

TYPE:	Administrative
TITLE:	Student Complaints
NO.:	ADMIN-239
RESPONSIBILITY:	Vice-President, Academic and Vice-President, Student Affairs
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
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1. Introduction

At Durham College the student experience comes first. This includes providing students with high-quality teaching, learning and service experiences. The College has a number of institutional policies and procedures that are designed to help it realize success in these areas, and also assist students in finding a resolution to concerns or complaints. The College is committed to addressing student concerns in a responsive and timely manner, including complaints related, but not limited to, the advertising and marketing of a program, the educational experience and/or the services they receive. In addition to this policy and procedure, students may also submit a concern or complaint via DC Cares.

DC Cares provides several ways for students to provide the College with feedback on our services, facilities and DC Cares receives comments on the website at: <http://www.durhamcollege.ca/dccares>. In addition, boxes to receive paper based comments are located on each campus and at the Pickering Learning Site.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to give an opportunity for students, without fear of reprisal, to raise concerns about a program, their learning experience or the services received in situations, where a College policy or procedure specific to their concern is not already in place. A list of policies and procedures that address specific academic or service concerns or complaints are available on the College's website. Where no obvious policy or procedure exists, this policy and procedure should be followed.

3. Definitions

Refer to [Durham College's Standard Definitions](#).

4. Policy statements

- 4.1. Durham College places a strong emphasis on the student experience, including the provision of high-quality teaching and learning experiences.
- 4.2. The College is committed to addressing any concerns students have about their educational experience or the services they receive, in a responsive and timely manner.
- 4.3. Students have the right to raise their concerns and to expect a timely response from the College.
- 4.4. Complaints raised by students about the teaching and/or learning experience, or services will be addressed in a way that respects the rights of all parties and with the goal of finding a resolution that is amenable to all parties.
- 4.5. All employees of the College who deal with a complaint shall respect the student's right to confidentiality.
- 4.6. A complaint must be made within 30 business days of the incident(s), giving rise to the complaint except in extenuating circumstances that, in the opinion of the College, would justify an extension.
- 4.7. If there is a conflict between one or more provisions of this policy and procedure and one or more provisions of another policy and procedure more appropriate to the nature of the concern or complaint, then the latter policy and/or procedure will prevail.
- 4.8. Students who submit complaints deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith will be required to meet with the relevant senior administrator who may refer the issue to the Durham College Student Conduct policy and procedure (ADMIN-248).

5. Procedure

- 5.1. Step 1
 - 5.1.1. The student will contact the relevant Durham College employee to discuss the complaint or concern within 30 business days of the incident(s) giving rise to the complaint, except in extenuating circumstances, which, in the opinion of the college, would justify an extension.
 - 5.1.2. Complaints or concerns related to the perceived delivery of a program based on the marketing or advertising of a program must be raised with the relevant Dean/Director of the school responsible for the program within six (6) months of the student's completion or exit from the program.

- 5.1.3. In communicating their concern, the students will state their complaint clearly, preferably in writing. The student should retain a copy of their written complaint.
- 5.1.4. The employee will review the concerns outlined by the student and seek clarification, if needed.
- 5.1.5. The student and the employee will explore ways to resolve the concerns and record them for action/distribution as appropriate.
- 5.1.6. If the student and employee are unable to resolve the issue, the student may choose to proceed to Step 2.

5.2. Step 2

- 5.2.1. If concerns have not been resolved with the relevant Durham College employee as described in Step 1, the student may choose to contact the appropriate administrator.
- 5.2.2. The student will provide a signed written complaint to the administrator providing the following information:
 - a) Description of the complaint, including time and date;
 - b) Employee involved (if relevant);
 - c) Names of witnesses, if any;
 - d) Action taken to date, including details Step 1; and
 - e) Resolution sought.
- 5.2.3. The administrator will review the student's complaint and seek clarification, as necessary.
- 5.2.4. Within seven (7) business days of reviewing the complaint with the student, the administrator will investigate the merits of the complaint, which may include a discussion with any relevant individuals. The investigation will follow any method deemed appropriate.
- 5.2.5. As relevant, the administrator will give the employee the opportunity to respond in writing to the specific concerns raised by the student within five (5) business days.
- 5.2.6. If the complaint is deemed to have merit, the administrator will identify a resolution and advise the student(s) and other relevant individuals, in writing.

- 5.2.7. As necessary, the administrator will bring the employee and student together to discuss the situation, clarify the complaint, and develop a strategy to resolve the complaint.
- 5.2.8. If the complaint lacks merit, the administrator will inform the student(s), and employee (as relevant) in writing and provide reasons no further action will be taken.
- 5.2.9. If the complaint is deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith, the relevant senior administrator will meet with the student (complainant) to discuss the motivation for the complaint and may refer the matter for review under the Durham College Student Conduct policy and procedure (ADMIN-248).
- 5.2.10. Reprisals, retaliation or threats of reprisals against anyone pursuing their rights under this policy and procedure; those having participated, co-operated in or for having been associated with someone who has pursued rights or participated in the procedures; or someone in any other role or capacity under this policy, are prohibited and may be subject to sanctions under the relevant College policies and procedures.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1. The Vice-President, Academic and Vice-President, Student Affairs is responsible for ensuring that this policy and procedure is adhered to and fully implemented.
- 6.2. College employees have a responsibility to respond to student concerns in a professional, confidential and timely manner.
- 6.3. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate each stage of the student complaint procedure in accordance with stated timelines.
- 6.4. It is the responsibility of the administrator to issue a written decision at the end of Step 2 within the stated timelines.

7. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act considerations

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards have been considered in the development of this policy and procedure and it adheres to the principles outlined in the College's commitment to accessibility as demonstrated by the Accessibility Plan (ADMIN-203).

8. Non-compliance implications

- 8.1. Non-compliance reduces the likelihood of resolving the student(s) concern and does not align with the College's mission and values.

8.2. Reputation may be negatively impacted when complaints are not resolved.

9. Communications plan

- A message will be posted on ICE alerting employees when new or revised policies and procedures are added to ICE.
- A message will be posted on MyCampus alerting students when new or revised policies and procedures are added.

10. Related forms, legislation or external resources

None.