

Complaints and Compliments Procedures

September 2015

Issue 4.b (update)

Summary of Procedures:

- 1) The Complaints Procedure sets out what to do if you are not happy with the service provided by TyneMet. We aim to deal with complaints promptly, sensitively and fairly and learn from them in order to improve our provision.
- 2) The Compliments Procedure describes what to do if you wish to tell us about excellent service you have received.

Senior Manager Responsible:

Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development

Complaints Procedure

1. Our Commitment to you

At Tyne Metropolitan College we aim to tell you clearly what you can expect from us and provide the best possible service to our students and customers. We listen to both positive and critical comments and complaints and use them to improve our services so, if you have views about our services, we would like to hear from you.

We take complaints seriously. Our aims are to:

- deal with complaints and critical comments promptly, sensitively and fairly
- try to resolve complaints as soon as we can and informally if possible
- learn from complaints and improve our services

These pages contain our complaints procedure and guidance on using it.

2. How to contact us

Ask for assistance at Reception or in the Gateway at our Coast Road campus (including IGNITE), at Reception at the Queen Alexandra Campus or in the Main Office at TMC. Alternatively, telephone: 0191 229 5000, or go online at www.tynemet.ac.uk to obtain our **Complaints and Compliments Form**.

If you would like to discuss your concern informally with the relevant member of staff and/or manager, please ask to speak to them directly.

If you do not know the appropriate person, but would prefer to talk through your concern, you can ask our Reception or Gateway staff. They will direct you to the right person, or record your comment or complaint on the appropriate form and pass the form to the Quality Improvement Team **within 24 hours**.

If you wish to put your complaint in writing and are unsure where to address it, please send it either by email to Ann-Marie.Crozier@tynemet.ac.uk or by letter to:

Ann-Marie Crozier
Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development
Tyne Metropolitan College
Battle Hill Drive
Wallsend
NE28 9NL

If you wish to fax your complaint, the number to use is 0191 229 5301.

The Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development will acknowledge your correspondence and make sure that the appropriate member of staff is given your complaint for investigation and follow up.

3. Stages in our Complaints Procedure

Tyne Metropolitan College's complaints procedure has 4 stages, as follows:

Stage 1 – informal resolution

We encourage you to discuss any concerns with a member of staff and/or manager without delay. We believe that most problems can be solved if you discuss the issues with the person who knows you best.

- **For students and parents or guardians** this will usually be the teacher, course leader or pastoral tutor.
- **For employers** this will usually be the member of staff you deal with at the College.
- **For partner organisations and suppliers** this will usually be the member of staff in the relevant work area.
- **For the general public** you should contact the Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development who will ensure the most appropriate member of staff deals with your complaint.

If you complain over the telephone, we will try to resolve your complaint on the spot. Give us as much information as possible to help us resolve your complaint. You can use our **Complaints and Compliments Form** to help you with this. Ask for a copy at Reception or from the Gateway.

Stage 2 – formal resolution

If, following your discussion with a member of staff and/or manager, you are still not satisfied, or if you feel in the first instance that the severity of the issue requires a written complaint, you can complete a **Complaints and Compliments Form**, and

- submit this by email to – Ann-Marie.Crozier@tynemet.ac.uk
- or
- hand it in to a member of staff at Reception or in the Gateway at the Coast Road or Queen Alexandra campuses, or the Main Office at TMC. The member of staff will forward this to the Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development

Alternatively, if you prefer, you may write a letter and address this to the Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development at the address provided above.

The Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development will provide an initial acknowledgement within **5 working days** of receipt of the comment or complaint and will ensure that it is forwarded to the most appropriate person for response. This will be the Head of Department in the relevant area. A full written response will be provided to the complainant by the relevant manager within a further **10 working days**. If, for any reason, it is not possible to provide a full response within a further **10 working days**, you will be kept informed and provided with a reason for the delay and an expected response date.

Stage 3 – Referral to a senior manager

If you are not satisfied with the formal response from the Head of Department concerned, then you may refer your complaint to an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team. You must make a request to the Deputy Principal: Finance & Corporate Development within **10 working days** of receipt of the outcome of Stage 2. The relevant senior manager will reply to you with a full response within **10 working days** of receiving the referral, or write to let you know why this cannot be done and give you a new deadline.

