



Northern Ireland Post Qualifying  
Education & Training Partnership

**Comments, Compliments and  
Complaints Policy and  
Procedure**

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# Contents

	<i>Page No.</i>
Introduction	4
Scope of Policy	4
Comments	5
Compliments	5
Complaints	5
What is a Complaint?	5
Objectives of Policy	6
Complaints Procedure	6
Step One – Informal Stage	6
Step Two – Formal Written Complaint	6
Step Three – Complaints Review	7
Record of Complaints	8
Appendix One	9

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Education & Training Partnership (PQ Partnership) strives to ensure that the service it provides is of a consistently high standard and is underpinned by a commitment to continuous improvement.

The PQ Partnership therefore welcomes feedback on all aspects of its service and provision.

The PQ Partnership has developed the Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy and a set of procedures to assist all stakeholders who wish to provide feedback or make a complaint.

The Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy and procedures document is made available to: all members of the PQ Partnership's Boards and Committees; candidates at the point of enrolment and is available for download from the PQ website; [www.nipqetp.com](http://www.nipqetp.com)

## 2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1 This policy addresses the process for making positive or negative comments as well as a formal complaint.
- 2.2 It is important to note that this Policy does **not** cover issues related to the decision making processes of either the PQ Assessment or Accreditation Boards. These matters are dealt with via the respective Review of Decision/Appeals Procedures which are available on the PQ website [www.nipqetp.com](http://www.nipqetp.com)
- 2.3 Where the complaint relates to a programme accredited by the PQ Partnership for awarding PQ Requirements or PQ Award(s) with the NI PQ Framework, the complainant should direct this in the first instance, to the programme provider. Each programme accredited with the NI PQ Framework will have its own complaints policy in place – where the programme is based within a University or College setting, the institution will have a complaints policy.
- 2.4 Where a complaint relates to an agency representative, this should be directed in the first instance to that person's line manager/employer.

## 3. Comments

- 3.1 The PQ Partnership is happy to receive written or verbal comments in relation to any aspect of the service provided. These should be directed to the Professional Manager. All comments are recorded and acknowledged.
- 3.2 Comments in respect of the operation of, or service provided by a PQ Board, will be shared with the relevant Chair and Professional Officer.
- 3.3 Comments will be used as part of any review process.
- 3.4 Comments are most helpful when they are specific and relevant to the remit of the PQ Partnership and its Boards or provision.

## 4. Compliments

- 4.1 Where the experience of the service provided has been positive, we would very much welcome compliments. This will help to identify those aspects of our service which are working well.
- 4.2 Compliments, whether verbal or written, should be directed to the Professional Manager. All compliments received are recorded and acknowledged.
- 4.3 Compliments in respect of the operation of, or service provided by a PQ Board, will be shared with the relevant Chair and Professional Officer.
- 4.4 A summary of all compliments received will be included in the annual report to NISCC.

## 5. Complaints

### What is a Complaint?

- 5.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service NIPQETP provides, including the conduct of our staff or the action we take.
- 5.2 Any person affected by our service, the conduct of our staff or the action which we take, may make a complaint. This will include candidates, employers, service users, providers or anyone involved in the work of the PQ Partnership and/or the delivery of the PQ Framework.
- 5.3 The following are examples of issues which should be treated as complaints:
  - Dissatisfaction about how we have dealt with a situation
  - Claims that we have provided a poor standard of service
  - Claims that members of staff have been rude or unhelpful
- 5.4 A complaint must be made within 3 months of the event, or within 3 months of the complainant being aware of the event, upon which the complaint is based.

## **Objectives of Policy**

- 5.5** The PQ Partnership aims to ensure that where a complaint is received:
- It is investigated and resolved as quickly as possible
  - The complainant is kept informed of the progress of the investigation of the complaint
  - All the points at issue are addressed and an effective response and appropriate redress provided
  - The privacy and confidentiality of the complainant is respected as far as possible at all stages of the process
  - The complainant is not in any way disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint
- 5.6** Specialist support will be made available to any complainant with particular needs, for example, providing help with completing the Complaints Form. This support will be available at all stages of the complaints process.

## **Complaints Procedure**

- 5.7** The PQ Partnership believes it is in everyone's interest to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, as close to the source of the problem as possible and by informal means in preference to formal means. The complaints procedure outlined below has been developed with these aims in mind. There are three stages in the process.

