



Your Learner Handbook

For all the latest about our courses, visit:
WWW.NORTHUMBERLANDSKILLS.CO.UK

Delivering on behalf of



Northumberland
County Council

WELCOME TO NORTHUMBERLAND SKILLS

Congratulations! It's time for you to discover your skills and talents.

This is the start of making more of life and seizing the opportunities that come from learning. We know that it will be challenging, new, and sometimes taxing, but overall, it will be enjoyable, exciting and rewarding. We want to welcome you to what we hope will be the start of great things we can achieve together. We will do our very best to work with you, so you can be what you want to be.

The Learner Handbook is a guide. It is here to help you. You can also find it on all of our computers in our classrooms and on our e-portfolio system.

As part of our drive to use less paper, we don't print these copies out. But if you find you need a paper version, please let the site and team administrator know at the campus where you are learning, or ask your lecturer, and we'll print one for you.

If you feel the handbook doesn't answer your questions, please let any of our staff know, we're here to help. We also welcome suggestions for improving our next edition.

Learn. Discover. Grow.



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If you or someone you know needs course information in a different format or language, let us know and we will seek to provide it promptly.

DISCLAIMER

Whilst we make every effort to ensure that the information in this handbook is accurate, we cannot take responsibility for any subsequent changes that may occur, or for the quality of information or services provided by other organisations.

Staff will use their best endeavours to inform learners of any changes that will occur during the academic year.

NORTHUMBERLAND SKILLS LEARNER CHARTER

Northumberland Skills seeks to provide an accessible, high quality service. We aim to give you the best possible chance of success. We are committed to putting the learner first.

Our commitment to you is to:

- Provide accurate impartial information for you to make an informed choice
- Provide ongoing advice and guidance and to signpost the progression routes available to you. Refer you to guidance providers, as appropriate
- Ensure that your course enrolment is handled fairly and efficiently
- Provide an induction to your learning programme
- Deliver high quality and enjoyable teaching and learning experiences. Advise you on learning resources to support your studies
- Ensure that classes start and end on time and where practicable, notify you of any unavoidable changes
- Make reasonable adjustments to provide additional support when required
- Explain how you are assessed. Ensure assessments are conducted on a regular basis
- Effectively prepare you for examinations and external assessments. Ensure assessments are carried out in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. Carry out reviews of progress frequently and additional support needs where these have been identified. Treat you fairly, equitably and with consideration and respect at all times
- Comply with our commitment not to discriminate against any individual on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability
- Ensure learning and work takes place in a healthy, safe environment. Provide you with information and advice on Health and Safety and ensure you are aware of your responsibilities
- Give you both formal and informal opportunities to feed back to us. Use learner feedback to take positive action to continually improve. Be responsive to any concerns you tell us about
- Deal with complaints fairly and in confidence



YOUR SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY

We aim to ensure that you feel safe and secure in our learning environments. Every learner will receive appropriate information during induction.

Our fresh blend of hands-on and digital learning has been designed to maximise flexibility and help you to gain essential skills to stand out in life and work.

AS A LEARNER, I AGREE TO...

- Complete enrolment/registration forms and pay fees as appropriate. Provide proof of entitlement if I want fee remission. Inform us of any changes in my circumstances. Agree to the refunds policy (ask a member of staff for details)
- Attend regularly and punctually for the agreed number of hours/days. Notify us if I am not able to attend a class or if I have decided to withdraw from my learning programme
- Take responsibility for my own learning – complete and update assignments, portfolios or attend exams as and when required. Let us know if I need help or further support for my studies. I will not collude, cheat or plagiarise on my work, assessments or exams
- Ensure any safeguarding concerns about your safety or that of fellow learners is reported via Tootoot, or speak to one of the designated safeguarding leads - ask your lecturer for more information
- Comply with the acceptable user policy related to premises, equipment and e-learning systems when on campus and when working remotely/from home
- Comply with our commitment not to discriminate against any individual on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability. Be considerate towards others
- Support the principles and practice of our Equality and Diversity Statement
- Comply with Health and Safety requirements and instructions. Be responsible for my own and others Health and Safety and report any unsafe practices
- Follow the complaints policy if I want to raise a concern, available at:
<https://www.northumberlandskills.co.uk/policies>

LEARNER SUPPORT

Ok, so you have started on one of our courses or programmes and realised that you could do with a little extra help. Don't be afraid to come and talk to us, we could help to make things easier for you.

You might also have money worries, but we don't want the added costs of learning to add to your burden. Travelling to classes or getting little ones looked after whilst you study can rack up. You can talk to us about this and we can often put financial help in place for your added costs.

Northumberland Skills provides a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. We have the same academic, technical or vocational ambitions for all learners, including learners with high levels of SEND as curriculum is designed to be ambitious whilst meeting individual needs.



LEARNING SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM

We offer extra support through our team of learning support assistants and pastoral mentors who work. If you think you need extra help, let us know when you enrol and we will then be able to prepare for you starting your course. If you need support and you have already started classes, **the best thing to do is tell your lecturer or the site and team administrator at the campus where you are studying.** They will get in touch with the appropriate member of the team who will work with you and the lecturer to find the best way to help you. This will ensure the appropriate support are in place for any exams or assessments.

We can help learners with a wide range of support needs like Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Autism, visual or hearing impairments, physical disability and mental health difficulties. You might also have a medical condition or need help temporarily, for example after an illness or accident.

Our support is broad and tailored to your needs. **We may be able to provide you with adapted materials, specialist software and if required we can make special arrangements for exams.**

This could include laptops, note-taking equipment, digital recorders, screen reading software and large-print materials.

Alternatively, we may be able help through 1-1 support with a learning support assistant or provide access to assistive technology loans.

We can also assist with exams and extra time in some circumstances. We will arrange for you to have an assessment with our Educational Psychology team for this.

