



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

Complaints Procedure

May 2004

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Complaints Procedure - User Guide

Introduction

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland is committed to providing a service of the highest quality. Council staff will do everything possible to ensure that this level of service is provided.

However, when things go wrong or you disagree with something we do, you have a right to discuss your problem or make a complaint.

Should you decide to make a complaint we will take it seriously and deal with it as quickly as possible. You will be given a copy of the Council's Complaints Procedure for guidance.

We will investigate your complaint thoroughly and impartially. We will treat you sympathetically and courteously, and your future dealings with the Council will not be affected in any way.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is:

- an expression of dissatisfaction which you have about any service of the Council and which requires a response and/or may lead to an investigation;
- a perceived injustice or failure to meet your reasonable expectations about a specific issue.

Your complaint

- We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 3 working days and aim to resolve the complaint within 10 working days;
- we will keep you informed about the progress of your complaint;
- if this timescale cannot be met you will be informed of any delay, the reason for the delay and you will be given a revised timescale; and
- in the event of your complaint needing further investigation you will be kept informed of progress on a regular basis.

What to do if you have a problem

Most problems can be resolved straightaway by talking to the manager of the service about the issue which concerns you.

You can do this by:

- arranging to call in person and speak to the manager of the service; or
- telephoning and speaking to the manager of the service; or
- writing to the manager of the service concerned; or
- contacting the Council by email or fax. The details of how to do this are listed at the end of this document.

If you are unsure of who should deal with your problem you can contact the Council by any of the methods listed at the end of the document and help will be given to make sure that you are dealing with the correct service.

Making a complaint

If you are unhappy with the way your problem has been dealt with you can make a complaint by contacting the Council's complaints officer.

You can do this by:

- calling at the Council's offices and asking to speak to the complaints officer. (It may help if you make an appointment); or
- telephoning the complaints officer; or
- writing to the complaints officer; or
- faxing the complaints officer; or
- e-mailing the complaints officer.

The complaints officer will see that your complaint is investigated quickly and thoroughly and will reply to you within 10 working days. If it is not possible to have the matter resolved within 10 working days you will be informed of the reasons for delay and when you can expect a response.

- If you are not happy with the outcome of the investigation then your complaint will be referred to the Registrar of the Council. The Registrar will carry out his own investigation and reply to you within 28 days.

- If you are not happy with the outcome of the Registrar's investigation then your complaint will be referred to a sub-committee of the Council's General Purposes and Finance Committee. The sub-committee will review the findings of the Registrar's investigation and reply to you within 28 days.
- It is the Council's policy to settle complaints locally wherever possible. We hope that by using the process outlined above you will be able to resolve your complaint.
- However, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the sub-committee's investigation you can ask for your complaint to be examined by the Northern Ireland Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is completely independent of the Council and investigates complaints from those who feel that a public body has treated them unfairly.
- There is no charge for the services of the Ombudsman and all investigations are carried out in private.
- The Ombudsman will not address any complaints until the Council's complaints procedure has been exhausted.

Complaints procedure - Stages

Stage 1

- At this stage the complaint will be referred by the complaints officer to the appropriate section head, and the complainant will be informed in writing of the action taken.
- The section head will address the complaint and the complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.
- If the outcome is to the satisfaction of the complainant and the matter resolved, then the complaint will be closed and the information entered in the complaints database.

Stage 2

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the section head's investigation the complaint will be referred by the complaints officer to the Registrar and the complainant informed in writing of the action taken.
- The Registrar will investigate the complaint, consider the procedure followed, and the outcome reached, and the complainant will be informed accordingly of the Registrar's decision.
- If the outcome of the Registrar's investigation is to the satisfaction of the complainant and the matter resolved, then the complaint will be closed and the information entered in the complaints database.

Stage 3

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Registrar's investigation the complaint will be referred by the Registrar to a sub-committee of the General Purposes and Finance Committee of the Council and the complainant informed in writing of the action taken.
- The sub-committee will review the findings of the Registrar's investigation and the complainant will be informed of the sub-committee's decision.
- If the outcome of the sub-committee's investigation is to the satisfaction of the complainant, then the complaint will be closed and the information entered on the complaints database.

