



Pennine Lancashire Access Centre Complaints Procedure

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Context

It is in everyone's interests to resolve complaints as speedily and fairly as possible and without undue acrimony. This procedure seeks to permit the resolution of any complaint by informal means prior to the commencement of a more formal process.

Stage 1: Informal Steps

This is designed to resolve problems through informal channels. Advice may be obtained from Student Services on what steps could be taken.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If you believe that your complaint has not been resolved through the Stage 1 process **OR** you would prefer not to use the procedure, you may move straight to Stage 2.

This involves making a formal complaint by completing the appropriate form, which is attached to this document and is also available from Student Services

- Completed forms should be forwarded to the Manager of PLAC or returned to Student Services Reception marked for the attention of the Manager of PLAC
- It is important not to delay in submitting your complaint as this may make investigation more difficult.
- Manager of PLAC will acknowledge your complaint within one working day of receipt and aim to have investigated the complaint within two weeks.

Manager of PLAC will:

Return the issue to those involved in the Stage 1 procedure (if appropriate) to see whether or not the problem can be resolved at this level.

Stage 3

If you do not accept the finding and decision of the Manager of PLAC a further right of appeal exists to the Principal. The Principal will follow the procedure outlined at stage 2 with the exception of the reference to stage 1.

- The Principal will make a decision within 15 working days of receiving the appeal.
- Any appeal should be commenced by you in writing and addressed to the Principal.

The Stage 3 procedure is not designed as a means for the Principal to rehear the complaint but to allow you to state why you believe the PLAC Manager made an incorrect judgement.

The Principal will give her/his decision in writing with reasons for the decision.

Stage 3 exhausts the College procedure. The only right, if dissatisfied with the decision, is to appeal to DSA QAG. Where appropriate information on this entitlement will be given together with the Principal's decision.

OTHER COMPLAINTS

1. Against the Principal

If the complaint is against the Principal, other than where the Principal has made a

decision by way of acting in his/her appellate capacity under Stage 3 of this procedure, you should complete the Complaints Form referred to at Stage 2 and return as soon as possible to the Clerk to the Board/College Secretary.

The Clerk will refer the complaint to the Chair of the Corporation Board, who will consider the evidence.

(i) If the Chair believes there is a prima facie case to answer, he/she will set up a subcommittee within 20 working days of the date of the letter of notification. That subcommittee will comprise no more than 3 Governors, who will hear the evidence and make a decision, which will be communicated within 5 working days of the hearing.

OR:

(ii) The Chair may establish a subcommittee of 3 members of the Governing Body, even though he/she does not believe a prima facie case has been established. If it is believed the circumstances warrant such a move, this will be done within 20 working days of the date of the letter of notification.

OR:

(iii) If the Chair believes, on reasonable grounds, that the complaint is vexatious or frivolous or that the evidence shows no reasonable case to be answered, he/she will reject the complaint and the complainant will be informed within 5 working days of the decision.

2. Against the VicePrincipal (Academic and Standards)

The College Complaints Form should be completed and returned to the Principal's Secretary.

The complaint will be considered by the VicePrincipal (Skills and Support) following the procedure outlined at Stage 2 above (with the exception of the reference to any appeal will be to the Principal on the grounds stated in Stage 3, with a further right of appeal to the Learning Skills Council.

3. Complaints against the Corporation Board

Any complaint against the Corporation Board will be referred by the Clerk to the Corporation Board, unless in the opinion of the Clerk and, in accordance with the College's Whistleblowing Procedure, a direct referral to the Learning Skills Council is required.

4. Complaints against a member of the Corporation Board / Clerk / Chairman

Any complaint against a member of the Corporation Board should be referred to the Clerk to the Board, who will pass the complaint on to the Chair. Any complaint against the Clerk should be forwarded directly to the Chairman. Any complaint against the Chairman will be forwarded to the ViceChairman.

The above procedure has been designed to comply with the rules of natural justice.

i.e.

(i) Proceeding with the matter without undue delay.

(ii) Allowing the complainant all reasonable opportunities to present his/her case.

(iii) Demonstrating that the College is acting in good faith in seeking to resolve the complaint by reference to all the evidence.