



Chapter 7

Student Complaints Procedure

De Montfort University's Students Complaints Procedure (SCP) has been developed to reflect the framework of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the Higher Education Ombudsman. It is based on "The Good Practice Framework: handling student complaints and academic appeals"¹ and complements the advice and guidance on concerns, complaints and appeals published by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education²

The University recognises the importance of effective complaints management as both a tool and a source of information for service improvement. The University recognises the right of current Students and Alumni to raise issues of concern about the services provided by the University.

If you want to understand how we process your personal data, and our legal basis for doing so, please refer to our Privacy [Notice](#).

The Student Complaints Procedure should be read in conjunction with the other University's statements and policies which might apply to the concern the Student wishes to raise; which include but not limited to Academic Appeals, the Dignity & Respect Policy, General Regulations Affecting Students, Student Code of Conduct, Student Disability Policy, No Space For Hate Policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy, Research Misconduct and Whistleblowing. Links to these and other related information can be found on the [Academic Support webpages](#).

1 Who can use the Student Complaints Procedure

1.1 The Student Complaints Procedure (SCP) can be used by all Students of the University. Students on courses leading to awards of De Montfort University but who are based at the campus of a partner organisation, must first exhaust the student complaint procedure before they have access to the SCP)

1.2 All complaints must be raised within three months of the matter becoming apparent.

¹ The good practice framework: handling student complaints and academic appeals Office of the Independent Adjudicator Revised December 2016
² UK

² UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance, Concerns, Complaints and Appeals Assurance Agency November 2018



1.3 Alumni can use the SCP to raise complaints once they have graduated but the matter being raised must have occurred within three months of the complaint being submitted.

2 What can be dealt with under the Student Complaints Procedure

2.1 A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more



3.4 Complaints relating to behaviour by Staff and Students.

3.4.1 In matters of Student behaviour, allegations that Students are in breach of the University's Dignity & Respect Policy will be dealt with by the University Security Investigation team. Reports about Student behaviour may be made by contacting the University's Security Team - security@dmu.ac.uk.

3.4.2 In matters of Staff behaviour, concerns around a staff member's behaviour should be raised promptly with an appropriate staff member within the Faculty/Directorate, i.e. a Personal Tutor to support, where possible an appropriate, an informal resolution. Where this not appropriate and/or a student remains dissatisfied with the informal resolution, they may raise formal complaint by contacting the University's Security Team – security@dmu.ac.uk or [via the Academic Support Office](#). The complaint will be shared with HR and the relevant Senior Manager (typically the Deputy Dean) in the Faculty and/or Directorate with responsibility for responding to the complaint. The relevant Senior Manager will review and undertake any necessary investigations, with support from the University's HR department, before providing a written outcome to the complaint.

(Students should be aware that there is a separate [Dignity at Work Policy.pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#) in place for staff. The professional expectations outlined within this policy do mirror those outlined in the student Dignity and Respect policy.)

3.4 Further support for Students who are survivors or witnesses to misconduct by either Staff or Students is offered through [Healthy DMU](#).

3.5 Complaints about the Students' Union.

Complaints relating to the Students' Union services, facilities, societies and staff are not eligible for consideration through the Student Complaints Procedure. Further details of the Students' Union Complaint Procedure can be found on the [DSU website](#).



4 Focus on Early Resolution

4.1 The University is committed to providing a high-quality service to our Students throughout their courses of study to graduation and beyond as part of the DMU global community. The University actively encourages feedback on all aspects of the teaching and learning experience and other services provided by the University. However, there may be occasions when the level of service received falls short of that which might reasonably be expected.

4.2 The aims of the Student Complaints Procedure are:

- to resolve complaints in a timely, effective and fair manner;
- to resolve complaints in the area in which they arise;
- to improve service delivery and the Student experience

4.3 Options for early resolution, such as mediation (facilitated discussion) see section 8, should be considered wherever possible. A fair and thorough investigation of formal complaints will be undertaken when necessary.

4.4 The University is committed to providing an inclusive environment. No person (Student, Staff or visitor) shall be unlawfully discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of their race, colour, ethnic or natural origin or

5) ((3)a(8(1) imentality, gender, marital status, age



7.2 Early Resolution is the stage where most concerns should be resolved swiftly and effectively, at the point at which a complaint is made, or as close to that point as possible. Early Resolution can be used for difficult interpersonal matters where early resolution strategies such as mediation may be beneficial see paragraph 4 of this chapter.

