

## **Student Complaint Policy**

### **1. Definitions**

#### **Complaint**

For the purposes of this policy a student complaint, as defined by the OIA, is "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a university's action or lack of action, or about the service provided by or on behalf of the university."

#### **Feedback**

A student may provide feedback which will be taken into account by a School/Department or Service when reviewing its policies and operations, without invoking this policy. Students are encouraged to provide feedback to the appropriate School/Department representative or service provider in a prompt and constructive manner.

### **2. Overview of the Student Complaint Procedure**

There are 3 Levels to the ESE complaints procedure:

Level 1: Local Level (informal resolution). To make a complaint a student must start at Level 1

Level 2: Head of School/Service formal consideration

Level 3: Quality Assurance Department paper-based review

After the internal ESE – University Partner processes have been exhausted, complainants have the opportunity to have their complaint independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

### **3. Who can use the Student Complaint Procedure?**

Students at all ESE campuses may use this procedure.

This complaints procedure may only be used by an individual who is, or has been, registered as a student of ESE and who is not recorded as being a leaver (or, if they are a leaver, is complaining about events that occurred before they were a leaver, within the permitted timescales). Applicants wishing to make a complaint should seek information regarding Admissions feedback, appeals and complaints.

A group of students may use this procedure to make a collective complaint provided that one student identifies him/herself as the main contact for purposes of communication and has written consent from others that wish to be named as part of the complaint.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to do so personally.

Anonymous complaints will not be considered unless there are exceptional and evidence-based reasons to do so. In many circumstances, raising a concern anonymously could impede the investigation and communication of the outcome.

#### **4. What issues constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?**

The subject of the complaint should relate specifically to one or more of the following, or comparable issues:

Failure of ESE to meet obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks.

Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by ESE

Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision or administration including where applicable, that provided by a partner institution. (Please note: normally the student would be expected to follow the partner institution's complaints procedures in the first instance).

Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by ESE.

Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of ESE.

Complaints relating to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff are associated with the Anti-Harassment Policy and should be addressed to the Head of Quality & Standards.

If a student's complaint relates to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff and to matters which are eligible for consideration under the terms of the Student Complaints Policy, ESE reserves the right to appoint one investigating officer to consider the issues within the parameters of the published procedures for both the Anti-Harassment Policy and the Student Complaint Policy

Complaints about the behaviour of students towards other students are within the scope of the Academic Misconduct Policy.

#### **5. What issues do not constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?**

Challenges to the academic judgement of a member of staff and/or School. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator will not interfere with the operation of a University's academic judgement.

Dissatisfaction with a mark and/or the academic judgement of the School is not covered by the School's policies.

Cases where complaints are upheld and there has been a clear impact on an academic outcome may, however, lead to an academic conclusion e.g. allow a student a further attempt at an assessment.

Cases better suited to consideration under the Academic Appeals Policy, including:

- A concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding student progression, academic assessment and award.
- A concern about a decision made under specific regulations, such as fitness to practise
- A concern about a School decision relating to a mitigating circumstance claim on the basis of a procedural irregularity
- Disagreement with a policy/regulation rather than its application.

Complaints relating to applications to the School, which are considered separately.

Where a student raises issues which do not fall neatly into the category of either complaint or academic appeal, the School will notify the student which specific issues will be considered under which specific procedure and direct the student to the alternative appropriate procedure, for example the academic appeals procedure, for the remaining issues.

## **6. Principles of this policy**

Complaints should be treated seriously and students must not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint in good faith. However, it is expected that students or people communicating on behalf of a student will conduct themselves responsibly and treat the process and those members of the School involved in the process with respect at all times.

In all cases, it is desirable that complaints are resolved informally and quickly between the relevant parties, and that the formal process is only started if that fails. Evidence of an attempt at informal resolution will be required.

Mediation can be a useful means of resolving matters of complaint where the parties involved are willing to engage voluntarily in the process in an attempt to work things out. The School may make an offer of mediation to students at any stage of the Complaint Procedure.

Complaints must be substantiated with evidence, expressed in clear and succinct English and submitted within prescribed timescales.

Complaints submitted outside of the timescales stipulated in the procedure will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where there is good reason, supported by evidence, for the late submission.

The School is committed to ensuring that complaints are handled in accordance with its published procedure. Occasionally, it may be sensible for the School to deviate from procedure if strict adherence to it could give rise to perceptions of prejudice or bias.

Complaints form part of the University's process of quality review and improvement and are considered as providing valuable feedback rather than criticism.

Students will be notified early in the process if the remedy sought within the complaint is beyond the power of the School to deliver.

It is important for students to note that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator cannot consider matters which are or which have been the subject of court proceedings. Similarly, the School reserves the right to decline, suspend or to discontinue a complaint under the Student Complaint

Procedure, in the event that legal proceedings are commenced and the claim concerns the same subject matter as the complaint.

## **7. Recording and monitoring of complaints**

It is important that complaints are monitored in order to improve the student experience. The Academic Team will record and provide reports to indicate the nature of complaints and complainants, and resultant action.

Such reports will:

- Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure at various Levels: department, school, faculty, University;
- Feed directly into appropriate School-wide committees;
- Assist in identifying problems and trends across the School;
- Form the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved;
- Be made available to the Students Portal.

## **8. Related policies and procedures**

[Academic Appeals Policy](#)

[Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

[Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy](#)

[Anti-harassment Policy](#)

[Academic Regulations](#)