

Participants COMPLAINTS SYSTEM: PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

The Alliance of Leading Learning (ALL) is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that NPQ participants may have complaints relating to their programme or the services and facilities provided by the NPQ partnership. There may also be times when an issue may arise with other participants or members of staff. The Alliance of Leading Learning takes such complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination and in a confidential manner. ALL is committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints, taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved by the informal process.

PRINCIPLES

This complaints system is designed for **all** our participants.

A complaint, under this system, is defined as *the expression of concern or dissatisfaction with a service provided by the NPQ partnership, the provision of a programme or related academic service.*

The Informal Procedure

If the complaint is related to an academic issue, in the first instance the participant(s) should discuss the matter with the programme facilitator. The participant may then be referred to the Quality Assurance Manager.

Informal Complaint Resolution - most complaints can be resolved informally, and as close to the origin of the complaint as possible. A constructive approach by all parties will most often provide a corrective/preventative solution or an explanation of what has happened and why further action is not appropriate.

In most cases a personal response to the complaint, by the Quality Assurance Lead, may be adequate. But if appropriate, or where requested, a written response (by e-mail or letter) may be provided.

If, having followed the informal route the complainant believes that their concerns have not been properly addressed or where the complaint is particularly serious or confidential then the formal procedure set out below should be followed.

The Formal Procedure

Complaints should be raised by the participant(s) rather than by any third party. Where exceptionally a participant wishes to raise a complaint through a third party ALL will require a signed written statement to that effect from the participant. ALL will not accept anonymous complaints as the formal procedure provides for independent investigation of the substance of any claims, where the complainant will be protected by ALL from any recrimination or victimisation.

ALL will not tolerate complaints that, upon investigation, are interpreted as malicious, vexatious, deliberately misleading or frivolous. Under such circumstances complainants may be referred to the NCTL.

Stage One

The complaint should be set down in writing and emailed to the NPQ Professional Learning Co-ordination.

The complainant will normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days. This length of time may be necessary to enable the NPQ Professional Learning co-ordinator to investigate the matter with appropriate colleagues. This may take longer during vacation periods. The participant may be asked to discuss the matter in person but will always receive a written response. If after this stage the complaint still remains unresolved to their satisfaction, the participant may decide to move on to stage two (review) of the procedure. The participant must notify the NPQ Executive director, of their intent to raise the complaint at Stage 2 within 30 days of the date of written notification of the outcome of Stage 1.

Stage Two (Review)

The NPQ Executive director will review the case and may request additional documentation to determine whether it is appropriate for the complaint to be considered by a resolution panel.

[A] If the NPQ Executive Director considers that the case requires further review then a Resolution Panel will be convened.

This will consist of three persons:

- Steering Group Chair (Chair)
- Non-executive external partnership champion
- A senior member of ALL staff

The Resolution Panel will be convened by NPQ Executive Director who shall prepare the relevant supporting documentation. The NPQ Executive director will be in attendance to support and inform the panel, with a note taker.

The Resolution Panel will investigate the complaint fully. The participant will have the right to present their case in person or in writing to the Panel. Any staff members who are the subject of the complaint will also have the right to present their case to the Panel.

The participant, as complainant, is entitled to be accompanied at this stage of the process by a person of their own choosing.

The Panel at the end of its deliberation will either uphold the complaint in whole or in part, make recommendation for any remedies to be applied or dismiss the complaint.

It is anticipated that the Resolution Panel process will take no more than 28 working days to conclude. At the conclusion a further and final written notification will be issued to the participant, by the Chair of the Panel in liaison with the NPQ director. This may take the form of a completion of procedures letter.

[B] It may be determined that previous investigations by ALL have been sufficient and that there is no merit in further consideration.

Where this is determined the Chair of the Steering group will issue a written notification of the outcome of this review in no more than 28 working days. This may take the form of a completion of procedures letter.

Independent Adjudicator: NCTL

If having exhausted all Stages of the partnership internal complaints procedure, the participant considers that the ALL has failed to consider and respond to their complaints appropriately, they can refer the case to a representative of the NCTL. In order to refer their case to the NCTL they will require a Completion of Procedures Letter. This will be issued when all stages of ALL procedures have been exhausted.

Definitions and explanatory notes

Timescales

For good practical reasons, complaints should be identified and investigated as soon as possible after the problem becomes known. Complaints lodged by current participant more than three months after the event will only be considered in those circumstances where there is a demonstrable reasonable cause for the delay.

Complaints will not be considered from recent graduates or other former participant any later than three months after the problem becomes known and/or if three months have expired from the point of formal notification of the conferment of the award or other reason for the expiry of enrolment.

Working Days are defined as normal working days in ALL Calendar. This does not include those days where ALL is closed down for holiday periods or public holidays. It should be understood that investigations may take longer during holiday periods. ALL will always endeavour to keep complainants informed about any delays to published timescales where there is a good and practical reason for the delay.

Completion of Procedures Letter

A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued when all applicable stages of the complaints procedure have been exhausted. The letter will be issued in accordance with the format prescribed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Quality Assurance Manager	NPQ Professional Learning co-ordination	NPQ Executive director
Joanne Jones	Gemma Hargreaves	Cavelle Priestley-Bird
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MONITORING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

ALL will ensure that complaints are handled consistently and fairly.

Confidentiality and anonymity of complainants will be maintained throughout the monitoring process and information will be held in accordance with the ALL obligations under the Data Protection Act.