

# Student Complaints Procedure

## Chapter 7 of The General Regulations

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Contents:

1.	Introduction .....	3
2.	Scope.....	3
3.	Glossary .....	4
4.	Responsibilities .....	4
	Academic Board .....	4
	Managers.....	4
	Students .....	4
	Consequences of Non-compliance .....	5
5.	What will not be dealt with under the SCP .....	5
6.	Complaints relating to behaviour by staff and students.....	5
7.	Complaints about the Student Union (DSU).....	6
8.	Where a complaint falls into one or more policy.....	7
9.	Third party complaints.....	7
10.	Anonymous and confidential complaints .....	7
11.	Group complaints .....	8
12.	Frivolous, malicious or vexatious complaints .....	9
13.	Timescales for making complaints .....	9
14.	Focus on Early Resolution .....	10
15.	What students can expect of the process .....	11
16.	What the University asks of Students.....	11
17.	Confidentiality .....	12
18.	Dignity and Respect.....	12
19.	The three stages of the SCP .....	12
20.	Grounds for escalation .....	13
21.	Mediation .....	14

22.	Making a complaint .....	14
23.	Stage 1 – Early Resolution.....	15
24.	Stage 2 – Formal Complaint .....	16
25.	Stage 3 – Review .....	17
26.	Independent External Review .....	18
27.	Monitoring and review .....	19
28.	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion .....	19
29.	Related policies and standards/documentation.....	19
30.	Appendices .....	21
31.	Document and version control information:.....	24

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 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"<sup>1</sup> and complements the advice and guidance on concerns, complaints and appeals published by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- 1.2. A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more Students about something a provider has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University. A complaint may relate, but is not limited, to:
- the quality and standard of service provided by the University, including teaching and learning provision;
  - failure to provide a service as advertised or reasonably expected;
  - unsuitable facilities or learning resources;
  - failure of the University to follow an appropriate administrative or academic process
- 1.3 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 recent Alumni to raise issues of concern about the services provided by the University.
- 1.4 Please refer to the University's Privacy [Notice](#) to understand how we process personal data, and our legal basis for doing so,
- 1.5 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 includes but is 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 and Harassment Policy, Research Misconduct and Whistleblowing. Links to these and other related information can be found on the [Academic Support webpages](#).

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 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 for that organisation.

- 2.2 All complaints must be raised within three months of the concern arising.
- 2.3 Alumni of the University 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.
- 2.4 In making decisions under the SCP the University takes into account guidance issued by relevant ombudsman services and other external bodies. It is recognised that any complaints procedure needs to be flexible as well as consistent, to respond to the many different issues which arise

### 3. Glossary

- 3.1 The [Glossary](#) sets out definitions of terms used in DMU policies and regulations.

### 4. Responsibilities

#### **Academic Board**

- 4.1 The Academic Board is responsible for ensuring the Student Complaints Procedure is in line with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework.

#### **Managers**

- 4.2 PVC/Deans, directors and line managers have a day-to-day responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this policy and ensuring all students and recent students of the University are supported in raising complaints about something the University has or has not done.

#### **Students**

- 4.3 Students are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and raising complaints in a timely manner and supported by appropriate evidence.

## **Consequences of Non-compliance**

- 4.4 Failure to act in accordance with this policy or to comply with any arrangements put in place to receive, investigate, monitor and respond to a Student complaint will be considered a serious matter, and shall be dealt with under the relevant Disciplinary Procedure for students and staff.
- 4.5 If a student has any concerns about a potential breach of this policy a report of their concerns should be submitted initially and without delay to the Director, Registry who will allocate it to an appropriate member of staff to investigate. their line manager or Dean or Director.

