



## **Quality Transformation Unit**

### **Student Complaints Procedure**

**Issued by the Quality Transformation Unit**

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Technical updates of this document take place on an annual basis to reflect changes to the University of Greater Manchester's organisational and management structure and to incorporate earlier, approved amendments to related policies, procedures and regulations.

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## **Purpose of the Procedure**

The University strives to achieve the highest standards in its provision of services but recognises that concerns and complaints may arise from time to time. This Procedure outlines the process which students should follow to raise concerns/complaints and the process through which these will be considered.

## **Scope of the Procedure**

The Student Complaints Procedure applies to all students who have a current registration with the University or those individuals who have recently finished their studies (ie normally complaints would not be accepted when a student has finished their studies more than 20 working days prior to submitting their complaint), as long as complaints are raised within the timeframe specified in this Procedure.

The Procedure also applies to students studying at the University's collaborative partner organisations.

The Procedure covers complaints against any academic or non-academic service provided by the University, with the exception of those matters outlined below. Complaints about services provided by collaborative partners will need to be pursued with the relative collaborative partner in the first instance. (Please see Appendix A).

The University will ensure that students raising a complaint through this procedure will not be treated less favourably because they have raised a complaint.

If the complaint is of a general nature, it may be more appropriate for the matter to be raised through the appropriate Student Staff Liaison Committee Representative or with the Students' Union with issues arising from the complaint being raised with the relevant member(s) of University staff. Guidance can be obtained from the Students' Union, Student Services or the Quality Transformation Unit.

Concerns and complaints should be raised in line with this Procedure. If a complaint is made directly to the Vice-Chancellor, or any other senior manager who is not a designated post-holder within this Procedure, the complaint will be passed to the Quality transformation Unit and the complaint will be referred to the most appropriate person, in line with this Procedure.

Complaints which are made anonymously will not normally be dealt with under this Procedure. Exceptionally, an anonymous complaint may be considered if the University determines that there is a compelling case, supported by evidence, for the matter to be investigated. Students should be aware that, in most circumstances, raising a concern anonymously may have a negative impact on the investigation and communication of the outcome.

Complaints which are made by a third party (including parents, guardians or friends of registered students) and/or submitted outside the time limit will not normally be dealt with under this Procedure. Students can give authority for a third party to

pursue a complaint on their behalf and students wishing to do this should complete the **Third Party Consent Form** and return this to the Quality transformation Unit.

Normally the following will not be considered under this Procedure, Complaints which:

- Have already been investigated and dealt with;
- Are outside of the scope of this procedure;
- Are made without disclosing adequate grounds;
- Have been disposed of in court or tribunal proceedings or under a settlement agreement between the complainant and the University;
- Are malicious, vexatious or frivolous;
- Are repetitive or harassing;
- Are non-meritorious or where the requested outcomes are deemed to be unreasonable; or where students or their representatives are aggressive, offensive or abusive; where demands are unreasonable in nature or unreasonably persistent.

This Procedure does not cover any of the following:

- Matters relating to examination and assessment performance and academic judgement (see Academic Appeals Procedure);
- Academic appeals against Assessment Board decisions (see Academic Appeals Procedure);
- Concerns raised that have not been through the Dignity at Study procedure Stages 1 to 3;
- Grievances from members of staff;
- Freedom of Information matters;
- Data Protection matters;
- Matters covered by the Freedom of Speech Policy;
- Complaints relating to the admissions process for any University programme of study (taught or research);
- Complaints about student conduct/competency (see Student Non-Academic Disciplinary and Conduct Policy and Fitness to Practice Procedure);
- Complaints relating to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks;
- Matters which are the subject of criminal investigation or legal proceedings until such time as those proceedings are concluded;
- Complaints submitted outside the timescale stated within this Procedure.

Complaints which relate to matters which are already being considered under other procedures (e.g. Fitness to Practice Procedure, Student Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure, Academic Appeals Procedure and Academic Misconduct) will not normally be dealt with under this Procedure. In addition, this Procedure cannot be used where students are dissatisfied with outcomes reached through other procedures.

