

Complaints and Procedures Appeals Policy

Tresham University Centre, Northamptonshire

This policy covers Higher Education Courses, e.g. HNC, HND, FdA, FdSc, Certificate in Education and PGCE Qualifications ONLY.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The UK Quality Code described a complaint as an '*expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student's learning opportunities*'. Tresham University Centre Northamptonshire (TUCN) subscribe to the Office of Independent Adjudicators for Students of Higher Education and abide by their overarching rules for dealing with complaints in our Higher Education provision.
- 1.2 Whilst TUCN is committed to meeting its statutory obligations as laid out in section 1.1; it is also committed to ensuring that it uses this process to help it achieve an outstanding teaching, learning and training experience for all of its Higher Education learners.
- 1.3 Complaints of a minor nature should be raised immediately with a member of college staff with the aim of resolving the problem directly and informally. It is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be resolved in this way.

2 Formal Complaint Stage

- 2.1 Where it has not been possible to satisfactorily resolve matters informally, a formal written complaint should be submitted to the college via our **online Talkback form**. This is available via www.tresham.ac.uk/talkback_a and provides the fastest way to provide feedback to us.
- 2.3 Should any other member of college staff, including customer services, the College Leadership Group (CLG) or Clerk to the Governors be sent details of a complaint directly, then these will be forwarded to the Talkback team as soon as possible in order for the complaint to be formally logged and processed.
- 2.4 Only when the Talkback team receives the complaint will the response timescales provided within this policy apply.
- 2.5 To ensure a prompt response the complaint must be specific and comprehensively documented. The complainant should present full details, including:
 - name and address of the complainant,
 - any relevant documentation, dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate.
 - any previous unsuccessful attempts at resolution.
 - what reasonable steps should be taken to resolve the complaint.
- 2.6 The Talkback team will then allocate the specific Head or Deputy Head of School as the investigating officer in order to facilitate a resolution of the complaint.
- 2.7 The complainant should expect to receive an acknowledgement of their written complaint within five working days.
- 2.8 Communication with the complainant will be via their preferred route, i.e. post, email, etc. If a preferred route isn't indicated, the response will be via the medium that the complaint was initially sent.
- 2.9 Following submission of the Stage One complaint:
 - 2.9.1 The complainant will receive a written acknowledgement within five working days.
 - 2.9.2 The complaint will be robustly investigated in a thorough, objective and transparent manner.

- 2.10 The college have a guideline of fifteen working days from the date of acknowledgement, to provide a written response to the complainant. This response will provide the result of the investigation.
- 2.11 If the investigation is likely to exceed fifteen working days, we will contact the complainant and tell them when we expect a response to be available.
- 2.12 Where complaints involve complex or multiple complaints, in order to ensure that the investigation process is complete and robust, investigations may take longer.

3 Review Stage

- 3.1 If a Formal complaint is closed but it is felt that the complaint remains unresolved, complainants can appeal via Talkback. This appeal must be made within one calendar month of the date of response. The request should include:
 - 3.1.1 the original reference number of the original complaint.
 - 3.1.2 full and specific details of why the complainant wishes to appeal the Formal Complaint decision.
- 3.2 The appeal will be acknowledged prior to any investigation.
- 3.3 The investigating officer will be of a role higher than that of the Investigating Officer for the Formal Complaint.
- 3.4 Following the submission of an appeal:
 - 3.4.1 The complainant will receive a written acknowledgement within five working days.
 - 3.4.2 The outcome of the original investigation will be reviewed.
- 3.5 The college have a guideline of fifteen working days from the date of acknowledgement, to provide a written response to the complainant. This response will provide the result of the investigation and details of the right to contact the Office of Independent Adjudicator for Students in Higher Education.
- 3.6 If the investigation is likely to exceed fifteen working days, we will contact the complainant and tell them when we expect a response to be available.
- 3.7 Where appeals involve complex or multiple complaints, in order to ensure that the investigation process is complete and robust, investigations may take longer.
- 3.8 The outcome of the stage two appeal is the final decision of the college and no further internal investigation will take place relating to this specific complaint.

4 Complaints that cannot be resolved by the college

- 4.1 If, after exhausting the two stages of the college Talkback process the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the College has dealt with their complaint, the complainant has the opportunity to contact the Office of Independent Adjudicator for Students in Higher education.
- 4.2 The college will support any legitimate external review of an investigation into a complaint, whilst being mindful of the Data Protection Act.

5 Upheld complaints

- 5.1 Complaints that are upheld receive an internal action plan to prevent future incidents of the same nature.
- 5.2 Upheld complaints are recorded and monitored on an annual basis.

6 If a complaint is about a member of staff, including the Principal

- 6.1 If a complaint is in relation to a member of staff, the college's Human Resources department will be notified at the same time as the complaint is formally recorded.
- 6.2 If a complaint is in relation to the Principal and Chief Executive of the College the College Governors (via the Clerk to the Governors) will be asked to investigate the complaint.

7 Praise and Suggestions

- 7.1 Praise and suggestions provided through the Talkback Policy are welcome and valuable to the College as a whole. These comments are recorded and passed on to the relevant department and/or person.
- 7.2 Where praise is provided, it will be sent to the college's internal reward and recognition scheme (known as "Tresham Recognises") for consideration of recognition.