## **5. What will not be dealt with under the SCP**

- 5.1 Academic appeals or other matters that relate to Assessment Board decisions. Appeals against Assessment Board decisions are managed by the Student Casework Services team and are dealt with under a separate appeals procedure contained within the General Regulations and Procedures Affecting Students. Any complaint made under the SCP which appears to be an academic appeal will be referred to the Student Casework Services team for consideration. If you require further information about the procedure for academic appeals, please contact [scs@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:scs@dmu.ac.uk) and the team will assist you.
- 5.2 A challenge to an admissions decision. This should be raised under the [University Admissions Policy](#).
- 5.3 Complaints about University Policies will not be accepted unless there are one or more elements to the policy that are evidently detrimental to many Students. Feedback on policies is welcome and should be sent to [scs@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:scs@dmu.ac.uk) in the first instance. Feedback will be taken into account at the next policy review point.
- 5.4 Complaints about matters which have already or are under consideration by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education ("OIA"), a court or tribunal.

## **6. Complaints relating to behaviour by staff and students**

- 6.1 Allegations that Students are in breach of the University's Dignity & Respect

Policy will be referred to an investigating officer within the Student Casework Services Team for investigation.

- 6.2 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 and appropriate, an informal resolution. Where this not appropriate and/or a Student remains dissatisfied with the informal resolution, they may raise a formal complaint by contacting the Student Casework Services team at [scs@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:scs@dmu.ac.uk) or by submitting the appropriate form which can be found on the Student Gateway.

- 6.3 The complaint will be shared with People Services and the relevant Senior Manager 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 People Services 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.)

**Allegations of sexual misconduct and harassment can be reported using the online form which can be found here [Harassment and Sexual Misconduct \(dmu.ac.uk\)](#): These complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Sexual Misconduct and Assessment Policy [Sexual Misconduct Policy \(dmu.ac.uk\)](#): and potentially referred to a Disciplinary Committee in accordance with the Student Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy [Student Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy 2024-2025 \(dmu.ac.uk\)](#).**

- 6.4. Further support for Students who are reporting an allegation of misconduct or witnesses to misconduct by either staff or Students is offered through [Healthy DMU](#).

## 7. Complaints about the Student Union (DSU)

- 7.1. Complaints relating to the Students' Union services, facilities, societies and staff should be raised with the DSU in the first instance; details of the Students' Union Complaint Procedure can be found [on the DSU website](#).

- 7.2 Once a complaint investigation has been concluded by DSU, if a Student believes that the Student Union has not followed its own procedures or acted within its agreed policies they may escalate the complaint to the university within 28 days of receiving the written outcome from DSU by sending an email to

[scs@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:scs@dmu.ac.uk). A complaint will be accepted if it meets the grounds and will be allocated to a Casework Manager to carry out a review.

## **8. Where a complaint falls into one or more policy.**

- 8.1 If a Student raises a complaint or appeal which does not fall neatly into the category of either a complaint or an appeal, or if the concern contains issues of complaint and an appeal, the Student Casework Services team will advise the Student which issues will be looked at under which procedure. This will be irrespective of which procedure the Student has used to formally raise their concern.
- 8.2 A Student's concern may be managed under an alternative procedure if that is appropriate. The University may decide to consider all matters together particularly if, for example, the findings of a complaint are likely to influence an appeal decision. The Student will be advised of any implications of following two procedures at once, and we may suspend one procedure pending the outcome of the other.

## **9. Third party complaints**

- 9.1 The University expects Students to engage directly with the University when raising complaints. Complaints made by third parties on behalf of a Student will not usually be accepted unless there are valid reasons why a Student is not able to engage themselves. The University will make reasonable adjustments to ensure Students with a disability have an equitable opportunity to engage with university processes through the provision of reasonable adjustments. See the University's [Communication with Third Parties Policy](#)

## **10. Anonymous and confidential complaints**

- 10.1 The Student Casework Officer (or their nominee) will not respond to anonymous complaints, but issues raised in anonymous complaints may be investigated if in the University's discretion, it is felt that such investigations would be justified. The University may also use anonymous complaints to help inform its practice. The University does however recognise that Students may wish to raise concerns in confidence. In such cases the Student Casework Officer (or their nominee) will try to resolve the issue without disclosing the Student's identity. It must be borne in mind that:



- 10.2 The Student Casework Officer (or their nominee) will not respond to anonymous complaints, but issues raised in anonymous complaints may be investigated if in the University's discretion, it is felt that such investigations would be justified. The University may also use anonymous complaints to help inform its practice. The University does however recognise that Students may wish to raise concerns in confidence. In such cases the Student Casework Officer (or their nominee) will try to resolve the issue without disclosing the Student's identity. It must be borne in mind that:
- It may be difficult to investigate complaints without revealing the identity of the Student.
  - 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 Casework Officer (or their nominee) will discuss the situation with the Student before the case proceeds.
  - The person or department which is the subject of a complaint may recognise the Student because of the issues or allegations raised.
- 10.3 No Student will suffer reprisals, academic or otherwise, for making a complaint.
- 10.4 Students may also raise concerns internally about malpractice through the [University's Whistleblowing Policy](#).

## **11. Group complaints**

- 11.1. Should a group of Students have a complaint, the Students can submit a collective complaint and nominate one Student as their representative in pursuing the complaint, provided that all Students provide their personal consent under the requirements of the Data Protection Act and confirm the accuracy of any evidence and information submitted to support their complaint. If a Student does not provide personal consent, they will not be included in the collective complaint investigation not resolution. When a complaint is submitted and investigated collectively, the group will receive a collective response. Outcomes for group complaints cannot be tailored for individual Students. If a Student seeks an individual outcome, an individual complaint must be submitted.
- 11.2. In line with guidance from the OIA the University does not accept petitions or complaints posted on social media as complaints under the Student Complaint Procedure. All concerns must be submitted via the complaints

process as outlined in these regulations. See the Student [Social Media policy](#) for guidelines on sharing views on social media.

- 11.3. When investigating certain types of complaints, it may be that investigation can only be progressed if the Student or Students, and not solely their representative, participate in an investigatory meeting.

## **12. Frivolous, malicious or vexatious complaints**

- 12.1. The University reserves the right to decline to investigate a complaint at any stage of the procedures if it considers that the complaint is being presented in an unreasonable or unfair way or is having a negative impact on university staff the Student Casework Officer (or their nominee) may ask the Student to present their complaint in a more reasonable manner or to behave in a different way
- 12.2. Should the Student Casework Officer (or their nominee) determine that a complaint is something that a fair minded person would consider to be trivial, if it is being pursued in such a way that it is having a seriously negative effect on staff or the university, or if the Student is seeking a remedy that lacks any serious purpose or value the complaint will be closed and appropriate disciplinary action may be taken if the Student is found to have breached the Student Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy.

## **13. Timescales for making complaints**

- 13.1. All stages of the process have a timeline and deadlines, but with the flexibility for the Student or the University to request an extension to those deadlines where there is good reason to do so, for example changes in workload for either party that could not have previously been foreseen.
- 13.2. Complaints should be raised at the Early Resolution stage within three months of the matter becoming apparent.
- 13.3. The University will endeavour to provide an outcome to the Early Resolution complaint within 15 University working days of the complaint having been received. Once an outcome has been provided at the Early Resolution stage, a Student or their representative, in the case of Students who exceptionally cannot present their case themselves, has 10 University working days to escalate their complaint to a Formal Complaint, together with supporting evidence.

- 13.4 The University will endeavour to provide an outcome to the Formal complaint within 15 University working days. Following the communication of the written outcome from the Formal Complaint, the Student or their representative, in the case of Students who exceptionally cannot present their case themselves, has 10 University working days to escalate their complaint for a Review, stating the grounds for progressing to a Review.
- 13.5 International Students must make themselves aware of immigration implications should consideration of their complaint extend beyond their permission to stay. A Student would not typically be required to be present at the University for a complaint to be investigated, though participation in an investigatory online interview or other means may be necessary.

## **14. Focus on Early Resolution**

- 14.1. 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.
- 14.2. 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
- 14.3. 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.
- 14.4. 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 nationality, gender, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, disability, economic situation or offending background. No person shall be discriminated against or adversely affected for making a complaint.