7.3 Formal Complaint investigated by the Office of the Student Appeals and Conduct Officer is appropriate where a Student wishes to escalate their complaint formally under the grounds outlined in paragraph 6.6 of this chapter.

7.4 Review by the Chair of the University Complaints Committee (UCC) which may be referred to a full panel hearing of the UCC. This is the Student's right to appeal the out-2.1 (e)J5 ()TJ 0.153 Tw T* [(6a)3 na gsh7 istststrsone in Stud deude for asy62be

7.4



9 Making a Complaint

9.1 The University actively encourages Students to raise any low level concerns initially by talking to a member of the University community. That could be their Programme team, Personal Tutor or another appropriate member of staff, or the Student Course Representative or they may seek independent advice from the Students' Union by email at dsuadvice@dmu.ac.uk. Low level concerns could be:

- Access to a workspace
- Confirmation of deadlines
- Options available in the canteen
- Securing letters for Council Tax purposes

9.2 Students are encouraged to try and resolve their concerns independently utilising the support services that the University can offer.

9.3 If concerns are not resolved satisfactorily or it is not appropriate to try and resolve the issue informally Students can submit an Early Resolution Form found on our [Academic Support webpages](#).

9.4 Students will be expected to engage personally with the University when raising a complaint (see the Universi







12.11 If the complaint is upheld by1 (nt)-3 (i)1 (s)0.9 (utU (uCC(i)1 (s)0.9 utU (un9 (uv.1



- 15.2 It may be difficult to investigate complaints without revealing the identity of the Student.
- 15.3 It may be possible to make preliminary investigations without revealing the identity of the Student but if the allegations are serious or the case is complex, the Student may need to be identified if the case is to be pursued further. In such instances the Student Appeals and Conduct Officer (or their designated nominee) will discuss the situation with the Student before the case proceeds.
- 15.4 The person or department which is the subject of a complaint may recognise the Student because of the issues or allegations raised.
- 15.5 No Student will suffer reprisals, academic or otherwise, for making a complaint.
- 15.6 Students may also raise concerns internally about malpractice through the [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

16 Group complaints

16.1



16.4 Complaints submitted by a group will receive a group response. Outcomes for group complaints cannot be tailored for individual Students. If a Student seeks an individual outcome, an individual complaint must be submitted.

17 Frivolous, malicious or vexatious complaints

17.1 The University reserves the right to decline to investigate a complaint at the Early Resolution or Formal Complaint stage if it considers it to be frivolous, malicious



Appendix 1

* The University will endeavour to adhere to the published timelines but there may be occasions that this is not possible. The University will inform Students of any delays in the process.

Stage 1: Early Resolution

University Response Timeline	Considerations made	Outcome
<p>Outcome sent to student within 15 University working days from the date of receipt. *</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • What specifically is the complaint about and which area(s) of the University are involved? What outcome is the Student hoping to achieve? • Is the complaint straightforward and likely to be resolved or responded to with minimal investigation or by using an existing University policy? • Can another member of Staff assist in seeking informal resolution if I am not in a position to do so? What assistance or support can be provided to the Student in taking this forward? Should the Student Appeals and Conduct Officer (or their nominee) be asked if mediation might be appropriate in this case? 	<p>Either:</p> <p>Complaint upheld/partially upheld and remedy offered</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Complaint dismissed (100%)</p>



Stage 2: Formal Complaint and Investigation by the Office of the Student Appeals and Conduct Officer

University Response Timeline	Considerations made	Outcome
<p>Outcome sent to student within 15 University working days from the date of receipt. *</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the specific, key elements to the complaint? • Why was Local Resolution at Stage 1 unsuccessful? Was any potential resolution offered? • What does the Student seek to achieve by escalating the complaint to Stage 2? • Do the Student's expectations appear to be reasonable and achievable? • Should the Office of the Student Appeals and Conduct Officer be asked if mediation might be appropriate in this case? 	<p>Either:</p> <p>Complaint upheld/partially upheld and remedy offered</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Complaint dismissed with an explanation why</p> <p>The Student will be informed of the outcome in writing via email (including how to escalate to the Review stage and on what permissible grounds)</p>

Student Response timeline – 10 University working days from receipt of outcome in writing; after this time the complaint will be closed by the University



Stage 3: Review by the University Complaints Committee

University
Response