8 Data Protection

- 8.1 The college is mindful of its requirement to comply with Data Protection requirements and, where personal information of someone considered as an adult may be discussed in a complaint, we will request permission to proceed from the person(s) involved.
- 8.2 Where it is impractical to obtain a letter of consent, a response will be sent directly to the person(s) involved, rather than the nominated complainant. The complainant will be informed of this.

9 General Points

- 9.1 Anonymous feedback cannot receive a formal response, but may still be recorded and investigated.
- 9.2 Abusive feedback containing offensive language is not tolerated. Whilst it is recognised that some communication may be written in anger, it is unlikely that abusive communication containing offensive language will be taken seriously.
- 9.3 Due to the need for sufficient facilitation and investigation, the need for college staff is vital. It is due to this that Talkback is only active during term time and will cease during scheduled college holidays.

10 Partner Universities

- 10.1 Complaints about courses delivered by TUCN, but in partnership with other partner universities, will be investigated following the college's Talkback policy in the first instance.
- 10.2 Any complaints sent to our partners universities will be forwarded to TUCN to be investigated in the first instance. The outcome of such investigations will be shared with the specific partner. The student has a right to appeal any decision made by TUCN with the partner university.
- 10.3 Complaints about the service provided by business not owned by the college but operating on college premises (e.g. Aramark - Cafe) are not within the scope of this Policy.
- 10.4 Complaints relating to External Service Providers should be made directly to the manager concerned, or to the relevant Head Office.

11 How we value feedback

- 11.1 The College takes the view that complaints provide valuable feedback so that we can improve our service. Complaints are welcome and any person(s) should not feel concerned that there will be negative consequences to them if they make a complaint.

- 11.2 In addition to wanting to deal quickly and effectively with any complaints, the College is also very pleased to receive praise or suggestions for how things can be improved.
- 11.3 Whilst the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are supported, it is not recommended that feedback is given this way. A number of more secure alternatives are provided by the College.
- 11.4 The college monitors social networks for feedback relating to the college and challenges accordingly. For Twitter this will be done via an official college Twitter account under the pseudonym [@TreshamTalkback](#) and whilst appreciative of the manner that Twitter is used, each comment will be considered for further action.
- 11.5 Positive and/or negative feedback received by the College in this way will be considered by the Talkback team and a response signposting the user to use the online talkback form will be provided.
- 11.6 A confidential and secure record will be maintained by the Talkback team relating to all correspondence with the college relating to praise, suggestion or complaint. This record will be carefully monitored:
- to acknowledge praise from our stakeholders
 - to ensure suggestions are carefully considered and responded to
 - to ensure that complaints are properly addressed and that the time frames specified are kept to
 - to identify where improvements can be made to the services and operations of the College
- 11.7 Talkback users may be guided to an online survey after the investigation is complete. This is to provide the opportunity for specific feedback on the management of the Talkback process, rather than the complaint or its outcome.

12 Reporting

- 12.1 An online Talkback 'dashboard' is available to all college staff, College Management Groups, College Governors and the Equality Committee. This is updated regularly and identifies key metrics within complaints and praise for the current academic year.
- 12.2 An annual report will be completed each year in order to report on, and analyse, key Talkback matrix. A resultant QIP will ensure that the outcomes of Talkback investigations remain a key driver of Quality Improvement.
- 12.3 Each Talkback report will be published on the College's internal Quality Toolkit for all staff to analyse and respond to the devised action plan.
- 12.4 An infographic poster will be produced each year and displayed across all three campuses to present key Talkback metrics to all stakeholders.

13 Data Retention

- 13.1 Complaints, Praise and Suggestions received by the College will be retained for a total period of seven years. The information retained will include:
- 13.1.1 All correspondence relating to the praise/suggestion/complaint
- 13.1.2 All items relating to the decision being made for each stage of the process
- 13.2 The retention of information is in accordance with the College's *Data Retention Policy*.

14 Availability

- 14.1 The Talkback form is available [on the college website](#) (or large font/print is available on request) and, if requested, can be completed by an independent member of College staff on your behalf, i.e., via customer services or LRC staff.
- 14.2 This policy can be freely accessed by any stakeholder via the College external website: www.tresham.ac.uk/talkback
- 14.3 This policy is provided to all users of the Talkback process at the time of acknowledgement and upon request.
- 14.4 Whilst the policy is available to college stakeholders, it is not to be used by College employees or contracted staff. Staff are encouraged to speak with appropriate line management or seek support via Human Resources.
- 14.5 Learners who have not met their agreed contractual obligations with the college, financially or educationally, are not eligible to use the Talkback process.

15 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 15.1 The optional information provided as part of the Talkback complaint, praise and suggestion scheme is treated confidentially and will contribute to the development of college policies and procedures aimed at ensuring all groups who may have traditionally been discriminated against will be treated fairly and equally at TUCN.
- 15.2 EDI data is requested from each Talkback user in order to anonymously collate and analyse feedback from different protected groups.

Date Policy written: August 2015 (Adapted from Tresham College of Further and Higher Education Policy first written in September 2008)

Date Policy reviewed:

Date Approved by Governors:

Date to review: July 2017