

Document Title	Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure
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SLT member responsible for policy	Executive Director of Strategic Planning & Corporate Services
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Head of Department (HOD) responsible for policy	Executive Director of Strategic Planning & Corporate Services
Author of policy	Data Protection Officer
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Related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection Policy • Learner AUP • Staff AUP • Inclusion Policy • Fees Policy • Health and Safety Policy • Code of Conduct Policy • Appeals Policy • Grievance Policy and Procedure • Safeguarding for All Policy
Keywords	Complaints, Feedback, Handling, Formal, Informal, Investigation
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This document is only valid on the day of printing

Controlled Document

This document has been created following the RNN Group policy production guidelines. It should not be altered in any way without the express permission of the author or HOD detailed above.



Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure

Version 3.2

11th March 2025

Version Control Table

Date	Version No	Summary of Changes	Changes Made By
01/09/2018	1.0	Birth of policy	Quality team
21/09/2020	2.0	Unknown – amended by previous owner	Quality team
09/01/2023	3.0	Full re-write of original policy – ownership transferred to IGA team	Kelly Condon Ian Sutherland
19/02/2024	3.1	Addition of 4.7 time limit on complaints. Addition of Highfield Qualifications to escalation – Appendix 1	Kelly Condon Ian Sutherland
05/03/2025	3.2	Annual review - no amendments	Information Governance and Assurance Team

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The RNN Group (Rotherham College, North Nottinghamshire College, Dearne Valley College and subsidiary companies hereinafter referred to as 'the Group') is committed to providing high quality learning experiences and welcomes all feedback about the services it provides.
- 1.2 This policy reflects sector best practice and underpins the Group Vision and Core Values whereby the experience and satisfaction of learners and stakeholders is at the heart of the service offer.
- 1.3 This policy complies with Education and Skills Funding Agency requirements for the handling of complaints and arrangement of appeals within Further Education and Apprenticeships. In circumstances where the Group Feedback and Complaints procedure has been exhausted, appeals can be made directly to the Education and Skills Funding Agency or respective awarding organisation. Further information regarding the contact details of these organisations can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 For complaints relating to any provision run through Highfield Qualifications, upon completion of the Group Complaint and Appeals process, any further appeal should be addressed to Highfield Qualifications as detailed in Appendix 1. Should the complainant remain unsatisfied with the outcome of such appeal then they may raise the complaint with the relevant qualification regulator. Representatives of either the Group or Highfield Qualifications will offer guidance on the appropriate qualification regulator in each instance and provide appropriate contact details.
- 1.5 For Higher Education complaints where the course is validated by the University of Hull where the Group Feedback and Complaints procedure has been exhausted, appeals can be made directly to the University of Hull with further information regarding the contact details of the University of Hull in Appendix 1.
- 1.6 For Higher Education complaints where the course is validated by the University of Huddersfield where the Group Feedback and Complaints procedure has been exhausted, appeals can be made directly to the University of Huddersfield with further information regarding the contact details of the University of Huddersfield in Appendix 1.
- 1.7 For Higher Education complaints where the course is validated by Sheffield Hallam University where the Group Feedback and Complaints procedure has been exhausted, appeals can be made directly to Sheffield Hallam University with further information regarding the contact details of Sheffield Hallam University in Appendix 1.
- 1.8 For Higher Education complaints where the course is not validated by the University of Hull, the University of Huddersfield or Sheffield Hallam University this policy reflects best practice as outlined by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). In circumstances where the Group Feedback and Complaints procedure has been exhausted, appeals can be made under the guidance of the QAA, with reference to *Chapter B9: Academic appeals and student complaints* of the Quality Code. The QAA will, in many cases, suggest that the complaint be made to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) with further information regarding the contact details of the QAA and the OIAHE in Appendix 1.
- 1.9 For consumer credit complaints, this policy is informed by the Financial Ombudsman Service guidance on complaints handling and referrals may be made to the service for any complaints which cannot be settled by the RNN Group.

