

BELFAST INSTITUTE OF FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION

GENERAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

- 1.1 Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education is committed to providing a high quality of service to all students and potential students, staff, trainees, clients and service providers.
- 1.2 The General Complaints procedure below should be used to ensure that exceptional complaints are investigated. Its purpose is not to address day to day operational concerns, which should typically be resolved through less formal, line management structures.
- 1.3 In certain circumstances, it may be more appropriate to use other complaints procedures such as Grievance, Harassment, Examinations, Appointments and Promotions Appeals or Section 75 Non-Compliance.

Aim

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure exceptional complaints from existing and potential students, staff, trainees, clients and service providers are considered and resolved in a timely, fair, consistent and equitable manner.

Objectives

- 3.1 The objectives of this policy are:
 - 3.1.1 to investigate and resolve complaints as quickly as possible
 - 3.1.2 to improve customer satisfaction
 - 3.1.3 to improve service provision
 - 3.1.4 to clearly identify the process to be followed by the appropriate person in dealing with an issue of complaint
 - 3.1.5 to ensure that no complainant will in any way be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint
 - 3.1.6 to monitor concerns which may be registered about the Institute and the way in which it conducts its business.

General Complaints Procedure

- 4.1 The Institute believes that it is in everyone's interests to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, as close to the source of the problem as possible, and by informal means in preference to formal ones. The complaints procedure described below has been drawn up with these aims in mind.

Step One – Informal Complaint

- 5.1 If you have cause for complaint or suggestions about any aspect of your course or learning programme including:

- misleading information in prospectuses, in advertising or promotional material;
- issues around the delivery of a course;
- the learning support available;
- any other deficiencies in Institute service or performance;

you (or someone on your behalf) should take the matter up as soon as possible with your subject teacher, personal tutor or line manager.

- 5.2 Whilst in general the Institute would wish the complaints procedure described here to be used when the complainant has a complaint or a concern about any aspect of our service provision, we recognise that sometimes you might not wish to approach a particular tutor or manager. In these circumstances you can if you wish, raise the issue, which is of concern to you, with another appropriate person of your choice.

- 5.3 The individual whom you approach will discuss your complaint with you and attempt to resolve the problem. A record of this complaint will be maintained.

- 5.4 If you are still unhappy after having discussed it with them, you should take the matter up with the appropriate Head of Department under the Formal Complaints Procedure.

Step Two – Formal Complaint

- 6.1 To make your complaint formal, you should contact the Head of Department or Director of the Institute in writing or by telephone. If you require assistance in making your complaint you should contact a member of staff in Information & Student Services.

Telephone: 028 9026 5126
Fax: 028 9026 5127
Minicom: 029 9026 5126
E-mail: information@belfastinstitute.ac.uk

- 6.2 Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days of receipt.
- 6.3 Your complaint will be thoroughly investigated and you will be notified of the outcome normally within 10 working days. If this is not possible, an explanation will be given for the delay.

Complaints Review

- 7.1 If you are not satisfied with the outcome at the formal stage, you may appeal preferably in writing within 10 working days, clearly setting out your grounds for appeal. The appeal should be addressed to the Director of the Institute.
- 7.2 In the event of an appeal being lodged, the Director will contact the Chair of the Governing Body (or their nominee) who will review the complaint and the action taken before making a final decision. The Governing Body will respond to the complainant normally within 20 working days of the appeal being received.
- 7.3 Should it not be possible to complete the procedure within the time limit stated, then the procedure will be completed as soon as possible and the complainant advised as to the reason(s) for the delay.
- 7.4 Where internal procedures have been exhausted or are inappropriate, a member of staff may complain directly to the Department for Employment and Learning.

Time Limits for Handling Complaints

8.1 Our normal time limits for raising complaints are:

- Within 6 months of the incident giving rise to the problem:
or
- Within 6 months of becoming aware that you have a cause for complaint, providing it is not more than 12 months after the incident giving rise to the problem

Monitoring and Review

9.1 Management will regularly review the volume and nature of complaints information and report annually on the impact of this procedure.

Alternative Formats

10.1 This policy is available upon request in alternative formats

(April 2003)
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