

## STUDENT COMPLAINTS & RESOLUTION PROCEDURE (INCLUDING NON-ACADEMIC COMPLAINTS & CONCERNS)

### Purpose

Newcastle University has a formal complaints procedure under the Student Charter by which students are able to make a formal complaint about INTO Newcastle University, a University Service or member of staff either within INTO Newcastle University or Newcastle University. ***The Level 1 complaints & concerns process below acts as INTO Newcastle University's complaints and concerns policy.***

### Grounds

A complaint can be made on any aspect of INTO Newcastle University provision or support which a student feels may have fallen short of what might reasonably be expected; evidence in support of the allegation will be required.

### Process

- Newcastle University operates a three-stage complaint procedure.
- If steps taken under **Level 1 (see below) fail**, or the complainant feels that their complaint has not been resolved, they can proceed to **Level 2** by submission of a Complaints Form and supporting evidence.

### Downloads and Guidance

The links below provides complainants with the Newcastle University procedure (Level 2) should steps taken under Level 1 fail:

Download Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure (PDF 287KB)

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/studentresources/Casework/Final%20Student%20Complaints%20and%20Resolutions%20Procedure%201920.pdf>

Download Student Complaints Level 2 Application Form and Guidance Level two only (PDF: 306KB)

Level 2 Complaints Form:

[https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/Student-Complaints-Form-andGuidanceLevel2\\_Final18\\_19.pdf](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/Student-Complaints-Form-andGuidanceLevel2_Final18_19.pdf)

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/complaints.htm>

# Level 1 Complaints and concerns

## (INTO Newcastle University Complaints Policy)

Students are encouraged to seek an informal resolution of the matter about which they are concerned, before beginning the formal procedure. Informal explorations of possible ways in which a matter may be resolved will not prejudice the consideration of a later formal submission.

### Informal Process & Early Resolution (Level 1)

#### 1. Academic Complaints and Concerns

A complaint can be made on nearly any aspect of your academic studies, but you should be prepared to provide evidence to support any allegation. Speak to your tutor about academic concerns or complaints and try to resolve them informally. If they do not resolve your complaint, concern or query contact your Programme Manager or Deputy Programme Manager as the next step (contact information is located in the Student Programme Handbook).

#### 2. Facilities and Accommodation

(The INTO Building and Halls of Residence (Bernecia & Joseph Cowen))

Contact the accommodation team about complaints relating to INTO Newcastle University Halls of Residence ([INTO.Accommodation@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:INTO.Accommodation@newcastle.ac.uk)). Contact the facilities team for complaints relating to the teaching and study spaces or facilities in the main academic buildings (The INTO Building and annex building and Joseph Cowen basement). INTO Facilities ([intofacilities@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:intofacilities@newcastle.ac.uk)). Contact INTO IT for complaints or issues related to buildings access, INTO Newcastle computers and printers ([intoit@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:intoit@newcastle.ac.uk)). For all urgent issues contact the 24 hour INTO Helpline on 07532 120169.

#### 3. Other Non-Academic Complaints and Concerns

Speak to the Welfare Officer, Christine Upright ([christine.upright@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:christine.upright@ncl.ac.uk)) or the Student Experience Manager, Louise Sinclair ([louise.sinclair@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:louise.sinclair@ncl.ac.uk)) about personal concerns or concerns that you may have about fellow students. If you contact via email it should contain a full explanation as to the nature of the concern, with supporting evidence.

If your request for an absence to be authorised is rejected and you feel that your rationale was within the scope of the guidance notes in the Student Programme Handbook or you have additional evidence not previously supplied you may appeal the decision in writing by emailing the Director of Studies & Student Experience, Stephen Grinsell ([stephen.grinsell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.grinsell@ncl.ac.uk)). If the decision to reject your request was made by Mr Grinsell, your appeal will be handled by the Academic Director, Chris Heady ([chris.HEADY@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:chris.HEADY@ncl.ac.uk)).

Note: The non-academic service areas listed in 2 or 3 are not exclusive and could include others not specifically mentioned

## Informal Written Appeal Process (Level 1)

If the informal complaints or concerns you have raised verbally or otherwise above are not resolved by your personal tutor, programme manager, deputy programme manager, accommodation team, facilities or IT team or Student Experiences team or other member of INTO Newcastle University staff you should put your complaint in writing. Please include all the discussions you have had with staff as well as the supporting evidence for your complaint.

Depending on the nature of your complaint you should email:

**1. Academic Complaints and Concerns**

Head- Student Progress and Admissions ([alex.perrin@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:alex.perrin@ncl.ac.uk))

**2. Facilities and accommodation**

**(The INTO Building & Hall of Residence (Bernecia & Joseph Cowan))**

Head- Facilities and Accommodation ([gareth.mckay@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:gareth.mckay@ncl.ac.uk))

**3. Other Non- Academic Complaints and Concerns**

Director of Studies and Student Experience ([stephen.grinsell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.grinsell@ncl.ac.uk))

4. The above three contacts are the INTO Newcastle University nominees of the Centre Director (**Authorised person**) (Level 1). It should be noted that your complaint is still regarded as informal at this stage and before a formal complaint (Level 2) is accepted, you should have tried to resolve the issue under Level 1 first.

