

Complaints Procedure for External Stakeholders

1. INTRODUCTION

Norland College is committed to providing a high-level service. If you are not satisfied with the service you receive from us or you have a concern about Norland, we need you to let us know. This will help us to improve our standards of excellence.

This procedure provides a mechanism for addressing concerns raised by external stakeholders promptly, fairly and effectively in order to help Norland achieve the highest quality in its education provision.

External stakeholders may include, for example, clients who are not satisfied with the service provided by the Agency or NQN Teams, or members of the public.

A separate procedure is available for students. Please note that if a complaint is made by a parent/ carer of a student, we will request that the student submits the complaint using the Student Complaints Procedure.

Norland is a member of the Bath Student Community Partnership (SCP) which publicises its protocols for members of the public to make complaints about any students living in Bath (Appendix 4). Any complaint received through this process will automatically trigger the [Cause for Action](#) procedure which may then signpost the complaint to this procedure.

1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 Usually, all complaints will first be considered under the Cause for Action procedure, which supports an informal resolution. **The Complaints Procedure for External Stakeholders is activated when all processes within the Cause for Action Procedure have been exhausted.**
- 1.2.1 In the event that you are dissatisfied with a Norland service, we will seek to:
 - a) resolve the matter at the earliest possible opportunity through the Cause for Action Procedure as noted in 1.1.1.
 - b) investigate fairly and thoroughly.
 - c) ensure the process is unbiased.
- 1.3.1 It is the intention of the procedure that complaints are resolved quickly and informally where possible.
- 1.4.1 In order to achieve this, Norland asks that you raise the problem as soon as it arises.
- 1.5.1 Details of your complaint will remain confidential to those involved. However, people who are the subject of the complaint have the right of reply and the complaint will therefore be discussed with them so that they can help find a resolution.

- 1.6.1 In the interest of fairness, you, and anyone else directly involved in the complaint, will be entitled to see all the evidence which will be considered and have right of reply.
- 1.7.1 If there is to be a hearing, all those directly involved will have the right to attend, be accompanied by a companion and to be heard.
- 1.8.1 Anonymous complaints or evidence will be considered but may not be given the same weighting and may only be considered if the evidence is corroborated. This may be anonymous corroboration.
- 1.9.1 If there are allegations of a criminal offence, Norland may refer the matter to the police and suspend its own proceedings until the outcome of any criminal proceedings are known, other than where Norland needs to act in the interests of the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and third parties, including visitors.
- 1.10.1 You will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint. However, if it is later discovered that a complaint was malicious or vexatious, Norland may consider taking legal action.
- 1.11.1 Norland will use any complaint made as an opportunity to improve its services. An anonymised log will be kept of all complaints, both informal and formal, by the Head of HR, Resources and Compliance (HRRRC). The nature of the complaint, how long it took to resolve, how it was resolved and at which stage it was resolved will all be recorded and reported annually to the Academic Board, SLT and Board of Directors.

1.2 Scope

The procedure is available for you to raise concerns about your experience of the services provided to you by Norland. You may or may not have been directly affected by the matter of concern.

2. PROCESS

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal measures taken under the Cause of Action Procedure, you can escalate your complaint by following the stages below in sequence:

2.1 Stage 1 - informal stage

At this stage you should raise the issue with the person most directly responsible, such as the manager or head of department, with the aim of resolving it as soon as possible. The complaint can be raised by phone, email or in person. It is expected that both sides will make a genuine and reasonable attempt to resolve any issues at this stage. It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved at this stage, with both parties willing to listen and cooperate.

The person most directly responsible for the issue will attempt to resolve the complaint informally by asking you the following questions:

- What specifically is the concern about and which area(s) of Norland is/are involved?
- What outcome are you hoping for and can it be achieved?

- Is the concern straightforward and likely to be resolved with little or no investigation?
- Can it be resolved on the spot by providing, where appropriate, an explanation, an alternative solution or an apology?
- Can someone else assist in seeking resolution?
- What assistance or support can be provided to you in taking this forward?

If responsibility for the issue raised lies in the staff member's area of work, every attempt should be made to resolve the concern at source in consultation with you. If responsibility lies elsewhere, the staff member will work with relevant colleagues to help resolve your concern, rather than simply passing you on to another person.

