

Northern Regional College

Privacy Notice for the College's Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

Northern Regional College ("the College", "we", "our", "us") is committed to protecting your personal information and respecting your privacy.

This Privacy Notice explains how we collect, use, share, retain, and protect personal information when investigating and responding to complaints received by the College.

This Privacy Notice applies to individuals who submit complaints to the College, individuals who are named within complaints, and any witnesses or third parties involved in the complaints process. It also applies where a complaint concerns alleged maladministration, poor service, or dissatisfaction with the College's handling of a complaint, including where the matter is referred to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

This notice applies to individuals who submit complaints to the College, individuals who are named within complaints, and any witnesses or third parties involved in the complaints process.

2. Who We Are

Northern Regional College is the data controller for personal information processed as part of the management and investigation of complaints.

2.1. College Contact Details:

Northern Regional College
40 Farm Lodge Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7DF
Telephone: 0333 034 8179

2.2. Data Protection Officer (DPO) Contact Details:

dpo@nrc.ac.uk
Telephone: 078119 97546

3. Purpose of Processing

In relation to complaints, we collect and process personal information to:

- Receive and record complaints.
- Investigate issues raised and establish the facts.
- Communicate with complainants and relevant parties.
- Resolve complaints and provide responses.
- Take appropriate action where College policies or procedures have not been followed.
- Monitor complaint trends and improve our services.
- Fulfil our legal and regulatory obligations.

4. Categories of Personal Information We Collect

Depending on the nature of the complaint, we may collect:

4.1. Personal Details

- Name
- Address
- E-mail address
- Telephone number
- Student identification number (where applicable)

4.2. Complaint Information

- Details of the complaint submitted.
- Correspondence relating to the complaint.
- Supporting evidence and documentation.
- Records of meetings, interviews or telephone calls.

4.3. Special Category Data

Where necessary, we may process special category personal data in relation to [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998](#), including information relating to:

- Religious belief
- Political opinion
- Racial group
- Age
- Marital status
- Sexual orientation
- Men and women generally
- Disability
- Dependants

Special category data will only be processed where permitted by data protection legislation, where this is necessary for the investigation of the complaint, or for the collation of statical reports regarding complaints.

5. Lawful Basis for Processing

The College process personal information under one or more of the following legal bases:

5.1. UK GDPR Article 6

- Article 6(1)(c): Processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation.
- Article 6(1)(e): Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the College.
- Article 6(1)(f): Processing is necessary for legitimate interests, where applicable and balanced against individual rights.

5.2. Special Category Data

Where special category data is processed, we rely on relevant conditions under Article 9 UK GDPR and Schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018, including where processing is necessary for substantial public interest purposes.

6. Sources of Personal Information

Personal information may be obtained from:

- the complainant;
- College students;
- College staff;
- College information systems;
- College services;
- witnesses;
- third parties providing evidence relevant to the complaint;
- College systems, records and documentation; and
- regulatory or public bodies where relevant.

7. Who We Share Your Information With

Your complaint and personal information will only be shared where necessary and proportionate to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Information may be shared with:

- Relevant College staff involved in investigating or responding to the complaint.
- Senior Management and decision-makers.
- Independent investigators or advisers appointed by the College.
- Legal advisers.
- [Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman](#).
- Awarding Organisations.
- Regulatory or oversight bodies.
- Law enforcement agencies where required by law.

Please note that your complaint may also be shared with staff where a staff member is the subject of your complaint.

Anonymised information regarding complaints may also be shared for the purposes of training to support the College's complaints process.

The College do not sell personal information to third parties.

8. International Transfers

The College does not normally transfer complaint-related personal information outside the United Kingdom.

If any transfer outside the UK becomes necessary, appropriate safeguards will be implemented in accordance with UK data protection legislation.

9. How Long We Keep Personal Information

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the [College's Retention and Disposal Schedule](#).

Retention periods will depend on:

- the nature of the complaint;
- the outcome of the investigation; and
- legal, regulatory and audit requirements.

At the end of the retention period, records will be securely destroyed.

10. Security of Your Information

The College takes appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect personal information from:

- unauthorised access;
- accidental loss;
- misuse;
- alteration;
- disclosure or destruction.

Access to complaint files is restricted to individuals with a legitimate need to access the information.

11. Confidentially

The College will treat complaints as confidential wherever possible. However, complete confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where:

- A fair investigation requires information to be disclosed to relevant parties.
- There are safeguarding concerns.
- There is a legal obligation to disclose information.
- Disclosure is necessary to protect the rights, safety or wellbeing of individuals.

Only information necessary for the investigation and resolution of the complaint will be shared.

12. Your Data Protection Rights

Under data protection legislation, you may have the right to:

- Access your personal information.
- Request correction of inaccurate information.
- Request erasure in certain circumstances.
- Request restriction of processing.
- Object to processing.
- Request portability where applicable.

These rights are not absolute and may be limited where exemptions apply. Requests should be submitted to the College's Data Protection Officer.

13. Complaints and your Rights

If you have concerns about the way the College has **handled your complaint**, we encourage you to raise these concerns with the College in the first instance through the Appeals process as stated within the [Complaints Policy](#). This gives us the opportunity to review the matter and seek to resolve it through our complaints processes. To raise an Appeal, after you have completed Stage I of the complaints process, please contact:

Quality Manager
Northern Regional College
40 Farm Lodge Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7DF

or

E-mail: quality.improvement@nrc.ac.uk

The College will review your concerns in accordance with its complaints procedures and will keep you informed of the outcome.

If you remain dissatisfied after the College has completed its internal complaints process, you may refer your complaint to the **Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO - www.nipso.org.uk)**, which provides an independent and impartial service for investigating complaints about public services, including complaints of maladministration. NIPSO's contact details are:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)

Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Telephone: 0800 34 34 24

Email: mail@nipso.org.uk

Where your concerns relate specifically to the College's **handling of your personal data in relation to your complaint**, you also have the right to lodge a complaint with the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO - www.ico.org.uk)**, the UK's independent authority for upholding information rights. The ICO's contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

14. Automated Decision-Making

The College does not use automated decision-making or profiling when handling complaints. However, to support the preparation of complaint responses, we may use AI tools. If used, any information entered will be anonymised and will not contain personal or identifiable details. In addition, all responses will be reviewed and approved by a member of our team before being issued.

15. Changes to this Privacy Notice

The College may update this Privacy Notice from time to time to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, or operational practices. The latest version will be published on the College's website and made available upon request.