2. Scope

- 2.1 Feedback and complaints may be submitted by learners, parents/carers/guardians of learners under the age of 18 (or up to the age of 25 for learners with Education, Health and Care Plans), employers, customers, other stakeholders or members of the public.
- 2.2 Complaints will not be accepted from representatives or a third party, without relevant consent. Any queries on what constitutes 'Relevant Consent' can be raised with the Feedback and Complaints Team who will provide any necessary assistance.
- 2.3 Learner groups are entitled to submit 'collective complaints' and where this is the case, the Group may ask learners to nominate a group representative.
- 2.4 The objectives of this policy are to:
 - Provide a transparent procedure which clearly outlines how feedback and complaints will be handled by the Group.
 - Ensure all complaints are handled sensitively, fairly and with respect for privacy (where requested and within limitations set by Government legislation).
 - Resolve problems and concerns quickly and successfully.
 - Improve the services of the Group by acting promptly and implementing any recommendations provided, following the investigation of complaints.
- 2.5 Training and development for staff who frequently handle feedback and complaints within the Group, will be arranged by the Feedback and Complaints team.
- 2.6 Concerns of a serious nature may include, but not limited to the following:
 - Health & Safety
 - Safeguarding issues
 - Breach of confidentiality
 - Theft or damage to personal property
 - Consumer credit disputes
 - Staff conduct
- 2.7 Anonymously submitted complaints are investigated and their findings recorded accordingly.

3. Key Responsibilities

- The Executive Director of Strategic Planning & Corporate Services (EDSPCP) – is the senior leadership team member with overall responsibility for complaints.
- The Feedback and Complaints team – manages the Central Complaints Tracker, receives, logs and forwards complaints to an Investigating Officer (Curriculum Manager/Head of Department), supports with investigations, responses and data analysis.
- The Investigating Officer – establishes the essential facts of the matter by collating any evidence that supports or contradicts the allegation. The Investigating Officer completes an Investigation Report and drafts a letter of response. The report and letter are sent to the Feedback and Complaints team for standardisation (complaints@rnngroup.co.uk).
- Human Resources Business Partner – will be consulted for any staff conduct issue which upon investigation is determined by the Investigating Officer to lead to potential disciplinary action and they will assign a dedicated member of the Human Resources team to support the Investigating Officer.

- The Health & Safety Manager – may be consulted if the complaint relates to a Health & Safety concern.
- The Head of Safeguarding – will be consulted if a Safeguarding concern is raised.
- The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive Officer – will receive, manage and respond to any Higher Education complaints.

4. Principles

- 4.1 This policy is designed to support and improve the Group offer and services provided. The Group values feedback, both good or bad, and sees this as vital to identifying and understanding the necessary information required to improve its services and to celebrate success.
- 4.2 Feedback is defined as any comment provided about the service or experience of learners, staff members, parents/carers, employers or other Group stakeholders, this is used as a basis for recognising good practice or making improvements. Feedback can be provided either verbally or formally, in writing, to the Feedback and Complaints team by emailing complaints@rnngroup.co.uk or utilising the online form available on any of the Group websites.

On receipt of feedback, the Group will:

- Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback
- Pass on any compliments to individual staff members/teams and their manager
- Share best practice to continue to improve services across the Group
- Investigate any suggestions as to how improvements can be made and where possible (and appropriate), act quickly to implement these

- 4.3 A complaint is defined as an expression that services provided by the Group have not reached a satisfactory standard or that action, or lack of action taken by the Group is unacceptable.

On receipt of a complaint, the Group will:

- Endeavour to listen carefully to any and all concerns raised within a reasonable amount of time
- Respect privacy if requested
- Operate fairly and sensitively
- Maintain accurate and detailed records, keeping all parties updated as to the progress of the matter
- Take appropriate action
- Ensure that any learner or staff member is not disadvantaged or discriminated against for having made a complaint

- 4.4 Complaints may be submitted to the Group in person, over the telephone (where a written statement will be taken by a member of staff), in writing to the Feedback and Complaints team, or via email to complaints@rnngroup.co.uk. The Group has a template form to be used, this can be found within the Feedback and Complaints policy section at <https://www.rnngroup.co.uk/about/group-policies/> or by collecting a hard copy from any of the main receptions.
- 4.5 Complaints sent to any other area of the Group will be forwarded to the Feedback and Complaints team for action.

