

TYPE:	Administrative
TITLE:	Student Complaints
NO.:	ADMIN-239
RESPONSIBILITY:	Chief Administrative Officer, Executive Vice-President, Academic and Dean, Students
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
EFFECTIVE DATE:	February 2024
REVISED DATE(S):	
REVIEW DATE:	February 2027

1. Introduction

Durham College (DC) provides students with high-quality teaching, learning and service support. In order to continuously improve the student experience, DC 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 does not exist.

3. Definitions

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

4. Policy statements

- 4.1. DC seeks continuous improvement in its delivery of teaching, learning and service to students.
- 4.2. DC is committed to addressing student complaints in a prompt and fair manner.
- 4.3. This policy and procedure do 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.

- 4.5. Complaints regarding DC'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 provincial Minister's Binding Policy Directive on the Framework for Programs of Instruction.
- 4.6. DC's resolution processes will strive to address complaints in a manner that is fair to all parties.
- 4.7. Confidentiality between the relevant parties 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.
- 4.8. Initial student complaints will be submitted directly to and addressed by the affected employee, Faculty or department most closely responsible for the matter of concern.
- 4.9. All student complaints shall be considered individually; group complaints are not permissible.
- 4.10. Students and witnesses will engage in the complaint process in good faith and can do so without fear of retaliation, sanction or reprisal.
- 4.11. Student complaints deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith will be addressed through student conduct policy and procedure.

5. Procedure

- 5.1. Step 1 - Informal Resolution of Complaints
 - 5.1.1. In communicating a complaint to the affected employee, students will state their concern clearly, preferably in writing. Students should retain a copy of their written complaints for future reference.
 - 5.1.2. An employee who receives a complaint will review it and seek clarification as needed. Complaints received about other employees will be referred to them, as appropriate.
 - 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 Step 2 – Formal Complaint. DC 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. Step 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 Step 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 of the investigation 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 will forward the investigation for review 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, Students are responsible for ensuring that this policy and procedure is fully implemented.
- 6.2. College employees are responsible for responding to student complaints in a professional and timely manner.

6.3. Students are responsible for initiating each step 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 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

8. Non-compliance implications

Non-compliance reduces the likelihood of resolving student concerns and does not align with DC's mission and values. This may negatively impact student satisfaction and retention, and harm the reputation of the College.

9. Related forms, legislation or external resources

- Minister's Binding Policy Directive on the Framework for Programs of Instruction
- Student Complaint Form