Where a complaint is raised by several students, it can be dealt with as one collective complaint, in the following circumstances:

- i. the case is conducted through a lead student to facilitate the progress of the complaint;

- ii. the names of all students who wish to bring the complaint forward are disclosed to the University on a **Group Complaint Consent Form** and to confirm that the student nominated as the lead student will act as the facilitator for the complaint during all stages of the Procedure. The **Group Complaint Consent Form** is required to be completed at each stage of the procedure.

The University recognises that it must balance the respective obligations and rights of students and staff. Those about whom complaints have been made have a right to know what is being claimed and who is making a complaint. Where a complaint is made through this Procedure, a copy of the complaint will normally be sent to the person who is being complained about and that person will have the right to respond to the complaint and to support and representation. If students are concerned about protecting their anonymity, they are advised to contact the Students' Union who may be able to make initial enquiries on their behalf. The University will adopt the principle of releasing information only to those who need it for the purposes of investigation or responding to the complaint.

Students are advised that where a complaint has been raised against a member of staff or another student it may not be appropriate to share details of action taken, especially where disciplinary action is taken against a member of staff or a student.

Research Students are referred to the [Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors](#) in the first instance regarding raising a concern related to their supervisor. A formal complaint may be submitted following the completion of that procedure.

The University expects students and staff to act reasonably and fairly towards each other at all stages of the Student Complaints Procedure.

## **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the University's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University.

The principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law (and our equalities duties) are very much embedded in the University Teaching Intensive, Research Informed Assessment Enabled (TIRIAE) philosophy and our organisational culture. They provide a basis for providing all members of the University community with the opportunity to think critically and engage with diverse perspectives whilst at the same time enable the University to drive forward research and innovation – as we advance knowledge, understanding and truth.

The University of Greater Manchester takes its responsibility to protect and promote both freedom of speech and academic freedom, strengthened by the Higher

Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, seriously and the principles are embedded into our key people policies, procedures and practices.

All members of the University community at all levels within the University have an obligation to understand, uphold and promote these principles. The University provides training/support and other resources to employees in support of this agenda. Any colleague who is not clear on these obligations should speak with their respective Head of Service/School.

The University will investigate and take both reasonable and proportionate action with respect to any allegations that go against these fundamental key principles. Where breaches by staff are uncovered the University will act under the Disciplinary Procedure (or other appropriate procedure), which if allegations are proven could result in a sanction up to and including dismissal or expulsion.

### **How does a complaint differ from an academic appeal?**

An academic appeal is a request for a review of a decision made by an Assessment Board charged with making decisions on student progression, assessment and award. The Student Complaints Procedure cannot change a decision made by an Assessment Board.

### **Outline of the Student Complaints Procedure**

The Student Complaints Procedure has three stages:

- Stage 1 – the Early Resolution/Informal Stage
- Stage 2 – the Formal Stage
- Stage 3 – the Review Stage

- 3.1 **Stage 1** - The Early Resolution Stage of the complaints procedure occurs when a student wishes to raise a concern with the University. The student should raise the concern with the relevant member of staff who is responsible for dealing on a day-to-day basis with the matter that is the cause for concern. For example, if the issue relates to an academic matter, the first point of contact would be the programme leader, personal tutor or module tutor. If the matter relates to a service provided by or on behalf of the University, the issue should be raised with a member of the relevant University Professional Service such as a Student Services Team Leader or a Subject Librarian. It is anticipated that most concerns raised will be resolved at Stage 1.

Where the subject of the complaint lies outside of the remit of the staff member with whom it has been raised, they may seek the advice of their relevant Head of School/Division/Professional Service who may determine that a different, more appropriate, member of staff should investigate the concern raised and the student will be directed to the relevant Head of School/Division/Professional Service for the issue to be considered, for example if a student raises a concern with their Programme Leader regarding an issue of concern in the Library, the Programme

Leader may refer the student to the Library Manager as a more appropriate person to consider the issue and respond to the student.

A response should be provided to the student in writing, usually within 10 working days of receipt of the notification of the concern, and the student will be informed of how they can take their complaint to the next stage of the process, should they wish to do so.

