

Student Complaints and Grievance Policy

Policy owner: Director of Student Life

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Middlesex University

Student Complaints and Grievance Policy

Introduction

1. The Student Complaints and Grievance Policy is designed to support students by ensuring that they have a fair, clear and supportive way to raise concerns, if something goes wrong with their university experience.
2. Its purpose is to explain the principles that guide how the University listens to and responds to issues brought forward by students, and to ensure these concerns are handled in accordance with recognised sector standards, including the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework.
3. This policy provides the foundation for the University's approach to the managing students complaints and grievances, giving students confidence that any complaint will be treated impartially, respectfully and with a genuine commitment to achieving a fair and constructive resolution.
4. This policy is informed by:
 - a. the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework
 - b. Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance on consumer protection in higher education
 - c. the Office for Students' regulatory requirements relating to the fair treatment of students
5. Together, these frameworks ensure that complaints processes are clear, accessible and fair, enabling students to understand and exercise their rights.

Scope

6. This policy applies to all current, and previously enrolled students of Middlesex University. Students studying at international campuses will normally follow the local complaints policy applicable to their campus, aligned to the principles of this policy.
7. Students studying on apprenticeship programmes may have access to additional complaints routes beyond the University. Apprentices are normally expected to follow University procedures in the first instance. Where concerns remain unresolved, they may also raise issues through external mechanisms, including the Department for Education (DfE). Students will be provided with appropriate information on these routes.
8. For students studying with partner institutions, responsibility for handling complaints is determined by the nature of the partnership arrangement:
 - a. **Validated provision:** Complaints are normally managed by the partner institution. Students must complete the partner's process before escalation is considered.
 - b. **Franchise provision:** Complaints are managed in line with agreed partnership

arrangements.

- c. **Joint provision:** Responsibility depends on the delivery model; students will be directed accordingly.

9. Where partnership arrangements allow, students may escalate to the University after completing local processes.

Definitions

10. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action, decision or service provided by the University.

11. A grievance is formal complaint raised by a student who believes they have been treated unfairly or harmed and is seeking investigation and resolution.

Grounds for a complaint

12. Students may raise a complaint where they are dissatisfied with:

- a. the delivery or quality of academic or support services
- b. actions or decisions taken by the University
- c. failure to meet expected standards or commitments

Stages of a complaint

13. Full details of how to raise and progress a complaint, including required forms, are set out in the Student Complaints and Grievance Procedures, see Appendix 1.

14. The University is committed to handling complaints in a timely manner. In line with sector good practice, the University will normally seek to complete the consideration of a formal complaint, including any internal review, within 90 calendar days.

15. Where it is not possible to meet this timeframe, the student will be informed of the reasons for the delay and provided with regular updates on progress.

16. The university operates a staged approach to the consideration of complaints. Refer to the procedures document for further information.

17. Once all internal stages have been completed, students will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. If they remain dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) for independent review.

Raising a Complaint

18. Students, or groups of students, should normally raise a complaint within three months of the issue occurring. Where a concern relates to a series of events, the complaint should be made within three months of the final event.

Early closure of a complaint

19. The University reserves the right to conclude the consideration of a complaint at

an appropriate stage where:

- a. the issues raised have already been fully considered
- b. the complaint does not fall within the scope of this policy
- c. there is insufficient evidence to progress the matter

20. Students will be informed of the reasons for any such decision.

Matters not covered by this policy

21. Some concerns are considered under separate University processes. These include:

- a. Academic appeals
- b. Academic honesty and integrity
- c. Fitness to practise
- d. Complaints against the Students' Union
- e. Admissions-related complaints
- f. Fitness to study

Guiding principles

22. The University is committed to ensuring that complaints are handled in a fair, transparent and supportive manner. Key principles include:

- a. *Fairness* - complaints will be considered impartially, based on evidence.
- b. *Transparency and clarity* - students will have clear information about how to raise a complaint and what to expect.
- c. *Accessibility* - reasonable adjustments and support will be provided to ensure full participation.
- d. *Early resolution* - where appropriate, issues will be resolved informally and promptly.
- e. *Timeliness* - the University will normally aim to complete the consideration of a formal complaint, including any review stage, within 90 calendar days. Where this is not possible, students will be informed and kept updated.
- f. *Compassionate approach* - complaints will be handled with sensitivity, recognising that students may be experiencing distress, and ensuring appropriate support is available.

Students' rights

23. Students have the right to:

- a. raise concerns without disadvantage
- b. receive clear information about the complaints process
- c. be given a fair opportunity to present their case
- d. receive a reasoned outcome

24. Where appropriate, students may seek independent advice and support from the Students' Union.

Seeking guidance

25. Students are encouraged to seek advice before and during the complaints process. This may include:

- a. University support services
- b. Students' Union advice services (independent and confidential)
- c. Campus support services

Student responsibilities

26. Students are expected to:

- a. raise concerns within three months of the event
- b. provide accurate and complete information
- c. engage respectfully with the process
- d. follow the procedures set out in the associated guidance

University responsibilities

27. The University is responsible for:

- a. ensuring complaints are handled fairly, consistently and with compassion
- b. providing clear communication and timely updates
- c. ensuring decision-making is evidence-based

Managing unreasonable behaviour or vexatious claims

28. Where a complaint is pursued in a way that is unreasonable or involves repeated issues without new evidence, the University may take proportionate steps to manage the process, while ensuring genuine concerns are still considered.

Outcomes of a complaint

29. Outcomes will reflect the findings of the investigation and may include:

- a. explanation or clarification
- b. corrective action
- c. recommendations for improvement

30. Complaints are intended not only to resolve individual concerns but also to improve the student experience.

Monitoring and review

31. Complaints data will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to identify themes, trends and areas for improvement. This will include:

- a. **Annual reporting** on complaints activity, including key themes, outcomes and actions taken.
- b. Regular monitoring of complaints data by protected characteristics to:

- i. identify any disproportionate patterns or trends
- ii. inform improvements to policy, procedures and student support

32. The University will use this information to:

- a. improve services and student-facing processes
- b. enhance clarity and accessibility of policies and guidance
- c. inform staff training and development
- d. support institutional learning and quality enhancement

33. Findings from complaints monitoring will contribute to wider institutional reporting and inform actions designed to improve the student experience throughout the academic year.