Stage 4 – Appeal to the Principal

If you still remain dissatisfied with the College response, you may request that your complaint is referred to the Principal. This request must be made to the Principal within **10 working days** of receipt of the outcome from Stage 3. The Principal will respond to your request in writing within **10 working days** of receipt of the appeal. The Principal's decision is final and no further correspondence will be entered into.

Independent review

If you feel that the College has not followed this procedure correctly or fairly, then you have the right to refer your complaint for independent review. Before you can do this, you must have exhausted all four stages of the College's complaints procedure.

If your concern reaches this stage, the College will give you full information on how to contact the relevant body on request to the Principal. You must make a referral in writing to the relevant body within **6 weeks** of the date of the Principal's decision at Stage 4 above.

For Further Education Provision:

You have the right to refer to the Skills Funding Agency.

For Higher Education Provision:

You have the right to refer to either the University of Sunderland (for programmes awarded by the University of Sunderland) or to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (for programmes delivered directly by the College).

4. Dealing with your complaint – our standards

All our staff will be courteous and helpful. All telephone calls will be answered promptly. Where a central answerphone is used, calls will normally be returned within **1 working day**.

We will acknowledge letters within **5 working days** and will provide a more detailed response within a further **10 working days** of receipt. We will aim to answer all points raised in correspondence accurately and to use plain English. If it is not possible to reply within the timescales outlined above, we will send an interim reply explaining the delay, answering any points we can and advising when you can expect a full reply.

In return, we would ask that you treat Tyne Metropolitan College staff politely and with respect at all times.

Complaints Monitoring

All complaints which reach Stage 2 (formal resolution) will be logged and included in an annual statistical report to the Corporation Board of Governors. The Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development will ensure that complaints are tracked and that agreed action is implemented and monitored as part of our quality assurance processes.

Freedom of Information Act

Tyne Metropolitan College has established a separate procedure for dealing with requests under the Freedom of Information Act, as published on our website. In the event of a refusal to allow access to information that we hold, we will provide you with a full reason in accordance with the legislation.

Confidentiality

The College will handle all complaints in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

All parties involved in the complaint will receive all documentation related to the complaint, including a copy of the original complaint. All parties will treat the complaint and all related documentation as confidential.

All meetings referred to in the complaints procedure will be held in private.

The College will produce a written record of meetings. All parties who attend the meetings will receive a copy of the written record. The College will regard the written record as confidential to those parties.

The College's annual report of complaints to the Corporation Board of Governors will be a statistical report and will not identify any individuals.

Improving our complaints procedure

If you have any suggestions or comments which may improve our complaints procedure, please send them to the Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development at the address given above.

Compliments Procedure

1. Our Commitment to you

At Tyne Metropolitan College we aim to tell you clearly what you can expect from us and provide the best possible service to our students and all who use our services. So, if you feel that we have done really well, we would like to hear from you.

2. Let us know when we are doing exceptionally well

Perhaps you feel that your teacher or mentor has gone above and beyond the call of duty in the support they have given. Perhaps another member of staff has provided a level of service that you feel is beyond your highest expectations.

In these cases, we like to be able to thank the member of staff on your behalf.

You can simply make a phone call (0191 229 5000) or drop an email to the member of staff/manager responsible. If you need contact details, ask at Reception or in the Gateway at our Coast Road Campus (including IGNITE), at Reception at the Queen Alexandra Campus, or in the Main Office at TMC.

You can also go online at www.tynemet.ac.uk to download our **Complaints and Compliments Form**.

3. How to offer formal thanks for exceptional service

If you feel that a member of staff has provided an exceptional service, the senior managers of the College would like to be able to add their formal thanks to your own. You can ensure that the College formally thanks staff for the exceptional service you have received either by sending an email to Ann-Marie.Crozier@tynemet.ac.uk or a letter to:

Ann-Marie Crozier
Deputy Principal: Finance and Corporate Development
Tyne Metropolitan College
Battle Hill Drive
Wallsend
NE28 9NL

We will write immediately to let you know that we have received your letter. We will also ensure that you receive a copy of the letter of thanks that goes to the member of staff.