The Head of School/Division/Professional Service will be briefed regularly about concerns that have been raised to members of staff in their School/Division/Professional Service. Heads of School/Division/Professional Services will liaise with the Quality Transformation Unit on a regular basis to establish if there are any patterns to the concerns that are being raised which may require input at School or University level.

- 3.2 If the student is unhappy with the response at Stage 1 of the process, they may take their complaint to the Formal Stage which is **Stage 2** of this procedure. A Formal Complaint Form **must** be completed by the student at Stage 2 and the student should explain why they are unhappy with any previous response. Within 10 working days of the informal written response being received, the student should submit the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form and supporting evidence to the Quality Transformation Unit by email to [complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk). The complaint will be assessed to ensure that it fits within the scope of this Procedure ie has been or would be better considered under another procedure and/or is within the timeframe outlined in this document.

If assessed to be within scope of this Procedure, the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form will be forwarded to the relevant Head of School/Division/Professional Service for investigation and response. If the Stage 2 complaint is assessed not to be within scope the student will be notified in writing which will include a Completion of Procedures Letter.

The Head of School/Division/Professional Service will appoint an Investigating Officer who is unrelated to the case. The Investigating Officer will investigate the complaint and provide a report to the Head of School or Service who will respond to the student by sending a Stage 2 Outcome Letter. Stage 2 should be completed within 30 working days of the appointment of an Investigating Officer. The Stage 2 Outcome Letter will include an explanation for the student should they feel they have grounds for a Stage 3 Review of the Stage 2 Outcome. A copy of the complaint file, including the response to the student, will be forwarded to the Quality Transformation Unit for quality monitoring purposes.

- 3.3 If, following receipt of the Stage 2 Outcome Letter, the student feels that they have grounds for the Stage 2 Outcome to be reviewed, they may request that their complaint be considered at **Stage 3 - The Review Stage** of this Procedure. The request for a review is submitted to the Quality Transformation unit. The Quality Transformation Unit will determine whether the grounds for a review of the complaint have been met and, if so, a member of the University's Senior Management Team will be appointed as Review Officer to conduct a review of the complaint and the outcome at Stage 2. This

will determine whether the investigation has been conducted fully and in line with these Procedures and whether the outcome was reasonable in the circumstances. The decision made at Stage 3 may be to return the complaint back to Stage 2 if for example additional information has been made available or the Review Officer considers that the evidence indicates that there have been procedural irregularities or the decision is unreasonable or the decision at Stage 2 may be modified or overturned by the Review Officer at Stage 3. The decision made at Stage 3 will be communicated to the student in writing in a Stage 3

Outcome Letter which will also be a Completion of Procedures Letter. Receipt of the Completion of Procedures Letter concludes the University's complaints process, and the letter includes details about how a student may raise their complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

The Complaints Procedure is detailed in full in Section 8 of this document

## **Student responsibilities under the complaints procedure**

In order that the University can deal with a concern or complaint properly and in a timely manner, we ask that students engage with the process and undertake the following responsibilities:

- i. raise concerns at the earliest opportunity with the person who normally has day to day responsibility for dealing with the issue being raised – engage with the Early Resolution process before escalating to a Stage 2 - Formal Complaint;
- ii. when a case is escalated to a Stage 2 Formal Complaint, provide any evidence to support the complaint and further evidence that is requested within notified timelines in order that your complaint can be investigated in a timely manner;
- iii. when submitting a complaint provide full details in a concise manner and provide documentary support for the points made. If evidence and information is not provided within notified deadlines the complaint will be considered based on the evidence available;
- iv. engage positively with those who are involved in investigating and/or resolving the issue that you have brought to their attention;
- v. make considered and reasonable suggestions for remedy should the complaint be upheld and include this in the Stage 2 - Formal Complaint submission;
- vi. be aware of sensitivities where issues involve other students or staff;
- vii. observe the Students' Dignity at Study Policy and Procedure (Bullying and Harassment) with regards to the concern/complaint;
- viii. raise a complaint only where a genuine issue has arisen, since repeated unfounded complaints may cause distress and could amount to harassment.

