

# Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure

If there is an issue affecting your university experience, we want you to tell us about it. You will not be treated less favourably by the University or suffer any detriment or disadvantage if you raise a grievance or complaint in good faith, regardless of whether or not the complaint results in further action.

Our Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure allows you to make complaints and raise grievances\*. This helps ensure your complaint will be dealt with fairly and appropriately, and investigated as quickly as possible.

If you want to raise a grievance or concern, you should aim to do so within 3 months of the incident or, if a series of events has occurred, within 3 months of the final event in the series. If you submit a complaint after 3 months, you must also include a written explanation for the late submission supported by evidence (if applicable).

Your program leader will personally look for each complaint

- **Stage 1: Early Resolution**

This stage aims to provide staff and students the opportunity to resolve any grievances within the area of University and at the level the incident occurred without the need for escalation.

For example, this could mean speaking to your Module Leader, Programme Leader, Head of School or the relevant service department.

How to raise your grievance

- **Speak to the staff member involved** - this can take place at the time or soon after face-to-face, on the phone or via email. If the staff member feels unable to deal with your complaint, they should refer you to another member of staff who will be able to give you a response
- **Speak to a different staff member** - this should be someone of the same level and in the same area of the University who can provide a response to your complaint or advise on next steps
- **Complete the Stage 1 Early Resolution form** - this can be used if you feel uncomfortable raising the grievance with staff or where an early resolution might not be appropriate. The form will be received by the relevant Faculty/School Leadership Executive Office (or equivalent) or the Head/Director of the Professional Service department. From there, they will either raise the concern with the member of staff or seek an alternative early resolution, such as nominating an Investigating Officer to handle your complaint.

- What happens next?

The staff member to whom you've raised the grievance will normally arrange a meeting to further discuss your complaint and try to reach a resolution that you're happy with.

Once a resolution has been reached, you should receive a written response detailing any actions that have or will be taken to address your grievance or why a resolution has not been possible.

The Director of Student Affairs will be copied into this response which marks the end of Stage 1 of the Student Complaints and Grievance procedure.

- Unhappy with the response?

If you're not happy with the outcome or response, you can escalate the grievance to Stage 2 of the procedure.

Before doing so, please seek advice from your Personal Tutor, the Students' Union or UniHelp.

Please speak to the person dealing with your complaint if you have concerns about the way the initial response was handled or you don't understand the response.

- Stage 2: Formal complaint

A Stage 2 formal complaint is used where you are dissatisfied with the response to the outcome at Stage 1 or the process of 'early resolution' is deemed inappropriate or not possible for your particular grievance.

At Stage 2, the complaint will be handled by the Deputy Dean (or nominee e.g. Head of Department) or by the Head/Director of a service. They will look at what happened in Stage 1, the response you received and, if necessary, they will conduct their own investigation which may involve speaking to parties involved and collecting evidence.

When the review is concluded, you will receive the outcome in writing.

How to raise a formal complaint

To submit a complaint, please complete the Stage 2 formal complaints form. This should be done within 21 working days of receiving the written response from Stage 1.

If you complete the form after the 21 days, you must also include a written explanation for the late submission supported by evidence (if applicable).

Please address your Stage 2 complaint to the relevant body:

- For academic programme or school-related complaints: the Deputy Dean
- For service related complaints: Head/Director of the relevant service department.
- Appeals and complaints
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An appeal is made against a decision of an Assessment Board regarding your assessment, progression, award or examination results.

A complaint can be made about any aspect of your student experience or the wider University, including educational aspects, with which you have a grievance.

If you submit an academic appeal and an associated complaint and wish them to be linked, this should be clearly stated in:

- Your statement of appeal against the University's academic decision
- On the standard complaint form that asks you to set out the remedy you are seeking
- In the covering letter that you submit with the completed and signed standard form.

- Evidence

The more information you provide, the better (there is no limit as to how much evidence you can submit). Make a log of what's happened (for multiple incidents, log details about each instance).

We recommend including:

- Date, time and place of the incident(s)
- Photos, screenshots, emails, text messages, official documents, or anything else that you think could be used as evidence.

If evidence is not yet available, submit your complaint now and explain why your evidence is delayed. Upload your evidence as soon as you have it.

Evidence should normally be the original and not a photocopy. Where photocopied documents are submitted, you may be asked to provide Student and Legal Affairs with sight of the original document in order to verify the authenticity.

- Stage 3: University-level review

You can request a Stage 3 University-level review if you believe one of the following three situations has occurred :

1. There has been a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the Stage 2 investigation **OR**
2. New information has come to light which you were unable to disclose previously and which would have had a material impact upon the investigation previously undertaken **OR**
3. The decision reached was unreasonable based on the information that had been available to the University when the case was considered.

If you are studying at a Collaborative Partner Institution, please complete the Collaborative Partner University Level Review form (CPULR).

Full details can be found in the Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure (Appendix A).  
The Office of the Independent Adjudicator

If you are still dissatisfied with the final decision on your case, you may be able to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education.

The OIA is an independent body set up to review student complaints against universities and is free for students to use.

You can only apply to the OIA once you have exhausted the University's procedures and have received a Completion of Procedures letter. The OIA provides you with access to an independent, impartial review of your complaint.

*\*Please note, the Student Complaints and Grievance procedure is used to raise dissatisfaction about matters which affect the quality of the student learning experience or the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of, Middlesex University. It is not applicable for appeals against Assessment Board or examination decisions; complaints relating to a case of alleged misconduct, matters relating to Fitness for Practice, or, complaints against the Students' Union.*