## **15. What students can expect of the process**

- 15.1 The purpose of the SCP is to provide Students and Alumni with a clear, consistent and transparent method of raising concerns and complaints, to resolve conflict and to bring about change when appropriate.
- 15.2 The University will ensure that Students are not disadvantaged either academically or personally if they choose to raise a complaint. The University understands the importance of trust and confidence all parties must have in this process. Any Student raising a complaint may continue their studies whilst the complaints procedure is conducted. If a Student believes that they are being disadvantaged due to raising a legitimate complaint, they should contact the Student Casework Services team ([scs@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:scs@dmu.ac.uk)).
- 15.3 At each stage of the procedure the University will endeavour to find a solution to the issues raised that are mutually acceptable for all parties concerned. This will not always be possible, and Students may not agree with the resolution that is offered.
- 15.4 The University offers Students a three-stage procedure for raising complaints and there must be clear grounds for escalation at each stage.
- 15.5 At each stage the Student will be given an outcome of their complaint. A mutually appropriate resolution may be found, the complaint may be upheld, and reparation made, or the complaint will be dismissed. At each stage the Student will be given information on how to escalate their complaint and the grounds on which they can do so.

## **16. What the University asks of Students**

- 16.1 The University expects Students to engage directly with the University when raising complaints. Complaints made by third parties on behalf of a Student will not usually be accepted unless there are valid reasons why a Student is not able to engage themselves, see paragraph 14 of this chapter
- 16.2 The University actively encourages Students to raise any low-level concerns initially by talking to a member of the University community, see paragraph 9.1 of this chapter.
- 16.3 When submitting a complaint, Students are asked to clearly state the issue of their concern and what outcome is being sought. Students must also supply any supporting evidence that will assist the University in its investigation into



complaints. It is important that Students submit the concerns as clearly and accurately as possible to assist an early outcome. Students are encouraged to seek the support of the DSU Advice team [dsuadvice@dmu.ac.uk] before submitting a complaint

## **17. Confidentiality**

- 17.1 The University aims to manage student complaints confidentially. It will be necessary for a limited number of people to know the details of the complaint for it to be investigated. Depending on the stage of the Student Complaints Procedure, these people will include staff who administer and manage the complaint, who undertake the investigation, are named in the complaint or are witnesses to the matters it raised, or who are asked to review a complaint outcome at the final stage of the procedures.

## **18. Dignity and Respect**

- 18.1 All students and staff engaging in the Student Complaints Procedure must behave with dignity and respect for each other and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The process may be halted where unreasonable behaviours occur. The University may make use of the Student Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy where behaviours constitute misconduct.

## **19. The three stages of the SCP**

- 19.1 The SCP is intended to provide a streamlined process with a focus on local resolution. Students are expected to complete each stage in the process before escalating to the next, if they have grounds. The SCP has three stages.
- 19.2 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.
- 19.3 Formal Complaints are investigated by a Student Casework Officer when a Student wishes to escalate their complaint.
- 19.4 The final stage of the SCP is a Review by a senior member of University Staff

who has not previously been involved in the case. A Review is an analysis of the Formal Complaint decision, not a rehearing of the original complaint. The senior member of Staff can review the complaint outcome under the grounds outlined in this policy.

- 19.5 While there are three clear stages in the procedure, the people involved in the complaint may resolve matters informally at any point in any stage, with active engagement by the Student and relevant others (DSU, faculty or directorate) prior to the final complaint outcome for that Stage being communicated to the Student
- 19.6 This Procedure sets out the expected timescales for each stage of the process. We will always let you know if we are unable to meet the published timescale and the reason why.

## **20. Grounds for escalation**

- 20.1 Students may escalate their complaint from Early Resolution to Formal Review if they are dissatisfied with the decision made on the grounds stated below:
- The complaint procedure was not followed correctly.
  - New information that was not available earlier in the process can now be provided by the Student.
  - The outcome is wholly inappropriate based on the evidence provided.
- 20.2. The University recognises that Students will not always be satisfied with the outcome of a complaint. The University will always investigate a complaint and will ensure that the procedures are followed correctly and impartially as long as the grounds are met.
- 20.3. All parties involved in the investigation and determination of an outcome of a complaint will be offered appropriate support by the University, through services established to enable the University to meet its duty of care towards Staff and Students. For Students the support services include:
- De Montfort Students [Union](#)
  - The [DMU Wellbeing Team](#).
  - Student Advice [Centre](#)
  - Academic Tutors
  - The DMU [Spiritual Support](#) team
  - No Space for [Hate](#)
  - The Mandala [Project](#)