THE PASTORAL TEAM

The Pastoral, Mentoring and Learning Support team are responsible for supporting learners beyond the academic, vocational and technical context. For full-time learners, they provide wraparound support through timetabled tutorials and study skills sessions. In addition, 1-2-1 support sessions may be available for all learners. The team will develop your confidence and resilience as you prepare for the future.

You'll be encouraged to learn new skills that will help you to contribute to everyday life and ensure that you are prepared for your next steps, whether you want to enrol on a higher level course, start an apprenticeship, apply to university or start a job. During your course, the pastoral team will be there to support you every step of the way. They will listen to your concerns, help you to deal with problems, work to keep you safe and make sure you feel supported.

WORK EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIENCE OF WORK

If you need a work placement to complete your qualification, or you recognise the benefits of getting some up to date experience with an employer, we'll do all we can to help you find a relevant placement. Going into a work placement on a regular basis will help you to become confident, develop your skills outside the classroom, provide the evidence you need for your qualification, and give you a great addition to your CV. You can also find your own work placement and we'll check out that the employer will provide a safe place for you to work. Full-time learners will gain an insight into the real world of work with guest speakers from a variety of organisations and businesses contributing to the vocational context and beyond.

INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE

Our dedicated team of curriculum leads and lecturers are ready to help. They can advise which level to start at, as well as helping you choose the route that will best suit your interests and aspirations. Our team can give you advice on courses, entry requirements and progression routes into further learning and work. This information is also available on our course information sheets. You may be unsure the course you are thinking of enrolling on next and whether it is the right direction for you. You might also be seeking a careers guidance session to help you to choose - we are very pleased to provide you with advice over the phone, or you may wish to have a private appointment at one of our campuses.

Northumberland Skills holds the Matrix standard for the provision of objective Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), so you can rest assured we have your best interests at heart. Signposting and referral will take place when it becomes clear that another individual, supplier or agency can offer more appropriate help or support to you. We will not refer you to an outside organisation or share your data unless you have given us your permission.



16-18 BURSARY FUND

The aim of the 16-18 bursary is to assist in the removal of financial barriers that might otherwise prevent young learners from fully participating in education. There are two types of 16-18 bursaries:

- Discretionary bursary
- Defined vulnerable groups bursary

The full application and eligibility pack can be downloaded from www.northumberland.gov.uk/learn, you can collect a copy from your local campus.

CARE TO LEARN

If you are a parent under the age of 20 years you can get help with your childcare costs through “Care to Learn”. This scheme can help with the cost of childcare. The scheme is run nationally by the ‘Learner Support Service’. You can get an application pack on the scheme from them by calling 0800 121 8989. Find out more about Care to Learn including eligibility and how to apply, see www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

If you are 20 years or older, looking for childcare help whilst you study, our Adult Discretionary Learner Support Fund below may be able to help.

ADULT DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND

The support fund offers financial help for learners with a specific financial hardship preventing them from taking part or continuing in learning. These are categorised as one of the following types:

- 19+ Hardship funding – general financial support for vulnerable and financially disadvantaged learners to support participation.
- 20+ childcare funding – for learners aged 20 or older on the first day of learning who are at risk of not starting or continuing learning because of childcare costs.

The full application and eligibility pack can be downloaded from www.northumberland.gov.uk/learn, you can collect a copy from your local campus.

PAYING FOR YOUR COURSE

The preferred method of payment for any course fees is by card payment.

ENGLISH AND MATHS

English and maths are offered across our campuses for school leavers as part of their Education Programme, as well as for adults and those studying an Apprenticeship.

For adults studying on an apprenticeship training programme, functional skills will form part of their studies if not already attained.

For part-time learners, English and maths functional skills courses are offered at our campuses across Northumberland, from Entry Level to Level 2. GCSE English and maths classes are also offered at campuses around the county with a September start as exams are taken the following May/June.

An initial assessment will establish which level you currently are at - this will allow us to advise which class or level is best for you. We use BKSBS initial assessment, which is an assessment and diagnostic tool to accurately record each learner's correct starting point.

It is essential to attend all timetabled classes regularly and attend for assessments and exams as appropriate, as well as completing any independent learning set by your lecturers.

You will be able to:

- Improve your everyday English: reading, writing, spelling, grammar, speaking and listening skills
- Improve your everyday maths: addition, subtraction, division, multiplication, fractions, percentages, shape, ratio and budgeting skills
- Refresh your skills and improve confidence
- Gain recognised qualifications that employers are looking for

Northumberland Skills aims to promote and support teaching and learning of English and maths in all of its programmes to help you to achieve learning goals and career ambitions.

ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)

If English isn't your first language, our ESOL courses will help you to improve your speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar and punctuation.

Learning English will help you in all aspects of life, from boosting confidence to improving social skills and gaining employment.

Additional support is available, speak to any member of staff for further information.



INDUCTION

The purpose of Induction is to ensure that all learners have the most up to date information about their learning programme. It is a requirement that every learner will undergo a course induction to introduce them to their course, staff and the environment in which it is delivered. Lecturers are responsible for ensuring that an appropriate course induction programme is in place for all learners.

Induction is a crucial stage in the planning required to ensure that learners get the best experience. An effective and engaging induction, collection of the required information that will be used to effectively plan learning and development. The induction process helps to build relationships that inform a positive learning experience. Your induction will include:

Campus induction

- Introduction to lecturers
- Learning Support Services
- Awareness of campus layout
- First Aid
- Health and Safety
- Accident reporting
- Complaints and Appeals procedures
- Emergency evacuation procedures

Curriculum induction

- Learner Handbook
- Equal opportunities
- Safeguarding
- British values
- PREVENT
- Assignment Submission Procedure
- Course timetable
- Programme/Qualification details
- E-Learning – E-Portfolio
- Plagiarism regulations
- Relevant policies and procedures
- Assessment methods
- Staff padlet
- Learning agreement

Pastoral induction

- Introduction to the team
- Discover your interests and talents
- Physical and mental health
- Personal development
- Develop resilience, confidence and independence
- Future ambitions

HEALTH AND SAFETY

You are required at all times to work in a safe and responsible manner, paying due regard for your own safety and that of others. We ask you to pay particular attention to any health and safety notices issued to you. We will provide a safe environment in which you can study. This will include instructions on what equipment and/or materials you can or cannot use for your safety.

