

STUDENT COMPLAINTS

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Description: New issue
Issued by: Quality Co-ordinator
Approved by: Quality Co-ordinator

7.2 Complaints Handling Processes:

7.2.1 The Institute shall take all complaints seriously and shall endeavour to improve the services it provides through listening; responding; recording and resolving students' dissatisfaction.

7.2.2 The Institute has in place a complaint handling process that is:

- Accessible, and places the complainant at the centre of the process.
- easy to use
- equitable with complaint handling principles that are consistently applied
- supports the sustainability of its quality assurance system

7.2.3 The aim of the Institute's complaint handling process is to resolve problems quickly and as close as possible to where the issue arose.

7.2.4 It is expected that most complaints can be dealt with to a satisfactory resolution at the first stage, that is, at the module or the area where the issue originated.

7.2.5 Where resolution cannot be reached, a complaint can be made to the Institute's Administration office, using the Student Complaints Form [see attachment 5.1]

7.2.6 Students who raise concerns shall do so without risk of disadvantage.

7.3. Stage 1 – Local Resolution

7.3.1 Students are advised to raise concerns as soon as possible (and no later than 15 working days) after becoming aware of an issue, directly with the module manager or the person in charge of area in which the issue has occurred.

7.3.2 At this stage in the process, a complaint should be made [reported] to the responsible person, either face-to-face; by phone; by email or letter.

7.3.3 Students should explain the nature of their complaint clearly and concisely, provide as many relevant details as possible and indicate what outcome they seek.

7.3.4 Actions under local resolution include review by the Dir. Academic Admin., where a complainant is not satisfied with the initial response received. The Student Complaints form should be completed.

7.3.5 When reviewing complaints, the Dir. Academic Admin. or their nominee shall where possible, hold face-to-face discussions separately with the student, and any relevant member of staff so as to:

- Determine, based on the available information, whether the complaint should be upheld, with reference to the specific action to address the issue sought by the student
- Communicate the outcome of the review [by email or letter] to the student within 15 working days.
- The communication shall inform the student that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of this process they may submit a complaint to Dir. Academic Admin. for formal investigation.

- It should also provide information on how they may do so and the timeframe within which the complaint must be raised (15 working days from the date of the email or letter was sent informing them of the outcome).

7.3.6 Where the timeframe of 15 working days for resolving the complaint cannot be met, the Dir. Academic Admin. or their nominee shall inform the student and respondent outlining the reasons for the delay and when it is anticipated that the outcome will be available instead.

7.4 Stage 2 - Institute Level Investigation

7.4.1 Stage 2 of the procedure deals with complaints that:

- a. could not be satisfactorily resolved at the local level (stage 1),
or
- b. due to their nature require investigation at Institute level from the outset.

7.4.2 Complaints made at stage 2 shall be handled directly by the Dir. Academic Administration and student affairs.

7.5 Making a formal Complaint

7.5.1 Formal complaints should be made using the Student Complaint Form [see attachment 5.1]

7.5.2 The completed form should be passed [handed; posted; emailed] to the Administrator.

7.5.3 The Administrator shall log the receipt of all complaints received and shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant within five working days.

7.6 Processing [stage 2] complaints

7.6.1 The Administrator shall open a 'File' in the name of the complainant. This file shall be used to store copies of all notes/documentation relating to the case, including a copy of the original completed Complaint Form,

7.6.2 This file shall have a 'Registry Page' - see attachment 5.2.

7.6.3 The file shall be treated as highly confidential with access being restricted to: the complainant and only those directly involved in the investigation.

7.6.4 The Administrator shall notify the Dir. Academic Admin. that an official complaint has been received.

7.7 Investigation

7.7.1 The Dir. of Academic Admin. shall appoint an 'uninvolved' member of the Programme Committee as an '*Examiner*' to investigate the matter.

7.7.2 The '*Examiner*' shall be given a copy of the 'File'.

7.7.3 The '*Examiner*' shall investigate the complaint, taking account of any documentation supplied by the complainant and information supplied by the

relevant area[s] of the Institute [including where the complaint involves an individual member of staff as respondent].

