



## **OPEN COLLEGE NETWORK NORTH WEST REGION**

### **Complaints and Appeals Policy**

In all dealings with our customers the staff at Open College North West Region endeavour to provide an accreditation service which is prompt, courteous, clear and responsive to customer needs. However, at times, there may be circumstances where a customer is dissatisfied with the service they have received and wish to make a complaint.

#### **Purpose**

This policy sets out guidelines to ensure that complaints or appeals received by the OCN are dealt with quickly, fairly and effectively.

#### **Policy**

All members and users of OCN services will have access to our complaints and appeals procedures.

The OCN will:

- take appropriate action to address concerns;
- implement the Complaints and Appeals procedure in an open, transparent and accountable way;
- acknowledge receipt of complaint within 5 working days of written complaint being received;
- communicate initial conclusions from the investigation within 20 working days from receipt of complaint;
- aim to reach a final conclusion in resolving a complaint within 35 working days of receipt of written complaint;
- aim to hold an appeals panel within 20 working days of receiving a written appeal.

## Complaints and Appeals Procedure

### **Informal**

It is hoped that issues can be resolved informally. An informal complaint can often be rectified immediately and therefore in the first instance you should contact a person in your Customer Service Team at the OCN who will seek to rectify the situation as soon as possible. You will find contact numbers on the 'Contacts and Who's Who' page of our website. However, should the complainant remain dissatisfied then formal procedures should be followed.

### **Formal**

A formal complaint concerning any aspect of the OCN's service should be made in writing (letter) to the Quality and Standards Manager at the OCN and requires investigation. Written complaints should be addressed to Quality and Standards Manager, Customer Services Section, OCN North West Region, P.O. Box 58, Speke, Liverpool, L24 8WW.

### **Stage 1**

The OCN will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of receipt of formal written notification. Should the complaint fall outside the scope of the OCN we will advise you of this in writing within 5 working days of receipt of your notification.

### **Stage 2**

The OCN will investigate the complaint and seek any further information and documentation that may be required. Once we are satisfied that all information/documentation is available to us an initial conclusion will be reached. This will be communicated to you in writing within 15 working days of receipt of the written complaint. If a conclusion cannot be reached within this time the reasons for this will be communicated to you within the 15 working days.

You will be invited to comment on the factual accuracy of the OCN's initial conclusion within 10 working days of the date of our written communication.

The OCN will consider any additional information provided by the complainant before reaching a final conclusion. The final conclusion will be confirmed to the complainant within 10 working days of receiving any comments. Should no comment be received then the initial conclusion will be confirmed as final.

### **Appeals**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision they may appeal against this in writing. Appeals will be heard by the Appeal Panel which is drawn from the Board of Trustees Quality Committee and include at least three members of the Board's Committee who have no interest or involvement in the complaint/appeal. The appeal will be heard within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be communicated to the appellant within 5 working days of the meeting and will be final.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Any Complaints and Appeals will be reported to the OCN's Quality Committee who meet 3 times a year. The number and nature of complaints and appeals and their outcome will be considered by the Committee and any changes agreed as appropriate.