Our health and safety policy covers all aspects of premises, including car parks and grounds. All of our campuses operate a no-smoking policy. This means there will be no smoking in any part of the campuses or sites (this includes e-cigarettes). Learners are kindly requested to use premises with consideration, paying particular attention for children and young people on all of our sites.

Please park your car with care, keeping all access routes free from obstruction, and only use bays marked for drivers with a disability if you are a blue badge holder. Please take particular care on grounds during winter weather. Building defects should be reported to the staff immediately.

If you have a concern related to health and safety, you should discuss it in the first instance with your lecturer or a member of staff at the campus where you are studying.

CCTV MONITORING

In most of our campuses, CCTV is in operation and is controlled by a CCTV policy. The areas covered by CCTV are clearly marked.

ACCIDENT REPORTING

If you have an accident, no matter how small it may seem, you are asked to complete an accident report form in your campus or work placement. The process will be explained at induction.

COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

Remember to take care when using computing equipment: please take regular breaks from the screen. Do not tamper with or misuse the equipment, and only use the software provided by the service. With your help, we will keep our computing equipment and resources in good working order. Guidelines for display screen equipment users are available at every campus - use the guide to ensure you can find the best sitting position for using a computer/laptop and how to adjust your seat and equipment correctly.

MANUAL HANDLING

You should not undertake a significant amount of lifting in our campuses unless it is part of your course and you have been trained in safe manual handling techniques. If you require assistance with carrying equipment etc. you can approach a member of staff.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

Maintenance and testing of equipment is routinely undertaken as part of our electrical testing programme. Only equipment displaying a current PAT testing pass label should be used.

Learners are asked not to use equipment they have not been trained or authorised to use. If in doubt about using any equipment or machinery please ask a member of the staff in your campus first.

FIRST AID

Trained first aiders are on duty in all of our campuses. Details for each campus will be displayed on-site and information about where and from whom you can receive first aid in the event of an accident or illness will be explained during induction.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

If you need protective clothing or equipment for your course, we will advise you prior to the start of the course, or it will be supplied on loan to you. It is provided free to 16-18 year old learners.

FIRE SAFETY

During induction, emergency evacuation, assembly points and procedures will be explained. Please take note of the emergency evacuation routes and assembly points at your campus. You must take part in any fire alarm practices.

Although the fire alarm, emergency evacuation routes and assembly points are different in each campus, the procedure is the same:

- Raise the alarm - on discovering a fire, ring the nearest alarm and/or call for assistance
- Inform the campus staff immediately
- On hearing the alarm staff will escort learners to the assembly point (Exit from the building should be by the nearest marked escape route in a quiet and orderly manner)
- The member of teaching staff will bring the class register with them
- Do not leave the assembly point until you are told by a member of staff that you may do so. The register will be taken again at the assembly point to make sure all staff and learners are safe
- The staff on duty will check that the building is clear and co-ordinate the fire service response
- Do not stop to collect belongings
- Do not return to the building until you are instructed to do so by the fire service and staff

DIGITAL SKILLS

E-safety and acceptable computer use

Before using any computer equipment or e-learning systems, including Office 365 and our Virtual Learning Platform with Northumberland Skills, you will be required to sign two documents:

- Our acceptable use agreement
- A digital media consent form

These state that you have been made aware of, understand and agree to abide by the terms and conditions set in our acceptable computer use policy and that you understand your rights and agree to personal terms under which digital recordings and images including you, can be captured, used and maintained by Northumberland Skills.

Safeguarding of learners and staff at Northumberland Skills is paramount to us, and we will do our utmost to ensure a safe environment for all those who work or use the service and expect all staff and users to play a role in promoting positive behaviour at all times.

All of our systems are monitored for safeguarding and the security of our users.

Online activity is filtered using specialist software which logs activity, this happens in the background and will not impact on your learning.

Any triggers that result in flags or alerts will be reviewed by specialist staff. At times, normal use can result in a 'false positive' trigger.

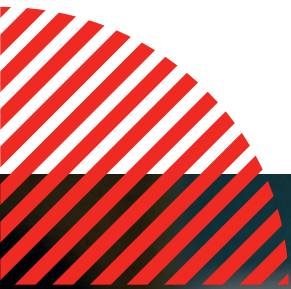
Northumberland Skills will ensure steps are taken to promote positive behaviour. This includes:

- Promotion and delivery of e-safety sessions to support understanding of responsible and safe use of equipment and tools
- Ensuring appropriate systems, security measures and resources are in place
- Induction and ongoing training and development for those delivering our services and taking part in our courses
- Use of monitoring and filtering systems to support access to appropriate content
- Learners are able to use our safeguarding tool Tootoot to record any online safeguarding concerns

Northumberland Skills may at times record online media generated on the e-learning platform for assessment and quality purposes. We will not tolerate behaviour that causes or has potential to cause harm to others in any form.