- 4.6 Where a complaint relates to the provision of a course or service, this policy covers all learners for a period of up to 3 calendar months from the last day of required attendance or from being informed of the qualification received, whichever is the later. Any complaint received after the latest date above shall be acknowledged and confirmed as out of time. The Group will take reasonable steps to resolve all concerns as quickly as possible.
- 4.7 Where the complaint relates to a specific incident of misconduct then the policy requires that the incident must be reported within three calendar months of the incident which is the subject of the complaint. Any complaint received after this date shall be acknowledged and confirmed as out of time.

5. Informal Complaint or Concern Handling

- 5.1 In the first instance, the Group will endeavour to resolve complaints informally with the objective of achieving an early and satisfactory resolution. Where this is not possible, the complaint will progress to the formal complaint stage and will follow the steps in Section 6.
- 5.2 When handling informal complaints, the Group will:
- Ask that the Complainant speaks directly to the member(s) of staff involved (this may include, but is not limited to tutors, assessors, team leaders or managers) within 20 days of the complaint or concern arising.
 - Ask that the Complainant contacts the Feedback and Complaints team, when it is not possible to speak to the person directly involved.
 - Aim to respond to the complaint or concern within 10 working days, or at least provide the Complainant with a progress update.

6. Formal Complaint Handling

- 6.1 Where informal complaints or concerns have not been resolved at the initial stage, or where it is deemed appropriate for them to immediately enter the formal stage, the Group will:
- Acknowledge the complaint within 2 working days of it being deemed as a formal complaint
 - Ask the Complainant to outline in full all of the details of the concern or complaint, any action which may have been taken thus far and what the preferred outcome to the complaint is
 - Appoint an Investigating Officer (IO) to investigate the matters raised
 - Provide a written outcome letter or update the Complainant on progress, where appropriate within 10 working days – The outcome letter will inform the Complainant of the appeals process, should the outcome be unsatisfactory to the Complainant.
- 6.2 The IO will be assigned to conduct the investigation and collate all evidence which may include witness testimonies, reports, documents and physical evidence. The IO completes an Investigation Report in the template format as provided by the Feedback and Complaints Team, and drafts the outcome response, which will include all of the findings. The response will be issued to the Complainant within 10 working days of the acknowledgement by the Feedback and Complaints team.
- 6.3 Where information/further information is required and requested from the Complainant but this is not provided in a timely manner and/or leads to undue or unnecessary delay as determined on a case by case basis then the

complaint may be discontinued and closed without formal conclusion and the Complainant notified of this.

- 6.4 Records relating to complaints will be retained by the Group for 6 years, unless UK legislation requires a longer retention period.

7. Appeals

- 7.1 If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they have the right to appeal (within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint response) if they believe that one of the following applies:

- There is evidence that the Feedback and Complaints Policy was not followed
- There is evidence that the facts stated were not investigated
- The findings are inconsistent with the outcome

- 7.2 When making an appeal, the Complainant should notify the Feedback and Complaints team of their intentions by writing to, telephoning or emailing – complaints@rnngroup.co.uk. The email should include the reason/s for appeal (refer to 7.1) and what they feel the preferred outcome would be. An acknowledgement to your appeal request will be sent within 2 working days.

- 7.3 On receipt of an appeal, the Complaint Appeal Board will review any evidence provided by the Complainant and the IO. The board will consist of a minimum of 2 staff members, at least:

- One Member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- One independent manager

Either member of the board may request a scribe to be in attendance.

- 7.4 The Complainant will be informed of the date and time of the Appeal Board, should they wish to attend.