4.1 The Authorised Person will acknowledge receipt of the informal complaint in writing within 7 calendar days of the receipt of the complaint. The Authorised Person may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify details of the complaint. If such a meeting does take place the Complainant may be accompanied, at any meeting under this procedure, by a friend/supporter.

4.2 The Authorised Person will determine in consultation with the Head of the Student Progress Service / Student Wellbeing Service whether early resolution by the mediation service may be appropriate and offered to the complainant. If mediation is appropriate and the complainant agrees to participate, the informal complaint will be put on hold until mediation is complete. If mediation is unsuccessful, the informal complaint consideration will resume.

4.3 The Authorised Person will gather evidence relating to the informal complaint either to reach a decision under Level 1 of the procedure or, where the Authorised Person considers the issues raised to be particularly serious at the outset, refer the case with the consent of the Head of the Student Progress Service for a Level 2 formal complaint investigation to be considered. Where the Authorised Person is able to reach a decision or resolve the informal complaint the outcome will be sent to the complainant in writing.

- 4.4 Subject to the written consent of the complainant, and sufficient evidence, the following provisions apply:
- 4.4.1 The Authorised Person will arrange for the informal complaint to be investigated.
  - 4.4.2 The Authorised Person will gather evidence from relevant individuals (the Complainant, members of staff and anyone against whom the complaint is made or who is judged to be helpful in resolving the matter). Evidence may be gathered either in writing or by oral interview, which may not be recorded without prior consent.
  - 4.4.3 The Authorised Person will send a copy of any responses to the informal complaint to the complainant and invite a response
  - 4.4.4 The Authorised Person will determine, on the available evidence, whether it is possible to reach a final decision on the complaint. Any decision, may be communicated verbally in the first instance, but will always be formally communicated in writing to the Complainant with a summary of reasons of the decision
  - 4.4.5 In particularly serious cases, the Authorised Person may, with the consent of the Head of the Student Progress Service, refer the case for consideration under Level 2. The Head of the Student Progress Service or nominee will determine whether a Level 2 formal complaint investigation should be initiated.
  - 4.4.6 Appropriate action will be taken in light of the outcome of the Level 1 procedure. The action will be intended to resolve the matter but it may include the initiation of formal disciplinary action against a member of staff under the University's disciplinary procedures.
  - 4.4.7 A Level 1 complaint procedure will normally be determined within 14 calendar days from receipt of the complaint but circumstances may result in a longer period. The Complainant will be informed of the reasons should a longer period of investigation required.
- 4.5 The Authorised Person will retain a copy of the outcome of the Level 1 Informal Complaint & Early Resolution investigation to be made available should the complainant remain dissatisfied and wish to progress to Level 2 of the complaint procedure.
- 4.6 The Authorised Person will update **INTO Newcastle University's Complaints and Appeals Log** to include a brief summary of the complaint.
- 4.7 If the complainant does not consent to the matter being investigated, no further action will be taken. The School/Service will keep a confidential record of the details of the informal complaint on file for 12 months.

A Complainant may, within **3 months** of the date of the original receipt of the informal complaint, subsequently lodge a request for the matter to be investigated by notice in writing. This time limit may not be extended, without consultation with the Head of the Student Progress Service.

## Complaints against other University Students

If you want to complain about another student at Newcastle University, you should contact the Casework Team by emailing [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk). Complaints of a serious nature concerning INTO Newcastle University students should also be forwarded to the Casework Team. The email should contain a full explanation as to the nature of the concern, with supporting evidence. Student Progress Service may invite you to a meeting as part of the investigation. The allegation will normally be investigated under the University's Disciplinary Procedure (<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/disciplinary/>).

# Academic Queries and Appeals

A complaint cannot be used to seek to overturn the academic decision of examiners. Newcastle University has a separate procedure for Academic Queries & Appeals.

## Purpose

The Student Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure is for appeals against the decisions of the Boards of Examiners (except those related to assessment irregularities), Personal Extenuating Circumstance (PEC) Committees, and sanctions imposed under Unsatisfactory Progress procedures.

## Process

Newcastle University provides a clear three-stage procedure for students making Academic Queries and Appeals requesting reconsideration of Board of Examiners/ Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) and/or Degree Programme Director (DPD) / Progress Decisions

- **Level 1** - Is the informal stage for querying academic decisions. Appellants are expected to make every effort to raise their assessment/progress query, in writing, with INTO Newcastle University directly in the first instance.
- **Level 2** - Only when the steps taken under Level 1 of the procedure have failed, or when the Appellant considers that their query has not been resolved, may Level 2 of the Academic Queries & Appeals Procedure be invoked by submissions of the Academic Appeal Form (Appendix A) together with full details of the formal appeal and any supporting evidence.
- **Level 3** - Is the formal review of the Level 2 outcome, where the Appellant requests a review of the outcome of their academic appeal at the Level 2 stage.

