

Complaints Policy

The organisation is committed to providing education and services of the highest quality. It aims to provide a supportive environment for our learners and to be responsive to concerns or complaints from any source.

It is recognised that, in a complex organisation, problems may arise of a teaching-related or service-related nature. These problems need to be addressed in order to ensure that normal high standards are maintained. We regard feedback, both negative and positive, as a valuable resource to help us improve the quality of our services and provision.

The Complaints Procedure is designed to enable anyone interacting with the organisation to bring matters of concern about their experiences of our services and provision to our attention and to enable investigation of those concerns to achieve satisfactory resolution. This process provides us with welcome feedback to help us improve our services to generally, as well as helping us resolve any particular problems experienced by an individual complainant.

The procedure aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved. It is based on the belief that complaints should be taken seriously, should be investigated promptly and dealt with as closely as possible to their origins. For this reason, all complainants are asked to try to resolve the issue as informally as possible in the first instance within the relevant department or service area. The intention is that most issues can be effectively handled locally, in a spirit of conciliation. Therefore, the formal complaints procedure should be seen as a last resort in the search for a solution.

The organisation sees the use of its Complaints Procedures as a positive, non-threatening means for change to the benefit of all.

What Is A Complaint?

- The Complaints Procedure covers any expression of dissatisfaction. About standards of service, courses or facilities provided by the
- Provisions of the organisation affecting students, customers, partners or stakeholders.

The Complaints Procedure does not cover the following:

- Matters of academic judgement (i.e. matters related to academic performance)
- Requests for new or different services or provision
- Matters covered by separate policies or procedures, including:
 - Academic Appeals
 - Disciplinary-related issues
 - Equal Opportunities

Who Can Use The Complaints Procedure?

This procedure is for use by any student or prospective student, who seeks or receives a service from the organisation or any person who is directly affected by the activities of the organisation.

Guidelines for Making and Handling Complaints

All complaints will be taken seriously and, as far as is reasonable, be treated in a consistent fashion throughout the organisation. In line with our equal opportunities policy, all complainants will be treated equally and students who make complaints will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint. Only where complaints are proven to be malicious or vexatious might there be recourse to disciplinary investigation and possible sanction against the complainant. As a general rule, complaints which are made more than three months after the incident or action which is the subject of the complaint will not be investigated.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to confidentiality for all concerned. Any person named in a complaint, however, will be informed of the complaint and will have a right of reply as part of the investigative process.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints are very rare. While they will be logged and monitored, under normal circumstances they will not be investigated.

Third Party Complaints

Complaints must normally be made by complainants themselves and not by others acting on their behalf. However, young students (under the age of 16), vulnerable adults or any other students who would have difficulty making a complaint on their own behalf are fully entitled and encouraged to use whatever assistance is required from a third party to make their complaint effectively.

Accompaniment at a Complaint Hearing

In the event that a hearing is arranged to consider a complaint, any student, customer or member of staff asked to attend such a hearing has the right to be accompanied by a person of his/her choosing.

Help, Support and Representation

Advice and guidance on procedures and representation are available from the organisation. It is, however, the complainant's responsibility to seek advice and support when necessary.

Complaints to any Member of Staff will be acknowledged by the recipient. A copy of the complaint and acknowledgement will be passed to the Quality Manager Unit for logging. A copy of all further correspondence between the recipient of the complaint and the complainant will also be forwarded to the Quality Manager for recording until the matter is satisfactorily resolved or moves to the Appeal stage of the procedure.

How, Where, When And To Whom To Complain?

The procedure aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved and seeks to allow issues to be explored in a supportive, conciliatory context. Informal resolution is encouraged at every stage of the process. Use of the formal complaints procedure should only be taken as a last resort.

Stage 1 The Informal Stage

The organisation believes it is in everyone's interest to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, as close to the source of the problem as possible, and by informal means in preference to formal ones. Dealing with small problems or areas of concern as they arise will often prevent them becoming larger problems which are harder to resolve.

Therefore, complainants are encouraged to raise any issues at an early stage and to discuss the matter with the person responsible for the issue giving rise to the complaint. Many apparent concerns result from misunderstandings which can often be resolved quickly and easily by talking through the matter.

This can be done by:

- A telephone conversation with the appropriate person
- A face to face meeting with the appropriate person
- An email or letter to the appropriate person

Informal complaints should normally be responded to within 7 days of receipt of the complaint.

Stage 2 The Formal Stage

Every effort should be made by complainants and staff to use the informal mechanisms available to resolve issues of dissatisfaction. However, the organisation recognises that there may be problems that either have not been resolved, or are too serious to be dealt with informally. The organisation is also aware that there may be occasions

in which, for whatever reason, a complainant feels that it is impossible to raise an issue directly with the member of staff concerned. In any of these circumstances, the organisation's formal complaints procedure should be used.

A formal complaint should be submitted to the Quality Manager in writing. The statement of complaint should be as complete as possible and should include any supporting documentation (copies of previous correspondence, for example).

The Quality Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 48 hours.

The complaint will be referred to the appropriate person, who will carry out an investigation and report the findings back to the Quality Manager.

The Quality Manager will reply to the complainant in writing within 20 working days of its receipt.

At this stage, the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily with no further action being necessary. However, if the complainant is not satisfied with the response received as a result of Stage 2, the complaint may be taken to Stage 3 of the procedure.

Stage 3 The Appeal Stage

if a complaint has still not been satisfactorily resolved after Stage 2 of the procedure, a copy of the complaint, together with any documentary evidence relating to the complaint, should be sent to the CEO within 14 days of receiving the Stage 2 response. The CEO will decide any further action required and whether the complaint requires further investigation. The CEO will report back within 20 working Days of receipt of the complaint.