

## Section 11

### CAUSES FOR CONCERN

#### Raising Causes for Concern

Guidance for staff and students on raising 'causes for concern' may be obtained from the University Secretary's Office (0191) 227 4399, there is also a help document ('Reporting Academic Concerns Guidance') on the University's webpage (<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/uso/saac/repaccs/?view=Standard>). Students may seek independent advice and support from the Students' Union Advice and Representation Centre - [su.advice@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:su.advice@northumbria.ac.uk)

Assistance to staff on the investigation of 'causes for concern' may be obtained from the University Secretary's Office.

#### 11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 Occasionally a student may feel that there is a general issue of 'concern' that they wish to alert the University to. Such 'causes for concern' are not individual complaints but more general observations on the University's operations where there is a sense that there is a deficiency which compromises the quality of the service provided in a systemic way. Such 'causes of concern' may be raised by following the procedures outlined in section 11.2 below.

11.1.2 'Causes for concern' relate to the institution's policies or practices that are felt to jeopardise academic standards. They are not about a specific dispute between an individual and the University or individual member of the University (for which the student appeal and complaints procedures should be used).

11.1.3 The 'Quality Assurance Agency' has indicated that isolated occurrences of bad practice would not normally be sufficient to trigger an investigation by them. 'Causes for concern' are therefore serious systemic shortcomings which result in repeated procedural shortcomings in academic standards and quality.

#### 11.2 Causes for Concern

11.2.1 If a student feels that there are systemic causes for concern about University processes they should first submit their observations in writing to their Programme Leader or Service Director as appropriate. Care must be taken to provide evidence to support the comments. A response should normally be received within 10 working days.

11.2.2 If the student remains dissatisfied with the response they may submit their comments to the Student Appeals and Complaints Ombudsman within 10 working days of receiving the response under 11.2.1 above who will investigate the observations. A response should normally be received within 10 working days.

11.2.3 If the student continues to remain dissatisfied with the response, they may convey their concerns to the 'Quality Assurance Agency' (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/causesforconcern/default.asp>). Care should be taken to establish that the case meets the QAA criteria for a 'cause for concern' and that it is supported by substantial documentary evidence.