Acceptable use

- Any equipment or networks within Northumberland Skills, including at outreach venues and e-learning systems, should only be used for their intended purpose of legitimate work or training
- Users must report any issues/conditions that may prevent premises, equipment or e-learning systems from being used safely and for their intended purpose
- Users are expected to leave their work area clean and tidy
- Users are wholly responsible for their own actions and conduct
- Users may only access Northumberland Skills equipment or e-learning systems, including virtual classroom environments, with their own username and password
- Usernames and passwords are not transferrable and should not be used by anyone other than the person for whom they are intended. This is a legal requirement and any breach undertaken is the responsibility of the owner of the login
- In the event of a username and/or password becoming known to a third party, you must contact your local administrator or the systems administrator immediately
- Any breach of these statements must be reported to a member of staff or the IT team





Unacceptable use

- Unauthorised recording of Users, and live streaming of Sessions is not permitted under any circumstances
- Users must not cause offence or interfere with the work of other users. This will include:
 - o violating the privacy or disrupting the work of other users
 - o using foul or abusive language
 - o corrupting or destroying other user data
 - o downloading or transmitting viruses,
 - o creating or transmitting material which is likely to cause annoyance, inconvenience or anxiety to other users
 - o Cyber-bullying will not be tolerated

Users must not

- Use Peer-to-Peer networking Clients to access the Torrent Network
- Attempt to network with staff or students by proxy of Northumberland Skills equipment
- Attempt to bypass network security measures via VPN solutions or install their own hardware onto the systems with the intention of bypassing a security feature
- Modify the hardware configuration of the systems
- Connect personal devices to any Northumberland Skills networks without prior authorization from the IT staff (this includes Internet access)
- Access, create, store, display, distribute or transmit material of an illegal, obscene, indecent, pornographic, immoral, defamatory, racist nature offensive, abusive or is otherwise contrary to international law

Users must refrain

- From the transmission of material such as it may infringe the copyright of another person or material that is protected by trade secret
- Sharing any digital resources provided by Northumberland Skills as part of your learning in any form online or otherwise
- From altering or modifying the computer settings or otherwise causing damage to computer equipment

Users will be responsible for and will indemnify Northumberland Skills in respect of any loss or damage that may be sustained in respect of legal proceedings brought or threatened against Northumberland Skills and arising directly from the User's personal use of Northumberland Skills computer systems or networks.

Anyone found to be contravening any of the above will be subject to further action in line with Northumberland County Council/ Northumberland Skills policies and may result in the permanent exclusion from learning and any relevant information will be passed to appropriate authorities.



DIGITAL COURSES

We offer Essential Digital Skills courses at several campuses across the county and a wide range of bespoke digital courses which can be accessed online.

We have introductory courses which are suitable for IT beginners or novices, and progression to certificated courses for more advanced IT users.

Our digital courses could be exactly what you need if you are looking to secure a new job or need to develop your skills, or even if you are a business owner and require skills development, contact us to see how we can help you.

Our full programme of digital courses is available at www.northumberlandskills.co.uk/adult-learning or you can ask at any of our campuses.

LEARNING TOGETHER PLATFORM

Learning Together is our online learning platform, which enables you to access a host of free, flexible digital learning packages relevant to your learning and career aspirations. These packages are designed to broaden your skills and confidence, and can bolt-on to any course you are studying with us.

Explore the wide range of modules available to enhance your studies at:
www.northumberlandskills.co.uk/learning-together



OUR POLICIES: ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Attendance and punctuality are the responsibility of all, and are closely monitored by staff. Where attendance and punctuality fall below expectations this can fundamentally impact on your chances of succeeding on time, or in extreme cases, to succeed at all. As such, staff will support and challenge attendance and punctuality issues.

Learners are required to attend all scheduled classes and to be punctual in doing so.* However, the Service also recognises that, for some of our learners, adhering to these expectations could be too demanding; therefore absences/lateness due to personal circumstances will be considered on an individual basis. This is a term and condition of the individual's learning agreement.

Where learners persistently breach the agreement, we reserve the right to implement sanctions through the learner disciplinary policy. Where there is a personal issue that means you might need to take a break from learning but want to return, a process is in place for learners and staff to apply for a planned break and ensure it is compliant with funding rules.

**Please note that in the case of operating remotely and attending classes online, electronic tracking will ensure registers are up-to-date.*



OUR POLICIES CONTINUED: CANCELLATION OF SESSIONS

In the event of bad weather, staff illness or any other unanticipated changes we will make every effort to inform you of any changes to your timetable. However, some changes occur in a short period of time and this may not always be possible. We will try to arrange replacement sessions.

In the case of operating remotely and working outside the classroom, we endeavour to continue learning using digital means and online classes, plus mentor/lecturer support to keep your learning on track.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL MISCONDUCT & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Northumberland Skills has a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence, including that which is experienced online or via digital media.

Northumberland Skills is committed to ensuring a working and learning environment free from sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence so all members of our campuses and the local community can enjoy the right to study, live, work and be respected for the contribution they make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

We aim to ensure that coaching and teaching is delivered to the highest standards so that you can attain your desired outcomes (particularly learning and work outcomes).

We expect lecturers to have a good knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach and to provide effective support. Support staff working with you must similarly provide the same good level of expertise. Teaching should be designed and resourced to help you with your individual starting point. Over the course of study, teaching should help you to remember content you have been taught and to use this new knowledge effectively to achieve well, develop yourself and make progress.

Our goal is for you to exceed the national averages in the qualifications and outcomes obtained. We aim to support your progression to the next stage of education, employment or training.

TEACHING & LEARNING FOCUS

We will model teaching around the core EIF (Education Inspection Framework) teaching focus areas of:

Intent

We will provide a full curriculum that is ambitious, resourced, and designed to give all learners the knowledge and cultural capital they will need to succeed in life.

Implementation

Our lecturers will check your learning and understanding on a regular basis within lessons. They will identify any actions required accurately and provide clear, direct feedback to you.

Impact

Our lecturers will help you will develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and, as a result and outcome, we will expect you to achieve well.

Behaviour and attitudes

We have high expectations for learners' behaviour and conduct and will apply these expectations consistently and fairly.

Personal development

We will ensure that the curriculum offer extends beyond the academic, technical or vocational. It will provide for you a broader development, enabling you to develop and discover your interests and talents.