### **Step One – Informal Stage**

- 5.8** The normal expectation is that, where a minor complaint or concern arises, this should be resolved informally with the person within the PQ Partnership responsible for the particular service area or the person 'closest' to the perceived problem without being personally involved or implicated. This individual will clarify the concern and attempt to resolve the problem. They will also ensure the resolution is shared with the complainant. They will also seek clarification as to whether the matter has been addressed satisfactorily or not. A record of the concern or complaint will be maintained.

### **Step Two – Formal Written Complaint**

- 5.9** If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response offered, or where the complaint is deemed to be of a serious nature, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Professional Manager using the Complaints Form (**see Appendix One**). If the complaint to be made is in respect of the Professional Manager, the Complaints Form should be sent to the Chair of the Quality Assurance Board, who will then take on the subsequent responsibilities of the Professional Manager role. The Form should clearly identify:
- Name and contact details
  - The reasons for the complaint
  - The circumstances leading to the complaint
  - The necessary information to substantiate the complaint
  - Details of any attempts made to resolve the complaint at an informal level
  - What action the complainant now wishes NIPQETP to take to put things right

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.

- 5.10** The Professional Manager will advise the Chair of the PQ Management Board of the nature and detail of the complaint. The Chair and Professional Manager will determine whether the complaint can be dealt with by the Professional Manager reporting to the Chairs Group and onto the Management Board.
- 5.11** Alternatively, the Chair will appoint a member of the Management Board not associated with the circumstances surrounding the complaint, to co-ordinate and oversee the investigation process. This person will report back to the Management Board the outcome of their investigation. The Professional Manager will assist if appropriate.
- 5.12** Where the complaint involves a staff member of the PQ Partnership, they will be informed of the nature and detail of the complaint at the earliest opportunity and kept informed of the process of the complaint and its outcome.
- 5.13** The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the complaint normally within 15 working days. If this is not possible, an explanation for the delay will be given.

### **Step Three – Complaints Review**

- 5.14** If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at the formal stage, an appeal may be made in writing to the Chair of the PQ Management Board, within 10 working days of having received the initial written response.
- 5.15** The Chair of the PQ Management Board will appoint a Review Panel, drawn from Management Board membership and an independent member, where appropriate.
- 5.16** The Review Panel will convene within 15 working days and access all records and reports related to the complaint and may, as part of their review, interview the complainant and/or those connected with the complaint.
- 5.17** The Review Panel will make a recommendation regarding the case to the Chair of the PQ Management Board who will notify the complainant in writing within 10 working days, of the process that has occurred, the outcome and the action to be taken.
- 5.18** Where the investigation determines that a disciplinary offence may have been committed, this will be referred to the relevant disciplinary authority and the Management Board
- 5.19** If it is deemed that a breach of the NISCC codes has been committed, this will be referred to NISCC and to the Management Board.

## **6. Record of Complaints**

- 6.1** The PQ Partnership will maintain a record of all complaints received along with corresponding processes, outcomes and action taken. The Quality Assurance Board, Management Board and NISCC as the Approving Body, will be informed by annual report, of all complaints received.

# COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete this form if you wish to complain about the service you have received from NIPQETP, any action which we have taken or the conduct of our staff.

Completing this form will provide us with the information we need to deal with your complaint. If you require any help to complete the form, please contact the PQ office on 028 90461495.

1. Your Details	
Title: (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms etc)	
First Name:	
Last Name:	
Address:	
Tel No: (Home)	
Tel No: (Work)	
Tel No: (Mobile)	
E-mail Address:	
Please specify your preferred point of contact (e.g. work telephone no, e-mail): .....	

## 2. Details of the Complaint

Please provide full details of the following:  
-the reason for the complaint

- the circumstances leading to the complaint

- any attempts made to resolve the complaint at an informal level

- what action you would like NIPQETP to take to put things right

## 3. Declaration

To the best of my knowledge, the information I have provided above is accurate. I understand that to investigate my complaint, NIPQETP will need to share this information with those parties concerned.

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

When you have completed this form, please return to:

**Professional Manager  
NIPQETP  
Unit 2a  
2 River's Edge  
13-15 Ravenhill Road  
Belfast  
BT6 8DN**