

Customer Feedback & Complaints Procedure



IT Services has a clear customer focus which is aimed at providing a modern, flexible, high quality IT service appropriate to the goals of the University and our customers. We welcome any opportunity to improve on the services we provide and encourage both positive and negative feedback from our customers.

Why do we need a complaints procedure?

Customer complaints and complaint handling should be a streamlined, integral part of our business as it helps ensure customer satisfaction and informs continual service improvements and change. The culture within IT Services should be that complaints are to be welcomed, as they provide an invaluable source of data about service quality, act as an alert to potential problems and identify areas for improvement. Therefore, best practice in complaint handling should be founded on maximising the potential for our customers to make a complaint, not on minimising the number of complaints for PR or other narrow business purposes. Finally, it is crucial that front line staff have the skills and abilities to effectively and efficiently deal with customer concerns or complaints in an appropriate manner, and that managers follow-up on issues raised to effect change and continual service improvement.

Best Practice Principles for Complaint Handling

Visibility: Information about how and where to complain should be well publicized to customers, staff, students and other interested parties. It should be very easy and straightforward to complain. Therefore, a clear and easy to follow procedure for making complaints will be published on the IT Services home page.

Accessibility: A complaints-handling system should be easily accessible to all complainants. Information should be made available of the details of making and resolving complaints. The complaints-handling process and supporting information should be easy to understand and use. The information should be in clear language. To achieve this, a clear and easy to follow procedure for providing feedback and making complaints should be published on the IT Services home page.

Responsiveness: receipt of each complaint should be acknowledged to the complainant immediately on their chosen platform, with a corresponding job raised on Supportworks. All subsequent updates should be through Supportworks to ensure an audit trail. Complaints should be addressed promptly in accordance with their urgency. The complainant should be treated courteously and be kept informed of the progress of their complaint through the complaints-handling procedure. Clear response times and exceptional customer care should be observed throughout the process. These points will be addressed and re-enforced in the staff training sessions.

Objectivity: Each complaint should be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner throughout the complaints-handling process. Again, these points will be addressed and re-enforced in the staff training sessions.

Confidentiality: Data protection is paramount. Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant should be available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint within the organization and should be actively protected from disclosure, unless the customer or complainant expressly consents to its disclosure. Therefore, complaints naming an individual should be taken out of Supportworks, with the complaint being dealt with by their line manager via e-mail. Procedure for dealing with confidential complaints will be covered in staff training sessions.

Customer-focused approach: We should continue to adopt a customer focused approach, be open to feedback, including complaints, and should show commitment to resolving complaints by our actions in making corresponding changes to our service delivery.

Accountability: IT Services should ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions of the department with respect to complaints handling is clearly established. Complaints, decisions and follow-on actions should be reviewed monthly by IT management. If the feedback or complaint is a unique, stand-alone request, then a new Supportworks job should be created using “General-Customer Feedback” problem profile. If the feedback or complaint relates to an existing job, then a child job should be created using the same problem profile.

Continual improvement: Continual improvement through a regular review of the complaints-handling process once a year and the quality of products we provide should be a permanent objective of the department. This will also inform staff training needs to improve the implementation of the process.

The Complaints Handling Process

The Complaints Handling Process is intended to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process with a strong focus on early resolution by empowered and well-trained staff.

The procedure involves up to two stages:

- **Stage 1 Frontline resolution** seeks to resolve straightforward complaints swiftly and effectively at the point at which the complaint is made, or as close to that point as possible.
- **Stage 2 Investigation** is appropriate where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of frontline resolution, or where frontline resolution is not possible or appropriate due to the complexity or perceived high risk of the case. All VIP complaints will also fall into this category.

Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution

For issues that are straightforward and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation. On-the-spot apology, explanation or other action to resolve the complaint quickly. Complaint is addressed by Helpline staff, other frontline staff or escalated to appropriate manager for frontline resolution.

- Always try to resolve the complaint quickly, with the upmost customer care skills and to the customer’s satisfaction.
- Immediately acknowledge the complaint with the customer and log and categorise in Supportworks under “General- Customer Feedback”

- If complaint isn't resolved immediately, give regular updates to the customer, with a decision on the complaint provided within 3 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Complaint details, outcome and action taken is recorded, reviewed and used for service improvement by senior managers.

Stage 2 – Investigation

For issues where the customer is still dissatisfied after communication of decision at stage 1 and it is deemed further action is appropriate

or

where it is clear that the complaint is particularly complex, high risk or will require a detailed investigation

or

VIP complaint

- The complaint will be assigned to an appropriate manager for a thorough investigation of the issue raised. If it is a new complaint, immediately acknowledge the complaint and log and categorise in Supportworks. Give regular updates to the customer, with a decision on the complaint provided within 20 working days, unless there is a clear reason for extending this timescale. The written response may need to be signed-off by Senior Management.
- **Complaint details, outcome and action taken is recorded, reviewed and used for service improvement by senior managers.**

Follow-on Actions

Monthly the Customer Services Senior Managers will review all recorded complaints. They will report performance and analysis of outcomes to other departmental senior management and recommend changes to service delivery where appropriate.

IT Support - open 24 hours, 365 days a year

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| Phone | 0191 227 4242 |
| Chat | northumbria.ac.uk/itchat |
|  | twitter.com/NorthumbriaIT |



Customer Complaints Procedure

A complaint may be made in person, by phone, by e-mail or in writing. The first consideration is whether the complaint should be dealt with at Stage 1 (frontline resolution) or Stage 2 (Investigation). If against an individual, the complaint may need to be confidentially escalated to the appropriate manager.