Leadership and management

Our leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training for all. This is realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice.

Quality of education

Our team provides the education that learners need at each stage of their learning journey, and they take the time to understand each individual's needs in order to provide a high quality service.



ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE

We aim to ensure that all assessment decisions are fair, consistent and are based on valid judgements. We also aim to ensure all examinations are held to the strictest conditions in line with awarding organisation requirements. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when a candidate may wish to question an examination result or assessment decision made.

In order to deal with such situations, we have processes for reviews, appeals, assessments and complaints which are designed to:

- Provide a means of reviewing and, where appropriate, revising decisions made by a lecturer
- Be fair and non-discriminatory to all parties
- Be readily accessible and easy to use
- Have realistic target time limits for each stage
- Keep both the candidate and the lecturer informed of the progress of the review or appeal

All candidates have the right to appeal against any assessment decision made by their lecturer following which they feel that:

- Their learning needs have not been met
- They have been discriminated against
- They disagree with an assessment decision

For a full copy of the examinations and assessment appeals procedure contact the Examinations Officer.

RECORD-KEEPING, CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA PROTECTION

We require all learners to inform us of any changes to their personal and contact details, such as address, tel number etc. Failure to tell us of any changes may result in additional charges.

Information will be treated as confidential and will only be used to:

- Verify your identity where this is required
- Contact you by post, email or telephone
- Understand your needs and how they may be met
- Deliver our services and meet our legal responsibilities
- Securing funding from government and non-governmental organisations for your course or programme
- Provide joined up services to you
- Process financial and non-financial transactions
- Maintain our records
- Carry out and provide research
- Prevent and detect crime, fraud or corruption

Further information on how we use your data can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-privacy-notice and

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Contact/Information.aspx#privacynotices>



EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

You may have enrolled on a course that leads to a nationally recognised qualification, which will be assessed by examination, coursework, or by you completing a portfolio. Prices for our courses are set on the basis that you intend to and do participate in the assessment. **The fee includes first attempt examination fees only.**

Resits and non-attendance fees for examinations will be charged. If you do not take the required assessment, you will pay the unsubsidised rate for the course, registration and examination fee.

You will be supported to achieve the qualification. We will tell you about the qualification, the course specification, the awarding organisation and how you will be assessed, provide you with regular feedback on how your work is progressing and measure and record your achievement.

You will need to present your work for assessment or attend examinations as directed by your lecturer. If anything happens that might prevent you from presenting satisfactory work at an assessment you should try and tell your lecturer beforehand. If you have any concerns about working towards the qualification please speak to your lecturer as soon as possible.

It is essential to understand the following terms in relation to your work, assessments and exams. Any action knowingly taken by a student which involves misrepresentation of their work or abilities and skills may be considered dishonesty and as such is an offence which Northumberland Skills believes should merit the application of very severe penalties. Learners are expected not to cheat in their work, exam and assessments.

Polishing: It is not acceptable at Northumberland Skills to submit a first draft of an assignment for the lecturer to give comments, feedback and suggestions, to then resubmit the work for a higher grade. Learners cannot fail to achieve and it does not accurately demonstrate learning has taken place. Learners are able to submit an assignment plan only for comment, no later than 7 full days before the assignment is due. The assignment plan can contain titles, bullet points and planned sources only.

Plagiarism: is used as a general term to describe taking and using another's thoughts and writings as one's own. Plagiarism can occur not only in essays and dissertations, but also in scientific experimentation, diagrams, maps, fieldwork, computer programmes, and all other forms of study where you are expected to work independently and produce original material. If a learner uses the work of others, they must either quote it or paraphrase it, but whichever method they choose, they must include a citation and reference. Learners must not simply copy materials from other learners, past or present, from written sources, from the Internet, or from any other source whether this is through cutting and pasting, rewriting or by any other means. Changing a few words within a copied piece of text does not render these original and still counts as plagiarism.

In short, work submitted by learners must be their own unless it is specifically indicated within the text through appropriate referencing that this is not the case – or where originality was clearly not a requirement of the assessment being undertaken.

Collusion: is the active cooperation of two or more learners to deceive examiners. You will be guilty of collusion if you knowingly allow any of your work to be acquired by another person for presentation as if it were that person's own work. If you offer to provide work to another student to be passed off as their own you are guilty of collusion.

More information can be found in the Examinations & Assessment Policy.

USE OF DATA

The majority of our programmes are supported by funds from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). We need to keep data for them.

We require you to complete a number of forms during your course, although we try to keep this to a minimum. Please co-operate with us by providing the information we require.

The privacy notice included on your enrolment form is issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Department of Education (DfE). It is to inform learners how their personal information will be used by the DfE, the ESFA (an executive agency of the DfE) and any successor bodies to these organisations.

For the purposes of relevant data protection legislation, the DfE is the data controller for personal data processed by the ESFA. Your personal information is used by the DfE to exercise its functions and to meet its statutory responsibilities, including under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and to create and maintain a unique learner number (ULN) and a personal learning record (PLR).

Your information will be securely destroyed after it is no longer required for these purposes. Your information may be used for education, training, employment and well-being related purposes, including for research.

Your information may also be shared with other third parties for the above purposes, but only where the law allows it and the sharing is in compliance with data protection legislation.

Further information about use of and access to your personal data, details of organisations with whom we regularly share data, information about how long we retain your data, and how to change your consent to being contacted, please visit: www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-privacy-notice



REFUNDS POLICY

This policy applies to all courses provided by Northumberland Skills, delivering on behalf of Northumberland County Council.

COURSE CANCELLATIONS

Tuition fee refunds will normally only be made where a course is cancelled or where the times or location of the course are significantly changed by Northumberland Skills and the learner is no longer able to attend.