## **Who can help you to raise a concern or submit a complaint**

Students should refer to the following as sources of impartial help, advice, guidance and support in raising a concern or making a complaint:

- Programme Leader and Personal Tutors

- University of Greater Manchester Students' Union
- Student Liaison Officers
- Student Advisors within the Student Centre

Informed guidance may be sought on the applicability and operation of the procedure from the Student Centre.

## **The Procedure in Detail**

### **8.1 Stage 1 - The Early Resolution Stage**

#### ***Time Limit – Stage 1***

A concern must be raised within 20 working days of the event or circumstances which are its cause; only in exceptional circumstances will extensions to this time limit be considered. If the concern relates to a series of events, the concern should normally be notified within 20 working days of the most recent event.

#### ***Procedure – Stage 1***

The student should make initial contact with the relevant member of staff who is responsible for dealing, on a day-to-day basis, with the concern being raised. For example, if the concern relates to an academic matter, the first point of contact would normally be the Module Tutor, the Programme Leader or the Personal Tutor. If the matter relates to a service provided by or on behalf of the University, the issue should be raised with a member of the relevant University Professional Service such as a Student Services Team Leader or a Subject Librarian.

The type of information required will vary depending on the nature of the concern raised. The student is expected to give full and prompt assistance to the member of staff to whom the issue has been referred.

It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved at Stage 1.

Stage 1 assessment shall normally be concluded within 10 working days of the issue being referred to the member of staff.

The member of staff to whom the complaint has been referred shall normally advise the student in writing of the outcome of the assessment of the concern raised as soon as possible after the assessment has been concluded and this will usually be within 5 working days of the completion of the assessment of the concern at Stage 1. The written or verbal outcome which is provided to the student should be notified to the relevant Head of School/Division/Director of Professional Service and [complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk) for monitoring purposes.

In the written or verbal outcome of the Stage 1 assessment, the student will be informed of how they can take their complaint to the next stage of the process, Stage 2 – The Formal Stage, should they wish to do so.

Schools/Divisions/Professional Services shall normally keep a record of Stage 1 concerns raised to enable themes and trends to be monitored. Heads of

School/Division/Professional Services should be briefed on a regular basis. A Stage 1 Raising a Concern/Complaint template is available for staff to use to assist with record keeping but is not a mandatory requirement of the process.

Where the subject of the concern raised lies outside of the remit of the staff member with whom it has been raised, they may seek the advice of their relevant Heads of School/Division/Professional Services who may determine that a different, more appropriate, member of staff should investigate the concern raised and the student will be directed to the relevant Heads of School/Division/Professional Services for the issue to be considered. For example, if a student raises an issue with a Programme Leader which refers to service within the library, the student may be directed to raise their concern with the Library Manager.

## **8.2 Stage 2 – The Formal Stage**

If, having pursued the matter informally through Stage 1 of the Procedure, the student feels there are reasonable grounds for continued dissatisfaction, they may wish to progress to Stage 2 – the Formal Stage of the Procedure.

### *Submission of Formal Complaint – Stage 2*

A Stage 2 Formal Complaint must be submitted in writing using the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form (available on the University web pages at <http://www.greatermanchester.ac.uk/studentinformation-policyzone/Home.aspx> ) and should be sent via email to [complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk) or in writing to the Quality Transformation Unit.

The form requires Outline the nature of the complaint; The student to:

- Outline the informal steps taken to resolve the complaint at Stage 1;
- Explain why the student is dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1;
- Explain the outcome that the student is seeking in order to resolve their complaint.

In addition, relevant evidence to support the complaint is required, e.g. copies of letters, emails, signed witness statements or any other relevant documentation, to support the issue that the complaint relates to.