- 7.5 Where the Complainant expresses a wish to attend the Appeal Board but requests an amendment to the time and date, such requests may be considered by the members of the board on a case by case basis but there shall be no obligation placed upon the members of the board to grant any amendment to the time or date.

- 7.6 If an amendment to the time and/or date of the Appeal Board is requested which is judged by the panel as unreasonable or leading to an excessive delay in the process then the Appeal Board shall be entitled to disregard the request and meet in the absence of the Complainant.

- 7.7 Based on the findings of the Appeal Board, the appeal will either be upheld or dismissed. An outcome response will be issued to the Complainant, outlining the findings and the reason for the decision. This will be within 10 working days after the Appeal Board have met. If more time is required, an update will be provided. The appeal response is final and concludes the Group complaints procedure.

- 7.8 In the event of an unsatisfactory resolution following a full investigation, the Complainant can refer the matter to the appropriate external body as provided in Appendix 1 (please check with the relevant body to confirm their complaints criteria) within 3 months (unless otherwise stated) of the appeal response date.

8. Escalation of Persistent Complaints

- 8.1 The Group may decline to deal with complaints that are abusive, unreasonably persistent, vexatious or complaints where the formal complaints procedure has been exhausted.
- 8.2 In exceptional circumstances, such complaints may be escalated by the IO to the EDSPCP for review at any stage of the Group process.
- 8.3 Actions taken by the EDSPCP should be proportionate to the nature and frequency of the Complainants contacts, with the objective to manage the Complainants behaviour in such a way that their complaint can be concluded quickly and without further distractions. Options include;
 - (a) Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month;
 - (b) Offering a restricted time solely for necessary calls;
 - (c) Limiting the Complainant to one medium of contact e.g. telephone, letter, email;
 - (d) Requiring the Complainant to communicate with only one named member of staff;
 - (e) Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same matter;
 - (f) Any combination of the above.
- 8.4 The EDSPCP reserves the right to inform the Complainant that future correspondence will be read and placed on file but not acknowledged, unless it contains materially new information.

9. Monitoring and Reporting

- 9.1 All feedback and complaints received by the Group are centrally logged, monitored and reviewed by the Feedback and Complaints team to identify any themes. Monthly data reports outlining the number of informal/formal complaints are reported to the Senior Leadership team and Board of Governors via the EDSPCP. Monitoring and evaluation reports of all feedback and complaints are provided to the College Management team, Quality and Standards Group (bi-annually) and Board of Governors (annually).

Appendix 1

Further Education Provision (including apprenticeships):

The Complaints Team
Education & Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-further-education-apprenticeship>

Further Education Provision (Highfield Qualifications):

Note: Complaints under Highfield Qualifications which have completed the Group's complaint and appeal procedures should be escalated to Highfield Qualifications and then, if the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome, to the relevant Qualification regulator details of which are available upon request.

Highfield ICON
First Point
Balby Carr Bank
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN4 5JQ, UK

<https://www.highfieldqualifications.com>

Higher Education Provision – (validated by the University of Hull) within 21 working days

University Complaints Office
University of Hull
Cottingham Road
Hull
HU6 7RX

<https://www.hull.ac.uk/Choose-Hull/Student-life/Student-support/Complaints/Student-Complaints-Formal>

Higher Education Provision – (validated by the University of Huddersfield) within 21 working days

The University Secretary
The University of Huddersfield
Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 3DH

<https://www.hud.ac.uk/registry/current-students/taughtstudents/student-complaints/>

Higher Education Provision – (validated by the Sheffield Hallam University) within 21 working days

The Vice Chancellor
Sheffield Hallam University
City Campus
Sheffield
S1 1WB

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/appeals_and_complaints/

Any other Higher Education Matters (not related to the University of Hull)

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint>

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIAHE)
Second Floor
Abbey Wharf
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
RG1 3AB