In the case of a course cancellation, we will make every effort to offer an alternative that is comparable provision but where this is not possible tuition fees will be refunded as follows:

- Cancellation of the course prior to published start date – full refund of tuition fees
- Closure of the course within the first two weeks – full refund of tuition fees
- Closure of the course beyond the first two weeks – pro rata refund of tuition fees for remaining weeks not provided minus an administration fee of £5.00 per course

LEARNER WITHDRAWALS

Unfortunately, no refunds can be made where a learner decides to leave a course of their own volition, as a result of changes in the learner's personal circumstances, as a result of weather conditions preventing learner attendance when our campuses are open, or in the unusual case of them being asked to leave the course due to a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The only exception to the above is where a learner has to leave a course on medical grounds. Only the learner's own medical circumstances can be considered; unfortunately, this cannot be extended to include the medical circumstances of family and friends. Consideration will only be given to tuition fee refund requests where the learner is supported by evidence from the learner's GP or medical specialist that they are unfit to continue.

Evidence will normally be in the form of a fit note or letter on official headed paper from the GP or specialist. If granted, the refund will be pro-rata depending on the classes attended minus an administration fee of £5.00 per course.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR REFUNDS

Once a refund has been approved a refund will be made to the card on which the payment was initially made or, in the case of cheque or cash payments, a refund via cheque will be issued. Refunds will be processed as soon as possible but this may be up to 30 days during peak periods.



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Northumberland Skills is committed to ensuring the promotion of equality of opportunity for all members of the learning community. All forms of discriminatory behaviour are challenged and differences between individuals celebrated, to generate a culture where all staff and learners are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

We are keen to ensure that equality of opportunity underpins all policies, and treating everyone equally. Promoting, celebrating and valuing diversity is at the heart of our core values.

RESPECT

We will undertake to ensure all individuals are treated courteously and with respect. Beliefs, values and religious views will be respected and tolerance encouraged where individuals/groups have differences.

EXCELLENCE AND HIGH ASPIRATIONS

We will ensure that all members of the community are encouraged, supported and have equal opportunity to achieve their full potential. Pride will be taken in all achievements, and celebrated annually.

SUPPORT

Learners will be given equal access to support in their work or studies. We will make all reasonable adjustments to ensure individuals are given assistance and help where appropriate.

BRITISH VALUES

We believe in the fundamental British Values and their place within our own core values. Fundamental British values are democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.

DEMOCRACY

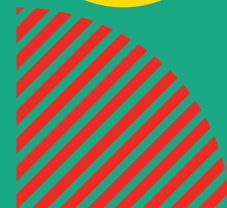
We like everybody to be involved fairly with decision making, for example in electing a new government. Learners and staff are also encouraged to be part of our service democracy by sharing their views and helping to shape the service through staff and learner voice events, focus groups and surveys.

INCLUSION

Diversity is not only valued, but also celebrated and promoted. We will ensure that individuals understand differences in others and that activities and opportunities are adjusted where appropriate to ensure equality of access for all groups.

BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

We will engender and foster relationships among learners and staff that reflect a positive and respectful culture. We will create an environment where bullying, child-on-child abuse or discrimination are not tolerated. If they do occur, staff will deal with issues quickly and effectively, and will not allow them to spread.





GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

We celebrate and promote understanding of international differences, encouraging all members of the community to develop a better appreciation, tolerance and respect for global issues.

ENTHUSIASM

We are passionate about the place we work and learn, and will seek to nurture a positive attitude amongst all of the community towards diversity, celebrating and exploring differences and valuing all individuals.

INTEGRITY

All inappropriate behaviour and actions against the spirit of the Equality Policy will be challenged and not tolerated. Staff are expected to act with integrity at all times in recognising and respecting individuals' differences.

LGBTQIA+

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual learners will not be denied access to courses or progression to other courses because of any aspect of their LGBTQIA+ identity. Any LGBTQIA+ learners will receive fair and equal treatment whilst studying.

The curriculum will be checked to ensure that it does not rely on or reinforce stereotypical assumptions about members of the LGBTQIA+ community and that it does not contain LGBTQIA+ - phobic material.

LGBTQIA+ abuse, harassment or bullying (name-calling, derogatory jokes, unacceptable or unwanted behaviour, and intrusive questions) is a serious disciplinary offence and will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with NCC anti-bullying procedure.

Northumberland Skills will provide a supportive environment for learners who wish their LGBTQIA+ identity to be known. However, it is the right of the individual to choose whether they wish to be open about their gender identity or sexuality. To 'out' someone without their permission is a form of harassment, and possibly a criminal offence.

All anti-LGBTQIA+ propaganda, in the form of written materials, graffiti, music or speeches will not be tolerated. The Learning and Skills Service undertakes to remove any such propaganda whenever it appears on the premises.

If you are LGBTQIA+ and want to be put in touch with other LGBTQIA+ residents, let us know and we can refer you to local social and support groups.

HEALTH MATTERS

Staff should be made aware of your medical needs in the event of an emergency. Please inform them of any relevant information to ensure you are properly cared for in the event of illness, accident or emergency.

We also have specific procedures we need to follow if you need us to administer or store any medication for you.

If you are attending a health or fitness enrichment activity you will be asked to reveal any medical condition that could affect your ability to participate. However gentle the fitness activity is, if you have a medical condition, you are advised to take advice from your GP.

You should always follow your lecturer's guidance about safe exercise. We cannot take responsibility or liability for personal injury if you have not disclosed medical information or have not followed instructions given.

You are advised to wear appropriate clothing and footwear to prevent injury and to enable you to fully participate in the sessions.

For further information or any concerns, inform any staff member.

SAFEGUARDING

We are fully committed to ensuring that consistent effective safeguarding procedures are in place to support all.

We are committed to safeguarding and ensuring all learners experience a secure, safe and welcoming environment in which they can learn. We work with learners to develop the skills necessary to take responsibility for their own safety and have specific arrangements to protect young people and vulnerable adults.



