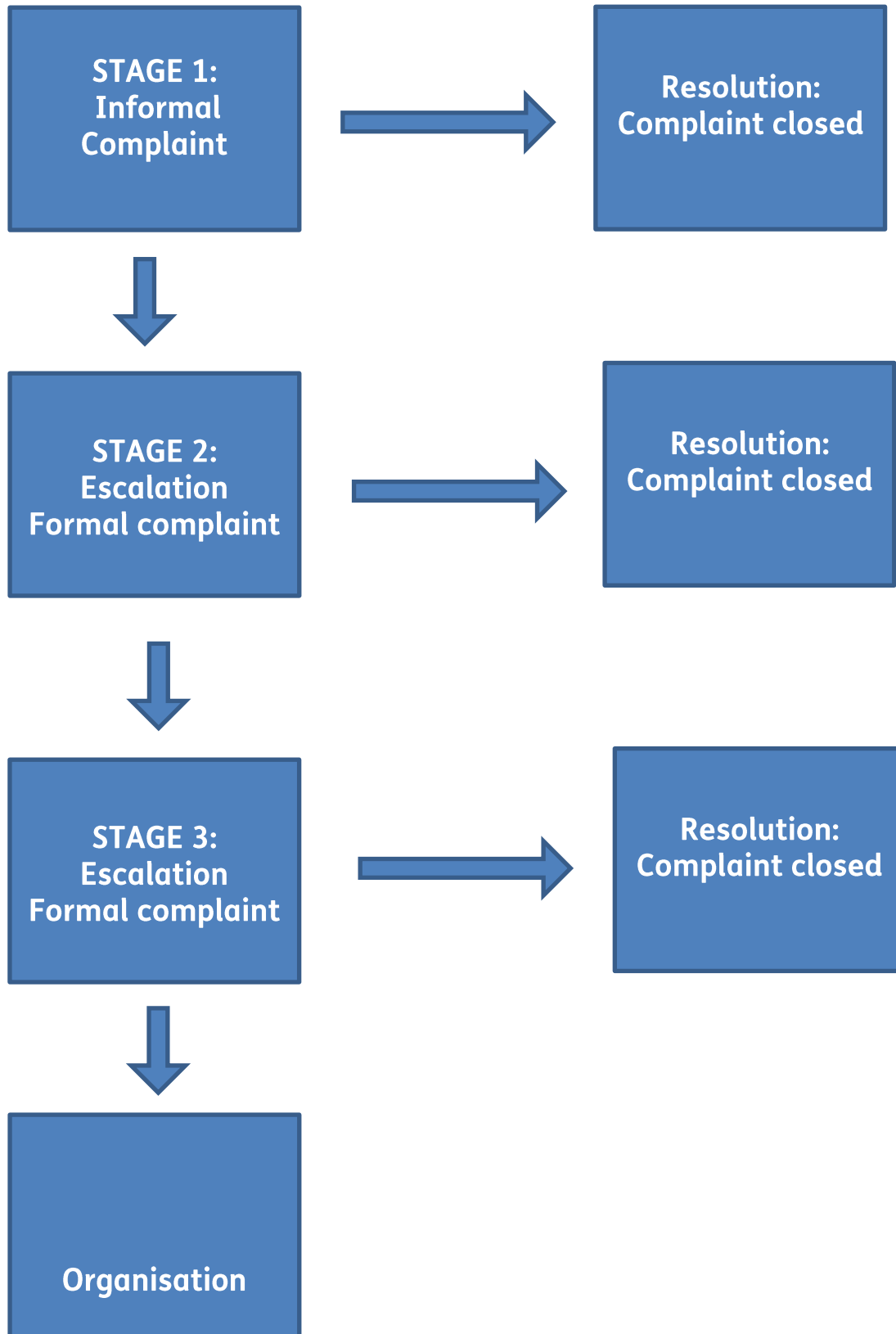
[The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to students](#)

Location And Access To This Policy

Buzz/policies.

Barnsley College website.

Appendix A – Complaints procedure Flow



The diagram above shows the complaints procedure and process. For those using a screen reader, this is replicated below as follows:

Stage 1 Informal Complaints

There are two possible outcomes for stage 1 informal complaints:

- The complaint is resolved and closed
- It escalates to stage 2 and becomes a formal complaint

Stage 2 Escalation of a Formal Complaint

There are two possible outcomes for stage 2 formal complaints:

- The complaint is resolved and closed
- It escalates to a stage 3 complaint

Stage 3 Escalation of a Formal Complaint

There are two possible outcomes for stage 3 formal complaints:

- The complaint is resolved and closed
- The complaint is escalated to the relevant Funding Agency or Awarding Organisation