Stage 4

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the sub-committee's investigation the complaint will be referred by the Registrar to the Northern Ireland Ombudsman and the complainant informed in writing of the action taken.
- The complaints database will be amended appropriately.

Contact Details:

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
4th Floor , Albany House,
73-75, Great Victoria Street,
Belfast,
BT2 7AF

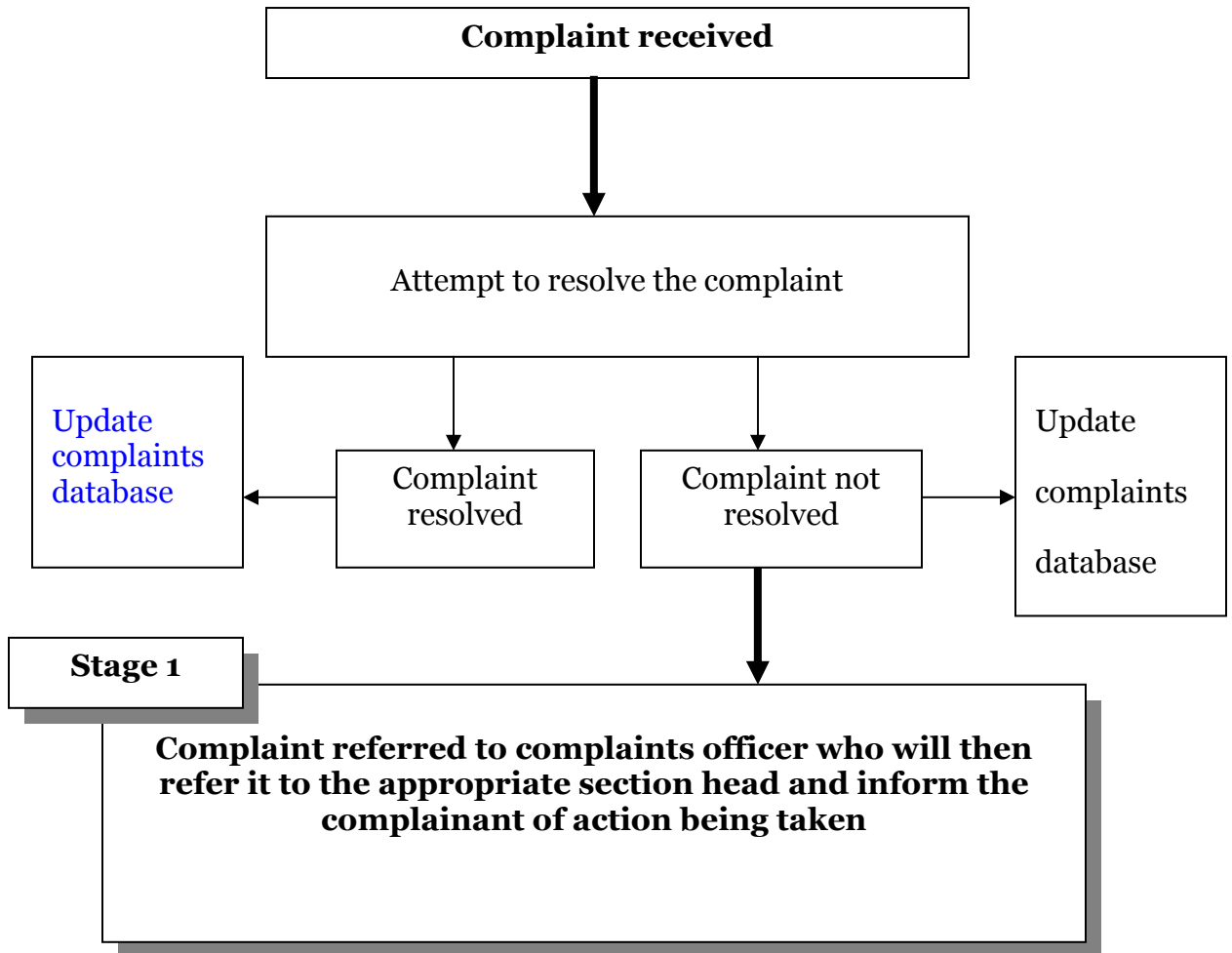
Tel: 028 9033 3390

Fax: 028 9034 8787

E Mail: info@gtcni.org.uk

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Instructions for front line staff who have received a complaint



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