

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Doncaster UTC (DUTC) takes the quality of its service provision very seriously and will continuously review its standards to provide exceptional customer service. Therefore the opinions of our stakeholders may be sought in a variety of ways throughout the academic year. One of the ways to accomplish this is to have open and clear channels of communication and dialogue, and to take seriously any concerns or complaints by any of the people affected by DUTC.

Aim

The DUTC will continually seek to ensure that all concerns, whether this be informal or formal complaints are managed as quickly and effectively as possible and in a manner which respects confidentiality and is non-adversarial in its approach.

The DUTC will seek to determine an effective outcome surrounding any concern or complaint with appropriate redress where necessary. In line with the DUTC's commitment to improving quality, where appropriate, the outcome of concerns or complaints will be used to inform further improvement in the DUTC's operations and services.

Definitions:

- A concern (informal complaint) is any query concerning the operation of the DUTC which reflects adversely upon it
- A continuing concern is any query left unresolved or any query which is received more than once.
- A persistent concern is any query which is repeatedly brought to the attention of the DUTC.
- A complaint is a formal complaint requiring the attention of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the DUTC. Complaints are defined as matters relating to breaches of the Law, to non-compliance with DfE Regulations, any issue which would bring the reputation of the UTC into disrepute and any unresolved persistent concerns put in writing to the SLT.

Stage 1: Concerns (Informal Complaints)

Concerns will be dealt with by the member of staff best placed to address the issue who will undertake an investigation of the situation. When concerns are received by telephone it is the role of the receptionist/admin support to route the call to the person most able to deal with it. In the event of any uncertainty then the call will be directed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

A parent / guardian expressing a concern about a SEN student should be dealt with by the Tutor, or in cases where the concern cannot be resolved by the Tutor, or by the Academy's SENCO. Any concerns expressed in writing will be passed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will direct them to the person most able to deal with them.

In every case an initial response will be provided within 24 hours and a final resolution of issues arrived at as soon as is reasonably practicable. Resolutions may include an explanation, admission that the situation could have been dealt with more effectively, an apology, an assurance that the situation will not recur or an undertaking that the DUTC will review the procedure in light of the concern.

Stage 2: Complaints

All formal complaints must be received in writing, giving as much detail as is possible. Acknowledgement of your complaint should be made to you within 3 working days. This will include details of what will happen next, the timescales involved and the person who will be dealing with the complaint; this will usually be the Principal.

Written records will be kept of meetings and telephone conversations during the investigation. The person who has been nominated to carry out the investigation will inform you of the outcome within 15 working days with a written response (this may be longer in exceptional cases). This will include a full explanation of the decision and the actions, where appropriate, that DUTC will take in relation to the complaint.

You will be offered the opportunity to discuss the response to the investigation. If it is not possible to resolve the complaint within 15 working days, then a further written acknowledgment will be sent to you detailing the progress to date.

If your complaint leads to action being initiated under other procedures e.g. disciplinary or child protection, then the complaints procedure will be suspended until action under the other procedures (including appeals) have been concluded. You will be notified that this is the case and informed of the delay in the resolution of your complaint.

However, you will not be entitled to know which other procedures have been initiated or the outcome of these.

DUTC will treat all complaints with respect during and after the investigation. The details of your complaint will be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with relevant persons who might contribute to their resolution.

All complaints will be entered onto the Complaints Log which will be held by the PA to the Principal with the:

- Date complaint received
- Nature of the complaint
- Person in charge of the investigation
- Outcome of the investigation
- Date complaint response sent
- Closure of complaint.

All documentation with regard to the investigation will be held by the PA to the Principal. The documents generated by it could be scrutinised by another body or disclosed to the complainant under the Data Protection Act 1998

Stage 3: Appeals Procedure

If you have exhausted the previous stages and feel that your complaint has not been investigated appropriately then you should appeal, in writing, to a Board Director of the DUTC. Details can be found on the DUTC website.

This should be done within 10 working days of receiving your outcome letter. The Chair of Directors will acknowledge receipt of your letter within 5 working days. The Chair of Directors will need to consider whether it is appropriate for him/herself to investigate the complaint or whether to convene a panel of 3 Directors who have not been involved previously. The Chair of Directors will inform you of the process, the timescales involved and the person who is progressing your investigation.

This will either be the Chair of Directors or an elected panel of Directors/Governors with a Chair appointed.

If the Chair of Directors is appointed;

- They will review the documentation from the initial investigation
- Invite you to meet with them to discuss your complaint and allow you to present any further evidence within 10 working days of receiving the complaint letter
- Inform you of their findings with an explanation within 20 working days of receiving your Complaint (in exceptional cases this may be longer).

In the event that a panel of Directors is convened to investigate the following procedure will be followed:

- The panel will meet within 20 working days of receiving your complaint. It will consist of 3 Directors and/or Governors. The panel will elect its own Chair.
- The Chair of Directors/Governors will write, at least 10 working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the panel meeting.
- You will be invited to the meeting and can be accompanied by a friend/advocate.
- The Principal or Chair of Directors/Governors will be asked to prepare a written response for the Panel in response to the complaint.
- You and other panel members will be sent all relevant documents in advance of the meeting by the Clerk to the Directors/Governors.
- You will be sent notification of the outcome of the panel meeting within 5 working days of the meeting. The details of the meeting, minutes and records will be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution.

The decision of the Chair of Directors or Chair of the panel is final.

Stage 4: Appeal to the Department for Education

An appeal can be made to the Secretary of State for Education if the Directors/Governors have acted unreasonably or failed to discharge its duties under the 1996 Education Act in following their complaints procedure.

Contact Details;

Department for Education

Schools Complaints Unit

2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Records

Written records of all complaints are to be kept by the Principal's PA. This includes all documentation including a record of the stage of resolution of the complaint. All records, correspondence and statements are to be kept confidential. A record of the number of complaints received under the formal procedure during each academic year will be available upon request in writing from the Principal's PA.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Board of Directors and DUTC Principal will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the DUTC's Complaints Procedure.

Date created: 11/11/2019

Date agreed: 6/12/2019]

Date of Review: December 2019

Date of Next Review: September 2020