



Stratford College London

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Complaints Policy and Procedure

AIM

In order to facilitate and coordinate the reporting of concerns, grievances and dissatisfaction within the college environment, this complaints policy and procedure has been designed to guide the aggrieved and the concerned in matters which fall within the spectrum of operation of this college.

By this procedure, we hope to establish a sound mechanism according to which all complaints and concerns of those who have relations with this college may have access for redress.

This policy and procedure is formulated in three parts. In the event of a complainant not being satisfied at one particular stage he/she may request to proceed to the next stage. The complaints coordinator will facilitate all these processes.

PRINCIPLES

In order to ensure fairness, impartiality and effectiveness, the following principles shall be adhered to:

- Where possible we shall encourage informal means of resolution
- The procedure shall be accessible
- Shall be publicised within the college community
- Simple to understand by people of all educational levels
- Implemented and followed at the utmost impartial levels
- Resolution of concerns and complaints shall be swift within the established time-limit framework
- All stakeholders shall be kept informed of progress being made
- Where necessary a full investigation by an independent person may be carried out
- Respect for peoples' confidentiality
- All points at issue must be addressed
- An effective response and appropriate redress for all issues at stake.



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THE FORMAL PROCEDURE

Stage 1

Concerns may be raised at this initial stage of the process. Staff should do their utmost best at finding a resolution. Success at this stage is very important because it helps to reduce the number of complaints, which become protracted or move to the formal stages. Where the staff member receiving the complaint feels too compromised to handle the complaint, the coordinator must refer the complaint to another staff member. In addition, where the complainant feels uncomfortable to discuss their concern with a particular member of staff, this would be resolved by assigning that duty to another member of staff. The coordinator should record all the developments at this initial stage.

Where there are elements of criminality or complaint of a very serious nature the Director of Studies must be informed immediately on the same day. He would then take steps to appoint a Hearing Panel and inform the Academic Board, Social Services and/or the Police if necessary.

Stage 2

Where the complaint is not resolved or complainant is not satisfied with the development at stage one, the issue moves on to Stage 2 within 3 days. At this stage, the complaint goes to the Director of Studies for review and it must be in writing. The complaints form is available at the front desk and must be completed fully. The Director may if he so wishes delegate a staff member to conduct an investigation and report but that does not have any part to play in action to be taken. The person appointed in this case should have no personal interest in the matter, to ensure fairness. Where the complaint is about the Director himself, then it has to be handled by the Academic Board appointed Panel.

Stage 3

This is the Board's Appeal Panel Stage. Where a party is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 the matter moves on to this Stage within 3 days. The coordinator must facilitate these processes but a person appointed as clerk of the Panel should handle all Panel activities. He/she should be the centre for information and coordination of Panel activities, schedules and documentation.

The Panel should consist of **at least three people**. Only people who were not directly involved in previous consideration of the complaint are eligible to serve on this panel. One of the three members must be independent of the management and running of the college.

Complainant may choose to be accompanied by a person of their choice to the panel hearing if they so wish.



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Panel investigates and deliberates on the matter; makes findings and recommendations. The clerk of the Panel should ensure that the complainant, proprietor or Director of Studies and where appropriate, the relevant person complained about are given a copy of the findings and recommendations.

The chair of the Panel (who is appointed by the members) should drive this stage, facilitating the process and giving fair hearing to all parties.

PANEL DECISION

Chair of Panel would notify the complainant, the person complained about and the Director of Studies or proprietor, of Panel decision in writing, explaining if there are any rights of appeal and if so where the appeal should be lodged.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All records and correspondence relating to an individual would be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the Education Act (2002) requests access for them.

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR (OIA)

The Higher Education Act 2004 required the appointment of an independent body to run a student complaints scheme in England and Wales and the OIA was chosen to operate this scheme in 2005.

Where a student has exhausted the internal college complaints mechanisms and still feels that the outcomes are not satisfactory, there is opportunity to submit a formal complaint to the OIA. College will guide students on how to make use of the OIA. Further information on the OIA can be accessed at: (<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/online-complaint-form.aspx>)

Their role is to review individual complaints by students against higher education providers. The OIA has no regulatory powers over providers and cannot punish or fine them.



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Flowchart Summary of Dealing with complaints

