

STUDENT GRIEVANCE GUIDANCE

DEFINITION OF STUDENT GRIEVANCES

1. Student grievances are expressions of protest or dissatisfaction by a student, directed against specific persons – named staff members or students – in relation to treatment or actions perceived as unfair or unreasonable. For all other expressions of dissatisfaction, the Complaints Procedure must be used.
2. A grievance must be regarded as formal if it is of a serious nature and/or cannot be satisfactorily resolved on an informal basis by the college department or individual against whom it is directed.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3. Wherever possible, staff should endeavour to resolve grievances informally. Aggrieved students should be treated with courtesy and sensitivity at all times. Staff should make every effort to avoid confrontation.
4. Staff members who receive a written formal grievance will forward it to the relevant Head. Additionally, they must inform their own line manager. If there is any doubt, the grievance should be sent to the Corporate Head of Student Services who will then direct it to the appropriate Head.
5. If for any reason a student wishing to register a formal complaint or appeal is not in a position to submit it in writing for themselves, they will be given all necessary assistance.
6. If the person who would normally deal with a grievance is actually the subject of that grievance, an alternative member of staff with a similar level of seniority will perform their role.

RESOLVING STUDENT GRIEVANCES

7. It is to be hoped that most difficulties raised by students can be resolved in a friendly and informal way. If a student with a grievance approaches a member of staff, they will normally be referred to their Personal Tutor in the first instance. Where appropriate, they may be referred directly to the Senior Tutor.
8. If an allegation is serious, they will either be advised to write directly to the appropriate Head, or the member of staff will document details and forward them to the Head on their behalf.
9. At any stage, a student will have the right to be accompanied by a friend or other chosen representative (other than a legal representative).
10. In all cases, students will be treated fairly and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.
11. Students who make malicious or unfounded allegations against staff members may be subject to disciplinary action.

Stage 1 - Resolution by Personal Tutor

12. Any student with a grievance should normally discuss the matter first with their Personal Tutor (if the grievance is against the Personal Tutor, students should approach the Senior Tutor directly).
13. The Personal Tutor will examine the nature of the grievance and any supporting information/evidence and respond as soon as possible with advice and guidance as to how to proceed from this point. Depending upon the seriousness of the grievance, the Personal Tutor may consult the Senior Tutor or other designated Senior Member of Staff and advise the student to apply directly for a Grievance Hearing.

Stage 2 - Resolution by Senior Tutor or other designated Senior Staff Member

14. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage I, within 10 College days s/he, or their representative should refer the matter to the appropriate Senior Tutor or other designated Senior Member of Staff who will attempt to resolve the grievance informally.
15. If the grievance cannot be resolved and the student remains dissatisfied, the grievance should be put in writing and sent to the relevant Head.

GRIEVANCE HEARINGS

16. The Head will review the grievance and decide whether a grievance hearing is justified. If not, s/he will refer the matter to a manager who has not previously been involved and who will attempt to resolve the matter informally. *The decision not to offer a hearing will not be taken without consulting BOTH the Customer Services Manager and Corporate Head of Student Services.*
17. Where necessary, the Head will convene a hearing at which the grievance can be examined. The hearing will normally take place within 5 working College days and will involve the Head, the Corporate Head of Student Services' nominee, one other Senior Member of Staff, the student and a friend/representative of their own choosing.
18. Staff participating in the hearing will familiarise themselves with the available evidence prior to conducting the hearing.
19. The student will be given the opportunity to present her/his grievance to the hearing, and the Head will send her/him a written decision in relation to the grievance (with a copy to other members of the hearing) within 5 working College days.

FORMAL INVESTIGATIONS

20. In exceptional circumstances, or in complex cases involving related multiple grievances and counter grievances, the Head may conduct a formal investigation during the course of which all the issues and associated substantive evidence will be examined. A report outlining the main findings of the investigation should be produced within 5 college working days of the conclusion of the investigation.

21. If the findings of the investigation warrant it:
 - a. One or more grievance hearings may be convened
 - b. The student disciplinary procedure may be invoked
 - c. The staff disciplinary procedure may be invoked.

APPEALS

22. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a grievance hearing, s/he may appeal. This appeal must be sent in writing to the Corporate Head of Student Services who will review the way in which the investigation/hearing was conducted and, in most cases, make the final decision as to whether the grievance has been fully and fairly dealt with.
23. If the Corporate Head of Student Services considers that there are sufficient grounds, s/he may establish an Appeal Panel comprising her/himself, or a nominee, and three college managers who have not previously been involved.
24. This Appeal Panel will arrange to sit without undue delay.
25. Notes of the Appeal Panel proceedings and decisions will be kept.
26. The student will be given the opportunity to put her/his case and be accompanied by a friend/representative.
27. In considering the appeal, the Panel will examine, amongst all other relevant factors, whether:
 - a. The grievance has been dealt with fully in accordance with this procedure and the principles of natural justice.
 - b. All evidence relevant to the grievance has been taken into account.
28. Within 5 working college days, the student will be notified in writing of the Appeal Panel's decision, which will be final.
29. Notes taken at the appeal hearing will be retained along with any written evidence presented to the Appeal Panel.

REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

30. The Customer services manager will conduct a termly review of:
 - a. Grievances dealt with by Heads
 - b. Appeals proceedings and outcomes.
31. The review findings will be reported in writing to the CEO who will initiate any necessary follow-up action.