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/can-you-complain-to-us/>

Consumer Credit Disputes – Financial Ombudsman

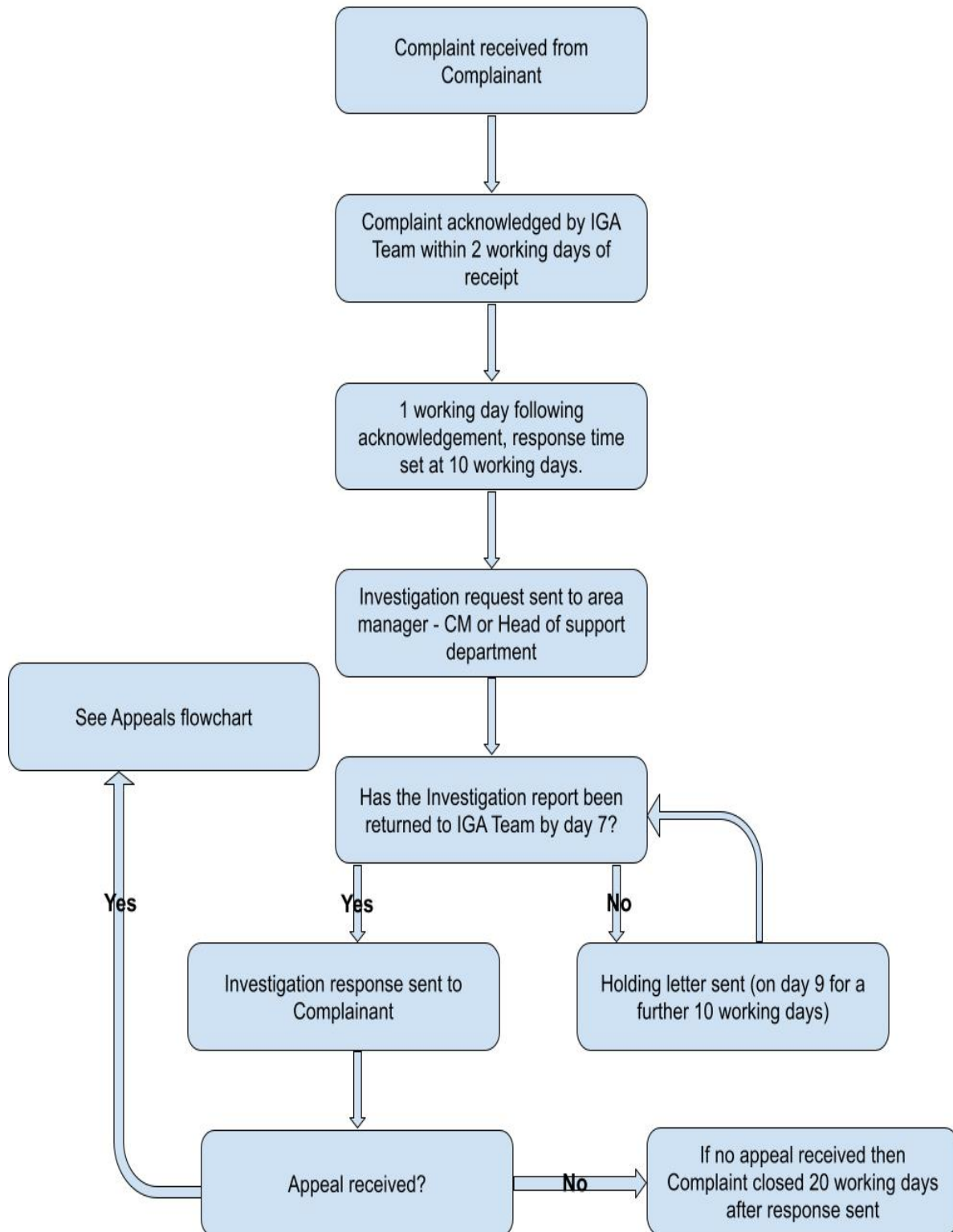
<https://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk/consumers/how-to-complain>

Freedom of Information requests/Requests relating to the handling of your personal data – The Information Commissioner

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

Appendix 2

Process Flow Diagram for Complaints Handling



Appendix 3

Process flow diagram - Appeals