In accordance with the Dignity at Study Policy and Procedure a student may submit a formal complaint at this stage. As the student has previously followed the informal Dignity at Study process and an informal investigation has been undertaken or the Policy Coordinator or Dignity at Study Champion has obtained relevant information, this can be supplied to support the submission of a formal complaint and to negate the need for the student to have to recount/provide this information again. The Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion will support the student with the collation of this information and advise the student of the submission process. Staff cannot write or submit the complaint on behalf of the student but can support with this and evidence already collated can be resubmitted. The student who is the victim will also

need to provide a short statement to indicate what they are expecting in terms of any outcome.

### ***Time Limit – Stage 2***

A Stage 2 Formal Complaint must be submitted no later than 10 days from the date on which the Stage 1 response was provided.

In exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate for students to progress directly to Stage 2 of the Procedure without first attempting internal resolution at Stage 1. Guidance must be sought from the Quality Transformation Unit in such cases. Examples of when this might be appropriate include complex complaint issues which require a detailed investigation.

In the event of immediate consideration at Stage 2, the Formal Complaint Form should be submitted within 20 working days of the event or circumstances which are its cause; only in exceptional circumstances will extensions to this time limit be considered. If the Formal Complaint relates to a series of events, the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form should normally be submitted within 20 working days of the most recent event.

### ***Procedure – Stage 2***

Upon receipt of the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form the Quality Transformation Unit will:

- Determine if the complaint falls within the scope of the Student Complaints Procedure;
- Determine if it is appropriate to refer the student to a different procedure;
- Determine if the complaint has been submitted within the appropriate deadline;
- Determine if resolution was attempted at the informal stage of the procedure and if not, determine if the matter should be referred to this stage;
- Determine if the complaint is clearly outlined;
- Consider if a mediation-style intervention may be appropriate.

If it is appropriate for the complaint to progress, the Quality Transformation Unit will forward the complaint to the relevant Head of School/Division/Professional Service for investigation.

If the complaint does not fit within the scope of the Procedure, the Quality Transformation Unit will advise the student within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form. If the Stage 2 complaint is assessed not to be within scope the student will be notified in writing which will include a Completion of Procedures Letter.

From Stage 2, the Quality Transformation Unit will log all incoming complaints and monitor timescales for process review purposes.

The Head of School/Division/Professional Service has responsibility for appointing an independent person who has not been involved in the matter under consideration to investigate the complaint. Where a complaint arises within a School, the investigator should preferably be appointed from within a different discipline area. The complaint

form shall be forwarded to the Investigating Officer to enable them to carry out their role. The Investigating Officer will be a member of University staff at grade 7 or above who is not a member of the Executive Board. Where the complaint directly relates to a member or members of staff, the Investigating Officer will normally be at the same level or the level above the staff involved. Where a complaint is directly related to a Head of School/Division/Director of Professional Services the Investigating Officer will normally be another Head/Director.

The student shall be advised of the name and role of the Investigating Officer. The Investigating Officer will normally meet or communicate with the student to discuss the matter in further details.

It is anticipated that the investigation of most Stage 2 complaints will be completed within 30 days of the appointment of the Investigating Officer. If there is any delay in the process (i.e. if the investigation is not completed within 30 days) the student will normally be informed.

The Investigating Officer will investigate the complaint and will produce a written report with appropriate evidence for the Head of School/Division/Professional Service using the **Investigating Officer's Report Template**. On receipt of the Investigating Officer's Report, the Head of School/Division/Professional Service may request additional information.

A letter will be sent to the student with details of the outcome and any action the School/Division/Professional Service intends to take. The written response will state whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or rejected and the reason(s) for this decision. A copy of the Investigating Officer's Report shall also be provided with any necessary redactions.

A copy of the response letter and the Investigating Officer's Report will be forwarded to the Quality Transformation Unit.

### **8.3 Stage 3 – Review Stage**

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome reached at Stage 2, a request for a review of the decision reached at Stage 2 may be submitted to Stage 3 – Review Stage of the Procedure. Stage 3 may only be invoked when Stage 2 has been completed. No new issues of complaint may be introduced at Stage 3. Students studying at a collaborative partner organisation should read the guidance provided at Appendix A.

#### ***Submission of Request for Complaint Review – Stage 3***

The request for a review should be submitted using the Stage 3 - Complaint Review Form.

