

# Student Complaints Investigation Procedure

## Section 1 - Introduction

### Purpose and Parent Policy

(1) This procedure outlines the steps required for a student to raise a complaint with the College under the [Student Complaints Policy](#). The College encourages students to raise issues of concern informally to enable resolution without recourse to the formal complaints procedure, where possible.

### Responsibilities

#### Student Responsibilities

(2) The student is responsible for the initiation of the process and the provision of any evidence in support of their complaint.

#### Staff Responsibilities

(3) The Registrar is responsible for the implementation of the [Student Complaints Investigation Procedure](#).

(4) The Student Support Officer is available to support the student through the informal complaints process.

## Section 2 - Procedure for Investigating Student Complaints

### Part A - Procedure for Informal Complaints

(5) Before invoking the formal complaints procedure, students are advised (but not required) to raise the matter informally with the subject of their complaint or the Student Support Officer.

#### Raising an Informal Complaint

(6) Initial informal action can be initiated orally or in writing. If submitted in writing, it is not considered a formal complaint at this stage and no record is retained if the matter is concluded at this level.

(7) The Student Support Officer attempts to mediate a satisfactory resolution through informal communication with the student and the subject of the complaint.

(8) Where appropriate, the Head of School/Programme Director, or nominee, can also communicate with the student and the subject of the complaint (if applicable) if this assists the informal resolution.

#### Outcomes

(9) The possible outcomes are:

- a. The complaint is resolved: The process concludes here and no formal record is retained.
- b. Where the complaint is not resolved through informal discussions, either:
  - i. The student decides not to pursue the matter further.
  - ii. The student makes a formal complaint.

## **Part B - Procedure for Formal Complaints**

### **Submitting a Formal Complaint**

(10) Formal complaints are submitted in writing to the Registrar.

(11) Complaints should be factual, specific, comprehensively documented and supported by appropriate evidence.

(12) Valid complaint submissions contain the following:

- a. Student name and student number
- b. All information relevant to the complaint to include dates, locations and details of any witness
- c. Details of any previous efforts to resolve the matter

(13) Complaints should normally be made within five working days of the alleged incident, matter or concern.

(14) Where a complaint is not made within five working days of the alleged incident, matter or concern, a rationale and, where relevant, evidence must be provided to explain this delay.

(15) In any instance, a complaint will not be accepted where the matter complained of took place more than six weeks in the past, other than where an informal process was undertaken within the six-week period.

### **Receiving and Investigating a Complaint**

(16) The Registrar acknowledges receipt of the complaint to the student within five working days.

(17) If a formal complaint is received by another member of Staff or Faculty, they forward it to the Registrar as soon as possible.

(18) The Registrar appoints an independent and competent Investigating Manager appropriate to the facts of the complaint.

(19) The Registrar, at this point, advises the subject(s) of the complaint and provides this person(s) with the details of the nature of the allegations and invites a response.

(20) The response is considered by the Investigating Manager.

(21) The Investigating Manager may arrange to discuss the complaint with the student or the subject(s) of the complaint.

(22) The purpose of the discussion is to establish facts and to seek clarification. The Investigating Manager is not authorised to give a viewpoint or decision relating to the complaint.

(23) A note-taker may accompany the Investigating Manager to create an accurate record of the discussion.

(24) Following the discussion, a summary of the discussion including facts and clarifications obtained is circulated to all parties to confirm accuracy.

(25) The Investigating Manager:

- a. Interviews the subject of the complaint
- b. Interviews any material witnesses (if possible and agreed to by the witnesses)
- c. Prepares a report for the Registrar

## **Valid Complaint**

(26) The Registrar considers the Investigating Manager's report and determines whether the complaint is valid.

(27) The Registrar refers valid complaints to the Complaints Committee of the Academic Board.

(28) Where the complaint is not considered valid, the process concludes and the Registrar notifies the student of the decision, the rationale for it and the appeals mechanism available.

## **Complaints Committee**

(29) The Complaints Committee comprises three persons drawn from the panel established by the Academic Board for this purpose, as specified in the [Student Complaints Policy](#).

(30) The Complaints Committee meets to agree the findings and to determine a fair resolution.

## **Outcomes**

(31) The Registrar formally responds in writing to all relevant parties to inform them of:

- a. The findings of the investigation
- b. Any decisions made
- c. The reasons for those decisions
- d. Any subsequent actions required by the College or any other party involved

(32) Where the result of the complaint includes consequent caution or recommendations, the Registrar notifies the appropriate person or committee, without undue delay.

(33) It should be noted that there could be instances where it is not possible for a decision to be reached and the College attempts to provide further clarity to the student making the complaint while also providing guidance to the subject of the complaint in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of any such incidents.

## **Right of Appeal**

(34) Students may appeal the outcome of the Complaints Committee within five working days of receipt of the communication, using the relevant appeal procedure, and must be advised of this at the point of communication of the decision.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	2nd November 2020
<b>Review Date</b>	2nd November 2023
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Academic Board
<b>Approval Date</b>	23rd September 2020
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	Quality Assurance