Where it is clear early resolution is not appropriate or possible, and that a concern will need to proceed immediately to the formal stage, you will be directed promptly to the relevant procedure. We will inform you of any time limits for submission and where and how to access advice and support.

The informal stage ends when one of the following applies:

- a) A remedy that is acceptable to you has been put forward and you consider the matter resolved.
- b) You are not satisfied with the remedy proposed within 15 working days (or whatever longer period was agreed) of your informal meeting with the person(s) to whom you complained.
- c) You have been unable to arrange a meeting with the person(s) concerned within 5 working days of you contacting them or you have not received a response to your initial email.

If a resolution is found that is acceptable to you, the staff member will report that the complaint has now been resolved to the Head of HRRC, who will record anonymised details on the Complaint Log

If the issue does not involve you directly or you do not wish to pursue the matter further, Norland reserves the right to conduct its own investigation in order to resolve the matter or to take further action. The anonymity of the complainant will be preserved if requested. For example, if a complaint is made about a Norlander by a member of the public, Norland may pursue its own investigation and make any necessary adjustments or take further action such as instigating a disciplinary procedure, should the complaint and evidence of the complaint be of sufficient concern. This investigation will be held internally and may lead to formal action being taken.

2.2 Stage 2 - formal stage

If you have been unable to resolve your complaint informally, you should put your complaint in writing, addressed as appropriate to the Head of Human Resources, Resources and Compliance (HRRC), stating with whom you attempted to raise the matter informally, the outcome and why you remain dissatisfied.

On receipt of the complaint, the Head of HRRC will consider the following questions:

- Was early resolution attempted? If not, should the matter be referred back to that stage?

- Has the complainant set out clearly what the complaint is about and which area(s) of Norland is/are involved?
- Has the complainant provided evidence in support of the complaint?
- What outcome is the complainant hoping for and can it be achieved?
- What assistance or support can be provided to the complainant in taking this forward?

Some complaints may require us to take particularly swift action. These may include, but are not limited to:

- complaints involving a threat of serious harm.
- cases where the impact of the issues raised has detrimental consequences for the complainant's mental health or where they display significant distress.
- issues of serious and repeated service failure and/or significant delay.
- issues of a highly sensitive nature.

2.3 Stage 3 – review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, you can request a review. A request for a review may be submitted on the following grounds:

- a) Procedures were not correctly followed at the formal stage.
- b) The outcome was unreasonable.
- c) New material evidence has come to light which the complainant was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

The review stage will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation. A complaint must have been considered at the formal stage before it can be escalated to the review stage.

You must submit a request for review in writing by email to the Principal.

3. THE PROCEDURE

3.1 Stage 1 – informal stage

Any complaint should be raised under the Cause for Action procedure first. Once all informal measures within that procedure have been exhausted and you remain unsatisfied, you can escalate your complaint by raising it directly with the person(s) concerned or responsible for that service as soon as possible after the outcome of the Cause for Action procedure has been received. A complaint that is raised more than 30 calendar days after the incident/cause for action process, will be difficult to follow up and will not normally be accepted other than where you can show good cause for the delay (such as extenuating circumstances).

Once you have raised your complaint under this procedure, you will be sent the Informal Resolution Complaints Form (appendix 1). On the form, you should state the nature of your complaint and the remedy you are seeking. You should return your form to the person responsible for that service as soon as possible.

It may be appropriate to arrange a meeting with the person responsible for the service and you may wish to be accompanied by a friend or supporter. It may help to put your thoughts in writing prior to the meeting and to take notes during the meeting. A note-taker will be present at the meeting. If a meeting is not possible or appropriate, you should email the person(s).

At the meeting, you and the person responsible for the service will discuss the complaint and try to reach an informal resolution. Together, you will complete part C of the form. Normally within 5 working days following the meeting or your email, the person(s) will either:

- a) email you with a summary of what was discussed if a meeting was held, or addressing the points you have raised if by email, what (if any) remedy is proposed and the timescale for its implementation; or
- b) respond to propose a timescale for resolution.

Unless agreed otherwise with you, this timescale should be no longer than 10 working days from the date of the email.

Where you have been unable to arrange a meeting within a reasonable amount of time (10 working days would be normal) of contacting the person(s) concerned, or no acceptable resolution has been received within 15 working days following a meeting (unless you have agreed otherwise), you should email the person(s) advising them you will be making a formal complaint.

The informal stage ends when one of the following applies:

- a) A remedy that is acceptable to you has been put forward and you consider the matter resolved.
- b) You are not satisfied with the remedy proposed within 20 working days (or whatever longer period was agreed) of your informal meeting with the person(s) to whom you complained.
- c) You have been unable to arrange a meeting with the person(s) concerned within 5 working days of your contacting them or not received a response to your initial email.

A record of the informal resolution stage will be kept on the Informal Resolution Complaints Form.

The staff member will send the Informal Resolution Complaints Form to the Head of HRRC, who will record anonymised details on the Complaints Log.

3.2 Stage 2 - formal stage

In order for the complaint to be considered formally, you must put the complaint in writing and send it to the Head of HRRC. Your details, the details of the complaint, the remedy sought and any supporting evidence should be included. You should also explain how you have attempted to raise the matter informally and why you remain dissatisfied. You should attach an email or other written confirmation to the complaint to evidence that the matter has been raised informally. Unless you can demonstrate that

you have been unable to receive an informal resolution of your complaint, you may be asked to return the informal stage before a formal complaint can be considered.

A formal complaint must be submitted to the Head of HRRC no later than 10 working days after the email concluding the informal stage as described in above.

You should expect to receive an acknowledgment from the Head of HRRC within 5 working days of your formal complaint being received.

We aim to resolve a formal complaint, which has previously been raised informally, within 20 working days of receipt. If there is likely to be a delay you will be informed of this and the reasons for it.

You will be offered a personal meeting with the Head of HRRC, or nominee, in order that you can explain your complaint and why you remain dissatisfied. At that meeting, which may include another member of staff, an administrator will be present to take notes. You will be given a copy of these notes for your records. You may be accompanied to this meeting by a friend or supporter, but you should inform Norland that you wish to be accompanied and give them the name of your companion.

The Head of HRRC, or nominee, may undertake whatever investigation is considered appropriate in order to establish the facts of the case and, if meetings are held with members of staff, notes will be taken by an administrator and you will be entitled to a copy of those notes. Similarly, if the complaint is about a member of staff, he or she will be entitled to see all the relevant documentation, including the notes of your meeting with the Head of HRRC, or nominee. All evidence considered as part of the complaint, including email correspondence, will be shared with all relevant parties.

You will receive a written decision which addresses the points you have made and gives reasons for the conclusion reached. The letter will also advise you of your right to refer the matter to Stage 3.

Where recommendations are made to the service as a consequence of your complaint, you will be entitled to know what these may be and when they will be implemented. Please note that any sanctions given to a member of staff will remain confidential.

A record of the formal stage will be kept on the Formal Resolution Complaints Form, see Appendix 2.

The Head of HRRC will record anonymised details of the complaint and the suggested resolution on the Complaints Log.

3.3 Stage 3 – review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, you can request a review. A review may be requested on the following grounds:

- a) procedures were not correctly followed at the formal stage.
- b) the outcome was unreasonable.
- c) new material evidence has come to light which you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

The review stage will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation. A complaint must have been considered at the formal stage before it can be escalated to the review stage.

You must submit a request for review in writing by email to the Principal within 5 working days of receiving notification from the formal stage

The Principal will review the case within 20 working days from the date the review was requested.

The Principal will review the Informal Resolution Complaints Form, the Formal Resolution Complaints Form and the rationale for your request for review and will make a decision about whether or not a reasonable resolution was suggested. There are two outcomes from this review:

- a) the Principal agrees with you that the resolution suggested is not reasonable and, in this case, the matter will be referred back to the Head of HRRC for reconsideration.
- b) the Principal decides that the resolution offered is appropriate to the initial complaint.

You will be informed of the outcome of the review in writing within 20 working days from the date the review was requested.

The Principal will report the outcome of the review to the Head of HRRC using the Principal's Review Form - see Appendix 3, who will record anonymised details on the Complaints Log.

4. APPEALS

If you are dissatisfied with Norland's investigation and outcome, you may lodge an appeal to request that the case is examined again. Norland will appoint an Appeals Officer. The Appeals Officer will be a senior member of Norland with no prior knowledge of or involvement in the case. This is likely to be a member of Norland's Board of Directors but it also may be a member of Norland's External Advisory Board or another suitable individual.

You must lodge an appeal, in writing, within 5 working days of receiving notification of the Principal's Review decision. The appeal should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Directors and should be sent to Norland's Oldfield Park campus or emailed to the Principal who will forward on to the Appeals Officer.

The appeal will be scrutinised by the Appeals Officer within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal. The outcome will be notified to you in writing within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal. The outcome letter will confirm that Norland's internal procedures have been exhausted.

There is no further scope for appeal, as the Appeals Officer, who represents the Board, will be the final authority on the matter.

5. TIMESCALES

Norland will not normally consider a complaint which is raised more than 30 calendar days after the incident giving rise to the complaint unless there are good and independently verifiable reasons for the delay.

In the event that you feel there are good reasons for the delay, you should let Norland know of those reasons and should support this with independently verifiable evidence in writing from a relevant professional (eg. GP or other registered clinician).

Norland aims to resolve matters as quickly as possible. Norland aims to give decisions within the following timescales:

- a) Stage 1 - Informal: not normally more than 15 working days of the matter being raised with the person responsible (see section 3.1)
- b) Stage 2 – Formal: within 20 working days of Norland receiving a formal complaint (see section 3.2)
- c) Stage 3 - Review: within 20 working days of initial receipt of the complaint at Stage 2 (see section 3.3)
- d) Appeals: within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal (see section 4)

If the matter requires further investigation and the time scales cannot be achieved, you will be informed of the delay in writing and the reasons for it.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Informal Resolution Complaints Form

Section A – to be completed by the complainant
Complainant Name:
Describe the nature of your complaint succinctly and accurately:
State the resolution or remedy that you would like:
Section B to be completed by staff
Name of staff member dealing with the informal stage:
What specifically is the concern about and which area(s) of Norland is/are involved?

Is the concern straightforward and likely to be resolved with little or no investigation? Yes/No
Can it be resolved on the spot by providing, where appropriate, an explanation, an alternative solution or an apology? Yes/No
Can someone else assist in seeking resolution? Yes/No
Section C to be completed by the complainant and staff together
Date of informal meeting with complainant
Record of discussion
Resolution suggested
Resolution agreed by complainant? Yes/No
Proceed to Formal Stage? Yes/No

Appendix 2 - Formal Resolution Complaints Form

Section A – to be completed by the person dealing with the Formal Resolution Stage
Complainant Name:
Name of person dealing with the Formal Resolution Stage – usually Head of HRRC:
Was informal resolution attempted? Yes/No
If no, please state why not. If yes, please state why this failed.
Has evidence been provided to support the complaint? Yes/No
If yes, please state the nature of this evidence
State the resolution or remedy that the complainant would like and whether this is reasonable and can be achieved.

Section B to be completed by Head of HRRC or nominee at or after the formal meeting with the complainant

Date of formal meeting with the complainant:

Record of discussion

Resolution suggested (if applicable)

Resolution agreed by complainant? Yes/No (if applicable)

Proceed to Investigation Stage? Yes/No

Section C - Investigation

Please outline the nature of the investigation:

Dates and records of meeting with others

Details of findings

Section D – Formal Resolution Stage outcome

Date of notification to complainant:

Resolution suggested to complainant:

Resolution agreed by complainant? Yes/No

Proceed to Review Stage? Yes/No

Appendix 3 - Principal's Review of Complaint Form

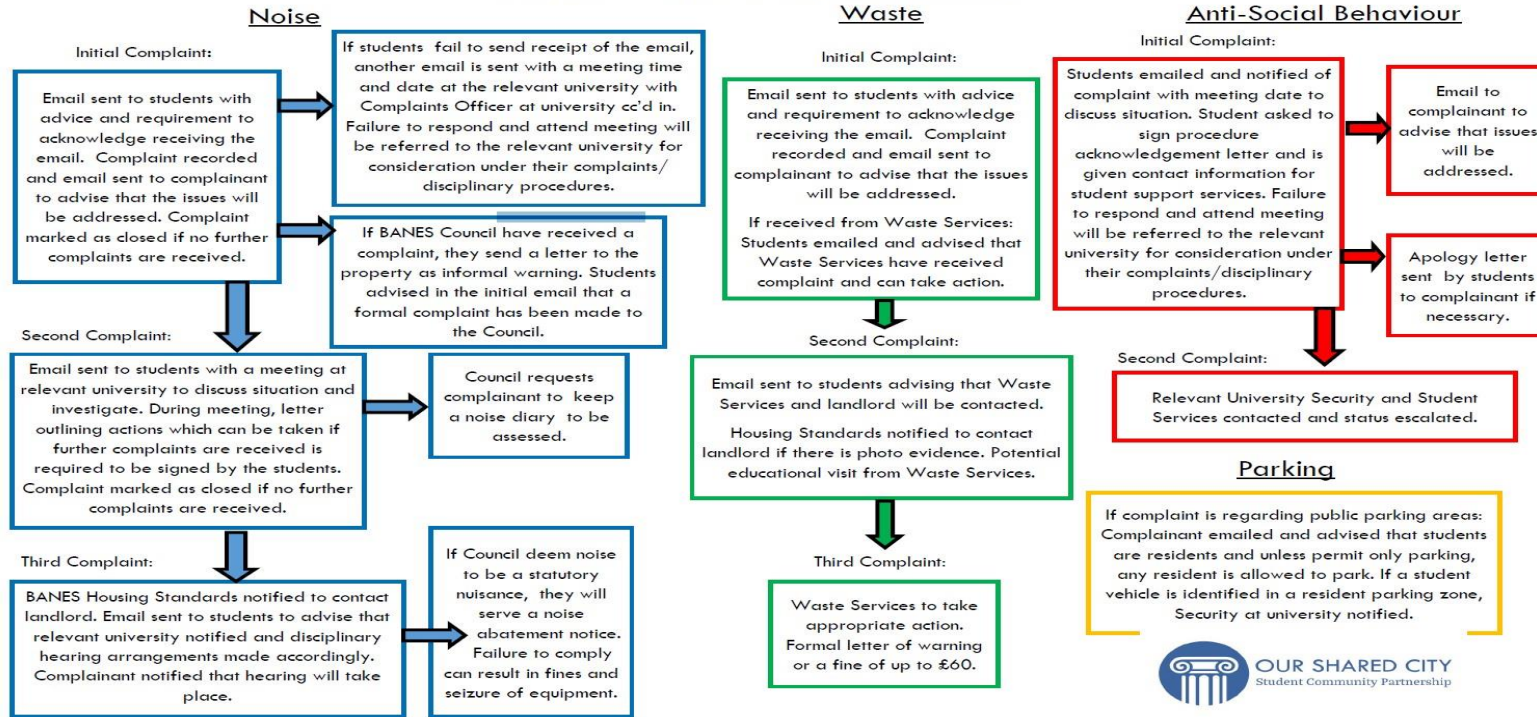
Section A – to be completed by the complainant to request a review	
Complainant Name:	
Reason for requesting a review:	
Procedures were not followed correctly at the Formal Stage	Yes/No
The outcome of the Formal Review was unreasonable	Yes/No
New material has come to light which you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process	Yes/No
Please give more detail about your reasons for requesting a review:	
State the resolution or remedy that you would like:	

Section B to be completed by the Principal or nominee	
Name of staff member dealing with the informal stage:	
Date of review:	
Outcome of review:	
Are there valid grounds for requesting a review?	Yes/No
Procedures were not followed correctly at the Formal Stage	Yes/No
The outcome of the Formal Review was unreasonable	Yes/No
New material has come to light which the complainant was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process	Yes/No
The resolution suggested at the Formal Review Stage is appropriate	Yes/No
The resolution suggested at the Formal Stage was not reasonable	Yes/No
Please give more detail about the decision	
Next steps:	
Confirm outcome of the Formal Stage	Yes/No
Refer back to the Formal Stage for re-consideration	Yes/No

Section C to be completed by the complainant and staff together
Date of informal meeting with the complainant:
Record of discussion
Resolution suggested
Resolution agreed by complainant? Yes/No
Proceed to Formal Stage? Yes/No

SCP Complaints Procedure

(Complaints received will be reviewed on a case by case basis)





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