We have a culture of safeguarding that supports effective arrangements to:

- Identify learners who may need early help or who are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming or exploitation
- Help learners reduce their risk of harm by securing the support they need, or referring in a timely way to those who have the expertise to help

All concerns are passed through the members of staff who are trained as 'Designated Safeguarding Leads'.

There are a number of ways you can report concerns about yourself or someone else.

- You can report to your class lecturer or any member of staff at our campuses
- You can also contact our Designated Safeguarding Leads
- You can report via our online Safeguarding portal 'Tootoot'



Sometimes people aren't confident enough to speak to someone face-to-face about their concerns, for fear of being identified or worrying about perhaps making matters worse.

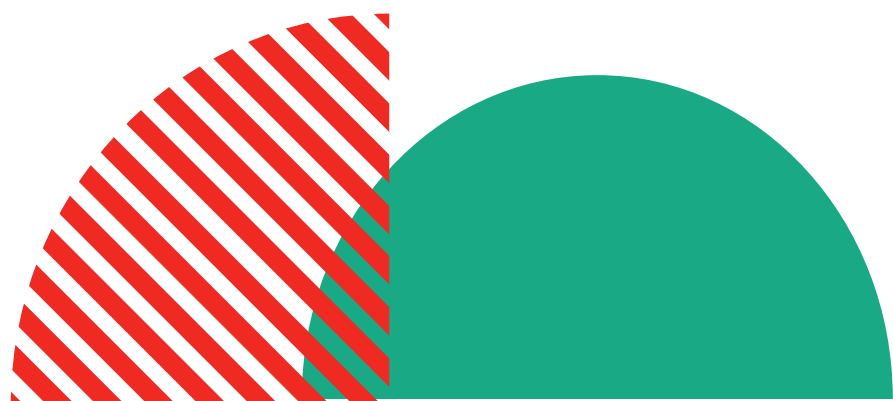
To reduce the stigma attached to having a voice, learners can use our online safeguarding platform and mobile device app to report confidentially to us. Learners can access tootoot at any time of day and can report their concerns, or on behalf of their peers using any web-enabled device.

Learners with iPhones, iPads and Android devices can even download the tootoot app to use on the move. All learners are anonymous at the point of reporting but identities can be disclosed to designated learner support staff. We have also placed the tootoot icon on all of our network computers. Just click on the tootoot icon and you are on the website. Posters are in every campus on display. All learners on induction will be introduced to the system.

For any concerns, our designated Safeguarding Lead is:

- Shona Richardson

Contact details are displayed at each campus.





KEEPING YOU SAFE

We aim to ensure that you feel safe and secure in our learning environments. Every learner will receive further information during induction.

E-SAFETY

All of our digital equipment has forensic software installed which is a sophisticated system that monitors, records and prevents computer misuse in our campuses. This allows a comprehensive and automatic protection for everyone who uses our equipment.

We take our duty of care seriously and take active steps to protect our learning community.

- You must not use or download material which may be offensive to others, download
- or forward any abusive material.
- You must not access, create or transmit material that is contrary to the law

Screen captures are taken all day, every day, of anything that could potentially be breaching our rules. We investigate all causes for concern.

An acceptable use policy is available from your campus. Any breaches in the policy are taken very seriously, and may result in your access to the network or course being removed. As part of your course, we will draw your attention to themes in E-Safety that we believe are important in protecting you as a technology user. You can ask us for advice on e-safety at any time.

PREVENT AND RADICALISATION

Northumberland Skills responds quickly to safeguarding concerns for children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable to the messages of extremism and the risks of radicalisation.

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental **British Values**, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

Radicalisation is the process by which people come to support terrorism, extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist groups.

PREVENT is a government strategy, its aim is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Early intervention is at the heart of PREVENT in diverting people away from being drawn into terrorist activity. PREVENT happens before any criminal activity takes place. It is about recognising, supporting and protecting people who might be susceptible to radicalisation. Our campuses are safe places to learn, and we intend to keep it this way.

Reporting concerns is everybody's business. If you have any PREVENT concerns, you can raise these concerns in exactly the same way as any safeguarding concern via Tootoot.

tootoot)))

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

At each stage of your learning journey, Northumberland Skills will prepare you for future success in your next steps. We will prepare you for life in modern Britain by equipping you to be responsible, respectful and an active citizen who contributes positively to society.