## 21. Mediation

- 21.1 Mediation can be undertaken at the Early Resolution and Formal Complaint stages of the SCP. This is a voluntary process where an impartial, independent third party helps to try and reach an agreement.
- 21.2 The parties to mediation follow a series of agreed steps. In mediation, the parties to the dispute, not the mediator, decide whether they can resolve the complaint and on what basis. Where all parties agree to mediation at the Formal Complaint stage of the SCP, revised timescales for the Formal Complaint will be agreed. If the resolution at the Formal Complaint stage is not acceptable to the Student they can request that it is escalated to the Review stage on one or more of the grounds listed above

## 22. Making a complaint

- 22.1. 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](mailto: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
- 22.2. Students are encouraged to try and resolve their concerns independently utilising the support services that the University can offer
- 22.3. 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](#)
- 22.4. Students will be expected to engage personally with the University when raising a complaint (see the University's Communications with Third Parties Policy), using their university email account
- 22.5. The **burden of proof** shall always be on the Student; this means that the Student must provide all the evidence they have to support the complaint they

are making. The **standard of proof** will be the balance of probability, this means that a judgement will be made as to whether the event is more likely than not to have occurred.

## 23. Stage 1 – Early Resolution

- 23.1 The Early Resolution Form can be found on the Student Complaints section of the Student Gateway: [Student complaints \(dmu.ac.uk\)](https://dmu.ac.uk/student-complaints). Once submitted it will be forwarded by email to the appropriate Early Resolution Officer (ERO) located in the appropriate department of the University. If the concern relates to multiple issues, the ERO will refer the complaint to the appropriate area and will ensure all communication with the Student is collated by the ERO.
- 23.2 Early Resolution is designed to address straightforward concerns informally, locally and expediently. The ERO may talk to the Student to determine more details about their case or may ask a relevant member staff to work with the Student directly.
- 23.3 The response to the Student must be supported by a written outcome which will be sent by the ERO. If mediation is required at the Early Resolution stage, the ERO will facilitate this with the Student Casework Services team.
- 23.4 The aim at the Early Resolution stage is to reach a mutually agreeable outcome before the concern escalates to the Formal stage. Mediation can be requested by either the University or the Student at this stage. Examples of how the University may deal with Student concerns at Early Resolution could be:
- Being empathetic and understanding
  - Apologizing where it is appropriate to do so
  - Actively listening to the Student voice
  - Clarifying reasons why decisions have been made
  - Suggesting solutions
  - Referral to mediation
- 23.5. In exceptional circumstances, complaints may be dealt with at the Formal Complaint stage without going through Early Resolution. A senior member of the University will decide on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate to start a complaint at the Formal Complaint stage. The decision of this senior member of staff is final.
- 23.6. The University is committed to trying to resolve concerns to a mutually beneficial outcome. The University acknowledges that sometimes the outcome for the



Student may not always be the outcome anticipated but the University will endeavour to provide a rationale to its decision making. A Student may progress their complaint to the Formal Stage if they believe:

- The Early Resolution process has not been followed correctly,
- There is evidence now available that was not available previously.

23.7. Students can escalate the complaint to a Formal Complaint using the form found on our [Academic Support webpages](#)

## **24. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint**

- 24.1 Each complaint that is escalated by a Student to the Formal stage will be assessed on a case-by-case basis upon receipt in the Student Casework Services team. The assessment will involve checking that the complaint has been submitted within the published timelines, using the right procedure, and in the correct format. This will result in one of the following outcomes:
- Referral to a different procedure (for example to the Academic Appeals process)
  - Rejection of the complaint (for example due to lateness of submission or the grounds for escalation have not been met)
  - Referral to Early Resolution (for example if this stage has not been attempted)
  - Referral to mediation (for example where this will more likely result in swift and mutual agreement) and can be requested by the Student or the University
  - Referral to formal investigation by the Student Casework Officer (or their designated nominee)
- 24.2 The Formal Complaint stage does not allow for additional complaints to be added that have not previously been raised at the Early Resolution Stage.
- 24.3 If the University decides that a complaint is out of time or otherwise ineligible to be dealt with at the Formal Complaint stage of the SCP, the University will inform the Student in writing within one calendar month of its decision with a clear explanation of the reasons for the decision. The University will issue a Completion of Procedures letter and the matter will be deemed closed. The University will also give the Student information about the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
- 24.4 If a complaint is deemed to be eligible for further investigation as a Formal Complaint, it will be allocated to a member of staff who has had no previous involvement in the matter to investigate. The staff member who has been

allocated the complaint may contact the Student, either face to face or by telephone, MS Teams or other remote method, to confirm the purpose and scope of their investigation in order to manage expectations about possible outcomes.

- 24.5 The staff member may talk to staff and other Students and consider documents and other relevant evidence. The outcome of this investigation will be communicated to the Student normally no later than one calendar month from receiving the complaint which outlines the process followed, the information gathered, the conclusions drawn and any other recommendations
- 24.6 There may be times when this timescale cannot be met, for example due to the complexity of the complaint, and the staff member will inform the Student of the reason for the delay and the revised timescale. However, the University will make every effort to adhere to the stated timescale.
- 24.7 The University will write to the Student with the outcome of the Formal Complaint, explaining the reasons for the outcome and providing evidence used in the decision- making process.
- 24.8 If a Student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Formal Complaint but does not have grounds on which to escalate their complaint to the Review Stage, the Student may request a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Should a Student wish to take their case to the OIA, they must request a Completion of Procedures letter within one calendar month from the date of the outcome letter.

## **25. Stage 3 – Review**

- 25.1 If a student believes:
- the Formal Complaint process has not been followed correctly, or
  - there is evidence now available that was not available previously,
- they can request to escalate the complaint for Review.
- 25.2. The Review form must be received by the University within 10 University working days of the Student receiving the Formal Complaint outcome. Students must identify the ground(s) on which they are making the complaint (as set out above). In addition, Students must provide evidence in support of their case. Where evidence was not provided in support of their Formal Stage complaint, Students must explain why this evidence was not available previously.

- 25.3. On receipt of a request for a Review, the Student Casework Officer will undertake an initial assessment to check that the complaint is submitted within the appropriate deadlines, meets the grounds for a stage 3 Review and is in the required format with supporting evidence.
- 25.4. A complaint without adequate grounds and evidence will be dismissed within 10 university working days of it being received.
- 25.5. If the Review Request is accepted, it will be referred to a Senior member of University Staff who has not had any previous involvement in the matter being complained about. The Review Stage does not allow for additional complaints to be added for review that have not previously been raised at the Formal Stage.
- 25.6. The Review stage will not usually consider matters afresh or involve further investigation, but if new evidence is submitted and accepted, additional investigation may be required.
- 25.7. If the Review is successful and the Formal Stage decision amended, the student will receive a written explanation of the decision within 15 university working days of the Review Request being received.
- 25.8. If the Review is unsuccessful and the Formal Stage decision is confirmed, the student will receive a Completion of Procedures letter, which provides the reasons for the decision and signposts the student to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education within 15 university working days of the Review Request being received.

## **26. Independent External Review**

- 26.1. Once the Review by the University Complaints Committee has been completed and an outcome issued to the Student, or it is determined there are no grounds for the complaint to be considered at Review, the University's procedure will be concluded, and therefore will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter.
- 26.2. The Student may then refer the complaint to the OIA should they remain dissatisfied. The OIA considers complaints from Students only at the conclusion of the University's internal complaints handling procedures and only if the complaint meets the OIA's eligibility requirements.
- 26.3. The complaint must be received by the OIA within twelve months of the Completion of Procedures Letter being issued by the University. It typically takes a number of months for the OIA to consider a complaint and issue an

outcome. Further information about escalating a complaint to the OIA is available on [the OIA website](#)

## **27. Monitoring and review**

- 27.1 This policy will be reviewed and monitored and kept up to date by Registry Services in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

## **28. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

- 28.1 This policy is underpinned by DMU's commitment to fostering a respectful, inclusive, and equitable environment where all individuals are valued, treated with dignity, and feel safe and supported to be able to study and work to their full potential. It aims to protect students from unacceptable behaviour by other students.

## **29. Related policies and standards/documentation**

The following policies should be read in conjunction to this policy as many relate to student and staff conduct.

[The General Regulations and Procedures Affecting Students](#) contains all general rules and regulations that apply to all DMU students.

The [Glossary](#) sets out definitions of terms used in DMU policies and regulations.

The [Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Policy](#) explains what action will be taken when reports of alleged sexual misconduct are received by the University.

The [Dignity and Respect Policy](#) sets out expectations for students behaviours.

The [No Space for Hate Policy](#) aims to ensure students and visitors are able to challenge behaviour which does not respect the rights and dignity of others and to raise genuine complaints about hate, harassment or bullying without fear of victimisation.

The [Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#) explains DMU's commitment to providing a fair, consistent and accessible service and explains what action will be taken when unacceptable behaviours are demonstrated.

The [Staff to Student Relationship Policy](#) explains that DMU prohibits members of staff from entering into any intimate relationship with a student where the relations was not pre-existing.



The [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#) sets out the University's framework for dealing with student welfare and discipline when students are enrolled on programmes leading directly to a professional qualification or the right to practice a particular profession or calling.

The [Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy](#) sets out the procedure to be followed when alleged academic misconduct has occurred.

## 30. Appendices

**\* 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
Outcome sent to Student within 15 University working days from the date of receipt. *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What specifically is the complaint about and which area(s) of the University are involved?</li> <li>What outcome is the Student hoping to achieve?</li> <li>Is the complaint straightforward and likely to be resolved or responded to with minimal investigation or by using an existing University policy?</li> <li>Can another member of Staff assist in seeking informal resolution if I am not in a position to do so?</li> <li>What assistance or support can be provided to the Student in taking this forward?</li> <li>Should the Student Appeals and Conduct Officer (or their nominee) be asked if mediation might be appropriate in this case?</li> </ul>	<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 Formal Complaint 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 2: Formal Complaint and Investigation by the Student Casework Officer

University Response Timeline	Considerations made	Outcome
Outcome sent to Student within 15 University working days from the date of receipt. *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the specific, key elements to the complaint?</li> <li>• Why was Local Resolution at Stage 1 unsuccessful? Was any potential resolution offered?</li> <li>• What does the Student seek to achieve by escalating the complaint to Stage 2?</li> <li>• Do the Student's expectations appear to be reasonable and achievable?</li> <li>• Should the Office of the Student Appeals and Conduct Officer be asked if mediation might be appropriate in this case?</li> </ul>	<p>Either:</p> <p>Complaint upheld/partially upheld and remedy offered</p> <p>Or 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 a Senior Member of University Staff.

University Response Timeline	Consideration made	Outcome
Outcome sent to Student within 15 University working days from the date of receipt. *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there evidence of procedural irregularity at stage 2?</li> <li>• What new evidence is available that was not available at stage 2?</li> <li>• Would mediation be appropriate?</li> </ul>	<p>Explanation and evidence to the Student made in writing via email (including right to proceed to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator)</p> <p>Upheld/partially upheld and remedy made or Dismissed</p>

Student has 12 months from the date of the Completion of Procedures letter to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator as detailed on [the OIA website](#)



### 31. Document and version control information:

Version control information heading	Details
Policy number	PRAB05
Owner	Registry Services
Author	Lottie Cairns, Interim Head, Student Casework Services
Approved by	Academic Board
Date of approval of this version	23 June 2025
Next review date	June 2026
Version number	1.0
Applicable statutory, legal, or national best practice requirements	Statutory
Data protection impact assessment completion date	In progress