

Public Complaints Policy

Policy owner:	Northern School of Contemporary Dance – Leadership Team
Lead contact:	Director of Governance
Audience:	Northern School of Contemporary Dance stakeholders
Approving body:	Audit Committee
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	
Related Policies, procedures and Guidance:	Student Complaints Policy & Procedure
Equality and Diversity Considerations:	Policy can be available in accessible format on request
Further information: For queries relating to this policy please contact info@nscd.ac.uk	

Public Complaints Policy

Purpose

The School is committed to providing high standards in its services, facilities and activities. We take complaints seriously because they help us put things right and improve what we do.

We will handle complaints in a way that is clear, fair, impartial, proportionate, timely and respectful. We will protect confidentiality as far as is possible and we will learn from outcomes.

Who may use this policy

This policy may be used by members of the public and external organisations who believe they have been adversely affected by the School's activities, services, facilities, staff or students. This may include visitors, contractors, suppliers, placement providers, customers, alumni and other partner organisations, where no more specific route applies.

A complaint may be made by a representative only where the complainant has given clear written consent. Group complaints may be accepted where all members confirm in writing that they are personally affected and appoint one named representative.

Matters covered

This policy covers complaints about services or facilities provided by the School, and about the actions or inaction of the School or members of its community, where the matter falls within the School's control and there is a practical remedy or response available.

Matters not covered

- Complaints by applicants, students or recent former students about their student experience; these should be considered under the relevant admissions, student complaints or academic appeals procedures.
- Complaints by staff or job applicants; these should be dealt with under the relevant HR or grievance procedures.
- Public interest disclosures (whistleblowing), fraud, bribery or corruption concerns; these should be referred under the School's whistleblowing or related compliance procedures.
- Matters subject to legal proceedings, a formal letter before claim, or another statutory review route such as data protection or freedom of information complaints.
- Complaints made anonymously, unless the School decides there is an overriding reason to consider the issue.
- Complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, malicious, abusive, threatening or repetitious.

Where a complaint concerns the conduct of a student or staff member, the School may investigate the matter under the appropriate disciplinary or conduct process instead. In that case, the complainant will normally be told that the matter has been considered, but detailed personal outcomes may not be shared because of confidentiality and data protection obligations.

How to raise a complaint

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible and normally within 20 working days of the event or of the complainant becoming aware of it. Complaints submitted later may be accepted where there is a good reason for the delay and it is still possible to investigate fairly.

Complaints should be sent to the Director of Governance at Ellen.Wood@nscd.ac.uk or 98 Chapeltown Road, Leeds, LS7 4BH. The complaint should include:

- The complainant's name and contact details;
- A clear summary of the complaint, including key dates and facts;
- Any relevant evidence;
- The outcome sought;
- Where relevant, written authority for any representative.

This policy will be made available in accessible formats on request.

We will normally acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and aim to provide a response or update within 20 working days of the acknowledgement.

Stages of the procedure

Stage 1: Early resolution

Where appropriate, complainants should first try to resolve the matter informally with the relevant member of staff or service area. Many concerns can be resolved quickly in this way.

Stage 2: Formal complaint

If the matter is serious, complex, unsuitable for informal resolution, or remains unresolved after Stage 1, a formal complaint may be submitted. It will be investigated by a person with no prior involvement in the matter wherever possible.

The Director of Governance will triage all formal complaints. They may investigate the complaint directly or appoint an investigating officer with appropriate independence and expertise.

We will normally acknowledge a formal complaint within 5 working days and provide a full written response within 20 working days. If this is not possible, we will explain why and provide a revised timescale.

Stage 3: Review

If the complainant believes that the formal complaint was not handled fairly or in line with this policy, or has new material evidence that could not reasonably have been provided earlier, they may request a review by a more senior person not previously involved.

A review request should normally be made within 10 working days of the formal outcome. We will normally issue the review decision within 20 working days. The review decision is final within the School.

Outcomes

Complaints will be decided on the balance of probabilities, based on the available evidence. The following outcomes will be available:

- The complaint being upheld in full or in part;
- The complaint not being upheld;
- An apology, explanation or correction;
- Practical steps provided to resolve the issue or improve services;
- Referral to another internal procedure or, where appropriate, an external agency such as the police or regulator.

Confidentiality, conduct and records

Information will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who need it to consider the complaint, subject to legal obligations and the rights of those complained about to know the substance of the allegations.

No person will be disadvantaged for making a complaint in good faith. We also expect complainants and staff to behave respectfully throughout the process. Abusive or threatening behaviour may result in the complaint being terminated and, where necessary, referred onwards.

The Director of Governance will maintain a record of complaints, outcomes and actions taken, and will report themes and lessons learned to the Audit Committee at least annually.

External routes

- Student complaints should follow the student complaints procedure and may then be referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), if eligible.
- Where a concern suggests that an OfS-registered provider may be breaching its conditions of registration, evidence may be submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) notifications process.

- From 1 September 2026, eligible complaints about freedom of speech by staff, visiting speakers and non-student members may be made to the OfS free speech complaints scheme; students continue to use the OIA route for such matters.