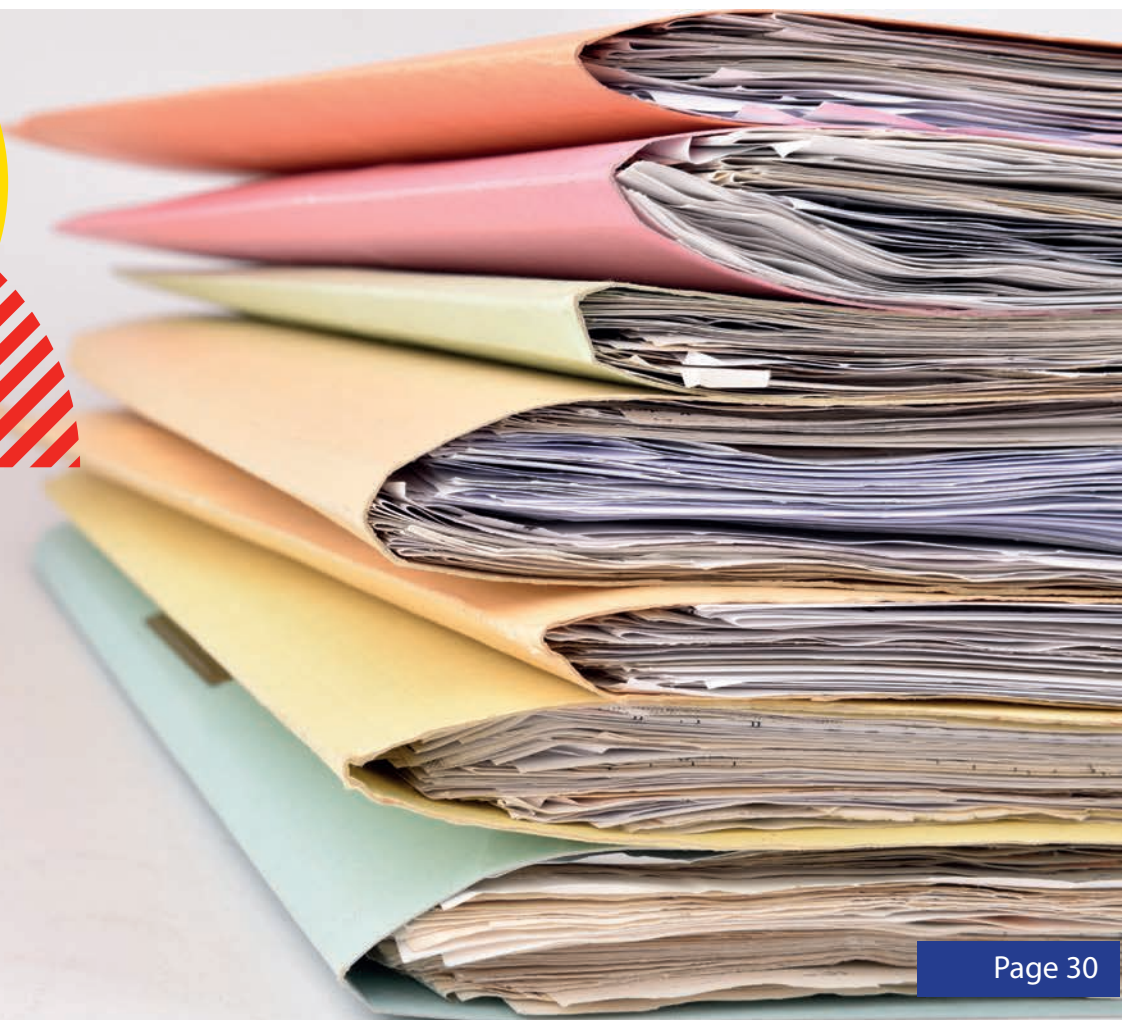
LEARNING RECORDS

Throughout your course you will be asked to complete a Personal Learning Record to record your learning journey. In the record, there is a learning log for you to fill in after each session and there is a course feedback questionnaire. You complete these during and at the end of the programme.

LEARNER SURVEYS

Learner voice is important to us and throughout your learning journey there will be opportunities for you to share your views and take part in focus groups. In addition, we may conduct national learner surveys on particular weeks during the academic year, which you may be asked to complete.

To ensure continuous improvement in the delivery and quality of our teaching and learning, an observer, quality assurer or OFSTED inspector may visit your class.





COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Northumberland Skills aims to:

- Actively gather feedback from learners throughout the academic year cycle
- Invite compliments and comments about the service at all times
- Provide a clear and transparent process for learners to follow to raise concerns or complaints about the service
- Learner voice and learner focus groups

We warmly welcome your feedback, compliments and comments. We use both positive and negative feedback to improve your learning experience.

Whilst we try our best to make sure your experience with us excellent, we know we sometimes don't achieve this. In these instances, we would like the chance to put this right as quickly as possible.

This relies on you telling us quickly if you think things aren't as good as they should be, and giving us the opportunity to properly investigate and take action.

We love it when learners talk to us directly about what we can do to help, rather than to someone else.

We also ask for learner and stakeholder feedback in a number of ways:

You can complete a Learner Voice Feedback Form or use the Learner Voice Padlet. In addition, by taking part in learner focus groups you can express your learner voice

WRITE TO US: Northumberland Skills, Alnwick Campus, Lindisfarne Road, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 1AX

EMAIL US: learn@northumberland.gov.uk

MEET US: You can book an appointment to meet with us at any of our campuses

CALL US: Telephone numbers are also available on our website at:
www.northumberlandskills.co.uk/contact

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We value your views and would like to encourage you to feedback at any time throughout your course. If you feel the matter warrants it, we have a process for making a complaint.

We hope to make it easy for you to express your views and receive a speedy and effective response.

If you feel you would like to complain, then you must observe the following procedure. It is important that you do not skip a stage in asking us to investigate your complaint.

Where your complaint involves requesting a refund of your course fees, you are also advised to read our Refunds Policy prior to submitting a complaint.

STEP 1

Speak directly to the person who, in your opinion, is responsible or to your Lecturer. We hope to resolve most complaints at this stage but, if you feel the matter remains unresolved, move on to formal step 2.

STEP 2

If you feel the response to your complaint is not satisfactory, you can write to the Campus Manager or Curriculum Lead. They will investigate your complaint and use their best endeavours to respond to you within 10 working days. At this stage, you must make your complaint in writing.

STEP 3

If you still feel the response to your complaint is not satisfactory, you can then write to:
Curriculum & Skills Manager, Northumberland Skills, Alnwick Campus, Lindisfarne Road,
Alnwick NE66 1AX

STEP 4

If you still feel the response to your complaint is not satisfactory, you can then write to:
Head of Skills and Employability, Northumberland Skills, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland
NE61 2EF

At this stage your complaint will also be considered by the Director of Education & Skills.

If you still feel the complaint has not been resolved, you can take this matter to the course's funding body. Before you do this, you must have followed steps 1-4.

We will let you know who the awarding organisation is for your course, provide contact details and help you to make your approach putting forward your complaint.



Scan the QR code to visit the Learner Zone and download a digital copy of this learner handbook.

Learner Handbook:
Version 4, updated Sep 2024