

# PROCEDURE FOR CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS BY PERSONS EXTERNAL TO THE UNIVERSITY



The University aims to provide a quality service which meets the highest expectations of its staff. It welcomes all constructive feedback on its activities, whether positive or negative, and understands that, from time to time, people or organisations external to the University may be dissatisfied or concerned with the way the University, its staff or students have acted. The University will respond positively, where necessary, by improving procedures, correcting mistakes and learning from experience. This procedure aims to provide a mechanism which will deal with genuine concerns or complaints of impropriety, irregularity, misconduct, poor performance or ineffectiveness against Middlesex University in a timely and open way.

## 1. Who may raise a concern or complaint?

- Anyone who is affected by the activities of the University including those receiving or seeking a service or who have been subject to a decision of the University.
- Students may not use this procedure and are directed in the first instance to the University Regulations. Copies can be obtained from Academic Registry or by downloading from the Internet at <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/regulations/>
- Staff may not use this procedure and are directed in the first instance to the staff complaints procedure at [http://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/services/HR/service\\_conditions.html#Disandcomp](http://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/services/HR/service_conditions.html#Disandcomp)

## 2. Before you raise a concern or complaint

Consider whether there are more appropriate procedures to make your point such as suggestion schemes or other feedback mechanisms.

## 3. What information should the concern/complaint contain?

- The background to the concern/complaint including dates and times of any particular incidents and the names of any people against whom you are complaining or who can provide evidence in support of your concern/complaint.
- Any specific issues which you want to be addressed.
- What outcome(s) you hope to achieve from the concern/complaints process.
- Concerns or complaints should not contain offensive or abusive language – please always try to be polite. Vexatious and malicious complaints (ie repeated or persistent complaints which are trivial or untrue, made purposely to abuse this concern/complaints procedure) or those accompanied by abusive or aggressive behaviour will be excluded.

## 4. Raising an initial concern

- 4.1 Concerns can often be resolved satisfactorily and dealt with quickly on an informal basis. If possible, talk informally to the person most directly involved in the situation

you wish to raise your concern about and as soon as possible after the situation arises. You should, in any event, raise your concern within three calendar months of the event. If you are unsure of who should deal with your concern you may direct it to Teresa Kelly ([t.kelly@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:t.kelly@mdx.ac.uk)), Clerk to the Board of Governors, who will direct to the most appropriate person on your behalf.

4.2 The staff member will attempt to resolve the concern and, within 7 working days of it being received, will write to you with one of the following outcomes:

- The concern has been resolved.
- The concern requires more time to investigate the matter(s) raised.
- The concern can be resolved (in a specified time, if possible).
- The concern cannot be resolved in the way you require and you can pursue a formal complaint if you wish.

Please note that concerns/complaints regarding the conduct of staff will be investigated in accordance with the staff disciplinary procedures.

## **5. Making a formal complaint**

### **5.1 Stage 1 – Initiating a formal complaint**

- 5.1.1 To initiate a formal complaint you must complete a complaint form (Appendix 1). Forms are available from the Clerk to the Board of Governors' office (contact [t.kelly@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:t.kelly@mdx.ac.uk)). Formal complaints must be submitted within three months of the issue complained about occurring or within 10 working days of your receipt of the outcome to your informal complaint.
- 5.1.2 Completed forms will be passed to the appropriate Dean of School, Director or Head of Service who will acknowledge receipt (and, if possible, make an initial response) within 7 working days. S/he will then undertake a full investigation. If you are unsure about the identity of the person to whom you should submit the form, you can send it to: Teresa Kelly, Clerk to the Board of Governors, Middlesex University, Hendon campus, The Burroughs, London NW4 4BT who will forward it to the appropriate person.
- 5.1.3 A full and considered response will be made within 30 calendar days of receipt of your complaint. If the investigation cannot be completed in that time for good reason (such as staff unavailability due to holidays) or the matter is complex, you will be advised of a revised timescale.
- 5.1.4 If the complaint relates to the conduct of a member of staff, this will be investigated under the staff disciplinary procedure. You will receive a response in accordance with the timescale of that procedure and will be advised whether or not a disciplinary sanction has been imposed on the staff member concerned (the University reserves the right to maintain confidentiality as to the exact details of any such sanction). This will signal the conclusion of the matter. No stage 3 Final Review process is available for staff disciplinary matters.

### **5.2 Stage 2 – Final Review**

- 5.2.1 If you are dissatisfied with the decision from Stage 1, you may refer the matter to the appropriate member of the University's Executive Team. The letter you receive at the end of Stage 2 will tell you who this is but it will usually be one of the following:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic): complaints against students.
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International, Marketing and Partnerships): complaints about University partners both home and abroad
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Finance and External Relations): complaints about financial and external relation services supplied by the University.
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise): complaints about research or library services.
- Director of Corporate Services: complaints relating to any other service supplied by the University or complaints about the Board of Governors or otherwise relating to the business of the University Council or its committees.

5.2.2 To initiate a final review you must write to the appropriate person above and indicate in your letter who has previously dealt with your complaint and why you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

5.2.3 The final review will be completed within 30 calendar days of receipt of your letter and the outcome will be reported to you in writing. This decision is final and there will be no further avenue of review in the University. If there is an external review body to whom the matter can be referred (such as the Information Commissioner) we will advise you of this in the letter.

## **6. What you can expect from the University**

We will:

- Deal impartially with your concern/complaint within the time frames set out above and in a polite and straightforward way.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the concern/complaints process, revealing information to others only to the extent necessary to complete a proper investigation and make a considered response and keeping the record of your complaint separate from other records.
- Ensure that no complaint made in good faith will be used to your disadvantage in future.

**APPENDIX 1  
COMPLAINT FORM**

This form is to be completed under Stage 1 of the procedure for complaints by external persons.

**PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS OR TYPE**

**Personal Details**

Title: ..... Name:.....

**Address for correspondence in connection with the complaint:**

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

Postcode:..... Telephone/Mobile number:.....

**Outline of complaint, including dates of actions (please use additional sheets if necessary):**

**Please explain here what steps you have taken, together with dates, to resolve your complaint locally (as per the informal procedure):**

**Please explain why you are unsatisfied with the response you have received:**

**Please indicate what outcome or further action you are expecting:**

**As part of the investigation of your complaint any members of staff or students mentioned will be made aware of the complaint, as will the Dean/Head of the Academic or Service Department involved.**

**Declaration**

I declare that the information given in this form is true, and that I would be willing to answer further questions relating to it if necessary.

Signed:..... Date:.....

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AT THE ADDRESS BELOW:**

**Complaints relating to Schools:** Dean of the School to which the complaint relates.

**Complaints relating to Services:** Director or Head of Service to which the complaint relates.

**If you are unsure to whom the form should be returned (and for matters relating to Freedom of Information),** please send it to Teresa Kelly, Clerk to the Board of Governors who will ensure it reaches the appropriate recipient.

Middlesex University  
Hendon campus  
The Burroughs  
London NW4 4BT