



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
A College of Queen's University Belfast

## **Procedure for Complaints by Persons or Organisations External to Stranmillis University College**

### **1. Who can use this procedure?**

The University College welcomes all constructive feedback on its activities, whether positive or negative, and understands that, from time to time, people or organisations external to the College may feel their expectations have not been met by the College, its staff or students. This procedure aims to provide a mechanism which will deal with any such complaints in a timely and open way.

This procedure is not to be used by students (who should use the student complaint procedure) nor staff (who should use the grievance procedure)

### **2. What information should the complaint contain?**

- The background to the complaint including dates and times of any particular incidents and the names of any people against whom you are complaining or who can provide evidence in support of your complaint.
- Any specific issues which you want to be addressed.
- What outcome(s) you hope to achieve from the complaints process.

### **3 Stage 1 - Making an initial complaint (informal)**

**3.1** Complaints can often be resolved satisfactorily and dealt with quickly on an informal basis. If possible, talk informally to the person most directly involved in the situation you wish to complain about and as soon as possible after the situation arises. You should, in any event, make your complaint within 1 calendar month of the alleged event.

**3.2** The staff member will attempt to resolve the complaint and, within 7 working days of it being received will acknowledge its receipt and as soon as possible thereafter, will write to you, or make alternative contact if preferred; with one of the following outcomes:

- The complaint has been resolved.
- The complaint requires more time to investigate the matter(s) raised.
- The complaint can be resolved (stating a specified timescale for resolution, if possible).

- The complaint cannot be resolved in the way you require and you can pursue a formal complaint if you wish.

## **4 Making a Formal Complaint**

Formal complaints must be submitted within 1 month of the event complained of occurring, or if you have made an informal complaint in accordance with clause 4.1 above, within 12 working days of the date of the letter or contact occurring, notifying you of the outcome to your informal complaint.

### **4.1 Stage 2 – Initiating a Formal Complaint**

**4.1.1** To initiate a formal complaint you must put the complaint in writing, or in an alternative format, clearly stating the following information:

- Personal Details, including, address for correspondence in connection with the complaint and Postcode and Telephone/Mobile number;
- Outline of complaint, including dates of actions;
- Please explain what steps you have taken,(if any) together with dates, to resolve your complaint locally (as per the informal procedure);
- Please explain why you are not satisfied with the response you have received to date;
- Please indicate what outcome or further action you are expecting:

**4.1.2** The complaint letter, or if in an alternative format is used, should be passed to:

*The Vice-Principal,  
Stranmillis University College  
2011 Stranmillis Road  
Belfast  
BT9 5DY*

The Vice-Principal will acknowledge receipt of your correspondence (and, if possible, make an initial response) within 7 working days. S/he will then undertake a full investigation.

**4.1.3** A full and considered response will usually be made within 20 working days of receipt of your complaint. If the investigation cannot be completed in that time for good reason (such as staff unavailability due to holidays) or the matter is complex, you will be advised of a revised timescale.

**4.1.4** If the complaint relates to the conduct of a member of staff, this may be investigated under the staff disciplinary procedure. You will receive a response in accordance with the timescale of that procedure (the University College reserves the right to maintain confidentiality in relation to staff disciplinary matters). This will signal the conclusion of the matter. No stage 3 Final Review process is available for staff disciplinary matters.

## **4.2 Stage 3 – Final Review**

**4.2.1** If you are dissatisfied with the decision from Stage 2, you may refer the matter to:

*The Principal,  
Stranmillis University College  
2011 Stranmillis Road  
Belfast  
BT9 5DY*

**4.2.2** To initiate a final review you must write to, or make contact with the Principal, indicating who has previously dealt with your complaint and why you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. To initiate a final review you must write to the Principal within 12 working of the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome to your formal complaint.

**4.2.3** The final review will be completed within 20 working days of receipt of your letter and the outcome will be reported to you in writing. This decision is final and there will be no further avenue of review in the University College. If there is an external review body to whom the matter can be referred, (such as the Information Commissioner) we will advise you of this when we report the outcome of the final review.

## **5 What you can expect from Stranmillis University College**

We will:

- Deal impartially with your complaint within the time frames set out above and in a polite and straightforward way.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the complaints process, revealing information to others only to the extent necessary to complete a proper investigation and make a considered response and keeping the record of your complaint separate from other records.
- Ensure that no complaint made in good faith will be used to your disadvantage in the future.

## **6. Vexatious and Malicious Complaints**

**6.1** Vexatious and malicious complaints (i.e. repeated or persistent complaints which are trivial or found to be untrue or made purposely to abuse this complaints procedure) or those accompanied by abusive or aggressive behaviour will not be dealt with under this procedure.