7.7.3 If the '*Examiner*' believes the need for an enquiry panel is warranted, they shall be empowered to co-opt two 'uninvolved' members of staff to assist as panel members.

7.7.4 The enquiry panel shall meet with both parties, the individuals involved and their witnesses if any [at separate times] to hear each side of the story, after which they shall consider the evidence and formulate a proposal for resolving the matter.

7.7.3 The '*Examiner*' shall write a report, including recommendations for resolution, and submit this to the Dir. Academic Admin. for final decision or referral to the Programme Committee and or the Academic Council.

7.7.4 The Dir. Academic Admin. shall further support a complaint enquiry as follows:

- Assess a complaint to ascertain whether it is malicious or vexatious or whether false information was submitted and, in such cases, shall inform the student in writing.
- Where a complaint is made at Institute level, before the matter was raised locally (stage 1) they shall, where appropriate, refer any matter back to the relevant person to try to resolve the matter locally, if possible.
- Inform the student and respondent in writing of the outcome(s) of the '*Examiner*' investigation and the final decision of the Committee.
- Inform the student that if they are not satisfied with the outcome they may raise their complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman.
- Where the timeframe of 15 working days for resolving the complaint cannot be met, the Student and the respondent shall be informed of the reasons for the delay and when it is anticipated that the outcome is likely to be available.

7.8 Outcomes Recommended

7.8.1 The decisions of the '*Examiner*' for student complaints shall be detailed in a report to the Dir. Academic Admin. who will inform the complainant and respondent of the outcomes.

7.9 Referral to the Office of the Ombudsman

7.9.1. If a student, having exhausted the Institute's internal complaint process and remains dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint they may complain to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Office of the Ombudsman
18 Lower Leeson Street
Dublin 2
Tel: +353 1 639 5600
LoCall: 1890 22 30 30
FAX: +353 1 639 5674
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

7.10 Processing and management of files relating to complaint:

- 7.10.1 Files generated as a result of this procedure shall be regarded as quality records and shall be maintained in accordance with procedure ref: SA/410.01 - *Control of Academic Quality Assurance Records*
- 7.10.2 The Administrator shall arrange for the safe storage and retrieval of all documents generated in the processing of this procedure.

SAMPLE

Attachment 5.1

Student Complaints Form

ref: AP/407.11 – 7.5.1

Student Complaints Form

Request to the Dir. Academic Admin. to review a complaint

For official use:
Ref No.....

Student Name: Student id number:

Programme: Year [e.g. 2013/14].

Please conduct a review of my complaint as set out below.

I have read the Institutes Student Complaints Procedure and I confirm that I have already tried to resolve the matter locally.

My complaint is:

.....
.....
.....
.....

In an attempt to resolve my complaint locally I have already communicated with the following people:

.....
.....
.....
.....

The following is the evidence supporting my complaint, and I have attached copies of any relevant documents:

.....
.....
.....
.....

To resolve my complaint, I would like the following to happen:

.....
.....
.....
.....

I am seeking financial redress and the amount in question is €

The following are the details with supporting evidence of the financial loss I have incurred.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Signature:

Date:

SAMPLE

Attachment 5.2

Student Complaints Register:

Form ref: AP/407.11 - 7.6.2

Complaint Form No:

Date of Receipt:

Student Name:

Student id number:

Programme:

Year :

Respondent Name:

If Student, id number:

Status:

Year :

Names of all parties involved:

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.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Part 2 Proposed Action:

Stage 1: **Was Stage 1** carried out? Yes No Was it successful? Yes No

Stage 2: Was matter moved to **Stage 2**? Yes No

Part 3 Stage 2:

Name of Examiner:

Names of Examining Panel, if formed:

.....
.....
.....

Part 4: Report by Examiner:

Were recommendations for resolution presented? Yes No

Dated:

Were recommendations accepted and acted upon? Yes No

Part 5 Was matter Referral to the Office of the Ombudsman? Yes No

Was resolution achieved? Yes No

Part 6: was matter reviewed for effectiveness? Yes No

Signed:

Dated

Position: