

TYPE:	Administrative
TITLE:	Student Complaints
NO.:	ADMIN-239
RESPONSIBILITY:	Chief Administrative Officer, Executive Vice-President, Academic & Dean, Students
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
EFFECTIVE DATE:	December 2020
REVISED DATE(S):	
REVIEW DATE:	December 2023

1. Introduction

Durham College provides students with high-quality teaching, learning and service support. In order to continuously improve the student experience, the College provides mechanisms for concerns to be received and addressed in a responsive and timely manner.

2. Purpose

This policy and procedure set out the scope and processes for receiving, reviewing and responding to student complaints in instances where a more appropriate policy and procedure do not exist.

3. Definitions

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

4. Policy statements

- 4.1. Durham College seeks continuous improvement in its delivery of teaching, learning and service to students.
- 4.2. Durham College is committed to addressing student complaints in a prompt and fair manner.
- 4.3. This policy does not address student complaints in instances where a more appropriate college policy or procedure, grievance or appeal process exists, including but not limited to: discrimination and harassment; sexual violence; grade appeals; refunds; and student conduct.
- 4.4. Students making a complaint should do so as soon as possible, but no later than 30 business days of the incident(s) giving rise to the concern. In extenuating circumstances, an extension may be considered.

- 4.5. Complaints regarding Durham College's marketing or advertising of programs must be made within six (6) months of a student's completion or exit from a program and will be addressed in accordance with the Ministry Binding Policy Directive on the Framework for Programs of Instruction.
- 4.6. Initial student complaints will be submitted directly to and addressed by the affected employee, school or department most closely responsible for the matter of concern.
- 4.7. The College will strive to address student complaints in a manner amenable to all parties.
- 4.8. Confidentiality with respect to student complaints will be maintained where possible, having regard for: the circumstances giving rise to the incident(s); privacy and data management requirements; collective agreement provisions; and the need to share information in order to resolve concerns. Confidentiality does not mean anonymity.
- 4.9. Students and witnesses will engage in the complaint process in good faith and can do so without fear of retaliation, sanction or reprisal.
- 4.10. Students complaints deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith will be addressed through the Student Conduct policy.

5. Procedure

- 5.1. Level 1 – Informal Resolution of Complaints
 - 5.1.1. In communicating a complaint, students will state their concern clearly, preferably in writing. Students should retain a copy of their written complaints for future reference.
 - 5.1.2. The Durham College employee who receives the complaint will review it and seek clarification as needed, or refer the matter to the appropriate College administrator for consideration.
 - 5.1.3. The student and the employee will explore ways to resolve the complaint(s) informally and document the resolution for action/distribution as appropriate.
 - 5.1.4. If the student and the employee are unable to resolve a concern, the student may choose to proceed to Level 2 – Formal Complaint. Employees will provide students who are seeking to pursue a formal complaint with the name and contact information for the relevant College administrator.

5.2. Level 2 – Formal Resolution of Complaints

- 5.2.1. Complaints not resolved to the satisfaction of the student in the informal resolution process may be escalated to the appropriate college administrator as identified at the conclusion of the Level 1 process.
- 5.2.2. The student will complete the College's Student Complaint Form and submit it to the relevant College administrator.
- 5.2.3. The relevant College administrator will review the student's complaint and seek clarification from the student, as needed.
- 5.2.4. Within seven (7) business days of receiving a complaint from a student, the relevant College administrator will initiate an investigation, which may include dialogue with appropriate employees or witnesses. The investigation will follow any method deemed appropriate.
- 5.2.5. Relevant employees will have an opportunity to respond to the specific concerns raised in the complaint within five (5) business days of being notified by the College administrator.
- 5.2.6. As needed, the College administrator may escalate the complaint to the appropriate vice-presidential level for a decision or bring the employee(s) and student together to discuss the concern, clarify aspects of the complaint, and/or develop a resolution strategy. Students who do not engage in this step of the process when requested will have their complaints deemed abandoned.
- 5.2.7. If the complaint is deemed to have merit, the College administrator will identify a resolution and advise the student and relevant employee(s) in writing of the outcome.
- 5.2.8. If the complaint is deemed to lack merit, the College administrator will inform the student and relevant employee(s) in writing, and provide a rationale for why 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 College administrator may consider the student's behaviour as a breach of the standards of student conduct.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1. The Chief Administrative Officer, Executive Vice-President, Academic and Dean of Students are responsible for ensuring that this policy and procedure is adhered to and fully implemented.
- 6.2. College employees are responsible for responding to student complaints in a professional and timely manner, in compliance with the procedure outlined in this policy.

6.3. Students are responsible for initiating each stage of the student complaint procedure in accordance with 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 a student(s) concern and does not align with Durham College's mission and values. This may impact student satisfaction and retention.

8.2. The College's reputation may be negatively impacted when complaints are not resolved fairly and promptly.

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

- Ministry Binding Policy Directive on the Framework for Programs of Instruction
- Student Complaint Form