## Downloads and Guidance

**The links below provides appellants with the Newcastle University procedure (Level 2) should steps taken under Level 1 fail:**

- The [Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/Casework/Final%20AcademicAppeals-Procedure%2019_20.pdf) (PDF: 533KB)  
[https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/Casework/Final%20AcademicAppeals-Procedure%2019\\_20.pdf](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/Casework/Final%20AcademicAppeals-Procedure%2019_20.pdf)
- Download [Academic Queries and Appeals Level 2 Application Form and Guidance](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/AcademicQueriesandAppealsForm18_19_Final.pdf) (PDF: 426KB)  
[https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/AcademicQueriesandAppealsForm18\\_19\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/AcademicQueriesandAppealsForm18_19_Final.pdf)

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/appeals.htm>

## Grounds

These are the only four possible grounds for appeal:

- You were adversely affected by illness or other relevant factors, of which you were previously unaware, or which for a good cause you were unable to disclose to the examiners in advance.
  - Procedural irregularity on the part of the examiners.
  - Bias or prejudice on the part of an examiner or examiners
  - That the decision reached was perverse, in that, it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.
- A) Grounds for academic appeal following Board of Examiners Decisions:
- Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) that you were unable to disclose in advance of the Board of Examiners meeting via a Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) application, or were unable to provide evidence for at that time, or of which you were previously unaware
  - Procedural irregularity on the part of the examiners
  - Bias or prejudice on the part of an examiner or examiners
  - That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.
- B) Grounds for academic appeal following PEC Committee Decisions:
- Procedural irregularity or other error on the part of the PEC Committee
  - Bias or prejudice on the part of the PEC Committee.
  - That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.
- C) Grounds for academic appeal following an Unsatisfactory Progress Decision:
- Evidence which was not available or considered previously
  - Procedural irregularity
  - Bias or prejudice
  - That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.
- D) Grounds for academic appeal following a Programme Manager / Academic Director Request Decision:
- Evidence which was not available or considered previously
  - Procedural irregularity
  - Bias or prejudice
  - That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.

**Note: A challenge to the academic judgement of the examiners on an assessment outcome or the level of award recommended is not of itself a valid ground of academic appeal.**

Also Note: An appeal relates to the decision of the examiners and should not be used to raise general complaints about tuition or support over the length of your degree programme.

You are expected to make every effort to raise your assessment/progress query, in writing, with INTO Newcastle University directly in the first instance Student Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure (**Level 1**).

## Level 1- INFORMAL ACADEMIC QUERY (INTO Newcastle University) Procedure

1. Level 1 academic queries can be submitted by emailing the **nominated Contact: Head – Student Progress & Admissions (alex.perrin@ncl.ac.uk)** within 14 calendar days of the original publication of the examination results.
  - 1.1 Level 1 Academic Queries should be submitted directly to the appropriate nominated Contact, in writing. The Academic Query should be made within 14 calendar days of the original publication of the examination results or decision letter. Full details should be provided together with any appropriate documentation relevant to the query.
  - 1.2 The nominated Contact shall ascertain the nature of the details of the academic query. For this purpose, the nominated Contact may invite the Appellant to a meeting to clarify the details of the academic query. The Appellant may be accompanied by a friend / supporter at this meeting and at any other meetings under this procedure. A late Academic Query shall only be considered if the nominated Contact is satisfied that the Appellant has reasonable grounds not to have applied within the period specified above.
  - 1.3 The nominated Contact shall gather any material evidence relating to the academic query to enable them to respond to the query. The nominated Contact may consult relevant members of staff and also seek information as necessary from anyone else likely to be helpful in resolving the matter, including the Appellant. Information may be sought in writing, via oral interview or both.
  - 1.4 If appropriate, the nominated Contact may send a copy of any responses regarding the academic query to the Appellant and invite additional comments.
  - 1.5 Once all necessary information has been gathered, the nominated Contact shall decide whether it is possible to conclude the academic query. This outcome may be communicated verbally in the first instance if appropriate, and will be confirmed / communicated in writing to the Appellant with a summary of reasons for the decision. All Level 1 outcomes should be forwarded to the Student Progress Service, to be recorded for statistical analysis and reporting to Executive Committees.
  - 1.6 The nominated Contact will update **INTO Newcastle University's Complaints and Appeals Log** to include a brief summary of the appeal.
  - 1.7 If appropriate, action shall be taken in light of the outcome of the Level 1 procedure. The action will be intended to resolve the matter and may include the reconsideration by the appropriate Board of Examiners or committee.
  - 1.8 Although any reconsidered outcome decision by a PEC Committee, Board of Examiners, or Degree Programme Director/ Dean of Postgraduate Study is final, where there is a claim of procedural irregularity of the handling of the reconsideration or that decision reached was unreasonable or perverse, review of the Final Outcome shall be overseen by the Academic Registrar at Level 3 of this procedure.
  - 1.9 An Academic Query will normally be determined within 14 calendar days from receipt of the academic query but circumstances may result in a longer period. The Appellant should be informed of the reasons should a longer period of investigation be required



## Creation and Revision History

To be reviewed annually by Head- Student Progress and Admissions. Next review due August 2020.

Version	Owner	Purpose/Change	Date
1.0	Alex Perrin Head-Student Progress & Admissions	Created	November 2019