The grounds for a review are:

- i. that there was a procedural irregularity at Stage 2 of the Student Complaints Procedure which has materially disadvantaged the student;

- ii. the emergence of new and relevant evidence which, for good and reasonable cause, was not available during Stage 2;
- iii. that evidence is available to show that the outcome reached at an earlier stage was unreasonable. In this context, unreasonable shall be taken to mean perverse, i.e. that the outcome was not a possible conclusion which a similar process of consideration might have reached.

At Stage 3, the following information is required:

- the grounds on which the request is based (see above);
- a rationale to explain the grounds;
- a statement to explain why the student is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response;
- the outcome sought by the student in order to resolve the complaint;
- any relevant evidence e.g. copies of letters, emails, signed witness statements and any other relevant supporting documentation

### **Time Limit – Stage 3**

The completed Stage 3 – Complaint Review Form should be sent via email to the Quality Transformation Unit, [complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@greatermanchester.ac.uk), no later than 10 working days from the date on which the Stage 2 response to the complaint was provided.

### **Documentation required - Stage 3**

As a minimum the following documentation will be provided to the Review Officer:

Stage 3 Complaint Form and any associated documentation;

Stage 2 Complaint Form, Stage 2 Outcome Letter, Investigating Officer's Report;

Written response following the Stage 1 review of the complaint (where available).

### **Procedure – Stage 3**

On receipt of a Stage 3 Complaint Review Form, the Quality Transformation Unit shall review the document to determine whether the request for review is valid based on the grounds for review stated above and is within the time limits stated above.

The decision regarding the validity of the request for review will be notified to the student in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the request.

If the request is deemed invalid the letter will advise that the internal University procedures in relation to the complaint have been concluded and will include details of the scheme of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

If the request is deemed valid, a member of the University Senior Management Team will be appointed as the Review Officer and will review the complaint and the decision reached at Stage 2 of the Procedure.

In exceptional circumstances, the Review Officer may consider that a Review Meeting is required prior to a decision being made.

The Review Officer may refer to the School/Division/Professional Service for their consideration of any additional information being made available which may result in

a change to the Stage 2 decision, or the Review Officer considers that the evidence indicates that there have been procedural irregularities or the decision is unreasonable.

If the complaint is not returned to the Stage 2 stage, the Review Officer may uphold or partially uphold the complaint or may uphold the Stage 2 decision.

### ***Stage 3 - Review Meeting***

Exceptionally, the Review Officer may determine that a Review Meeting is required and if this is the case the student will be invited to attend a meeting with the Review Officer and the relevant Head of School/Division/Professional Service (or nominee).

The Review Meeting will be serviced by a member of the Quality Transformation Unit (or nominee). Summary notes of the meeting will be taken.

The participants of a Review Meeting will receive the documentation as outlined above as a minimum.

The process that will be followed if a Stage 3 Review Meeting is required are as follows:

- Review Officer will ensure that introductions are made, and the role of each person present is clear and will outline the process;
- Review Officer will invite the student to outline the reasons for the review;
- Review Officer will invite the Head of School/Division/Professional Service (or nominee) to respond to any of the issues raised by the student;
- Review Officer may ask questions of the participants;
- The student and the Head of School/Division/Professional Service (or nominee) may call witnesses to present evidence;
- The student and the Head of School/Division/Professional Service (or nominee) shall question their witness(es);
- Any questions for the witness(es) shall be addressed through the Review Officer;
- Witnesses withdraw once their evidence has been heard and there are no more questions;
- Commentary deemed by the Review Officer to be irrelevant, frivolous or vexatious will not be recorded;
- Both the student and the Head of School/Division/Professional Service (or nominee) shall have the right to make final submissions to the Review Officer. The student will speak first, followed by the Head of School/Division/Professional Service (or nominee);
- Both parties will be asked to withdraw whilst the Review Officer reaches a decision.

### ***The Stage 3 Notification of Decision Process***

The standard of proof for the Review Officer when reaching a decision will be based on the balance of probabilities.

The Review Officer will consider all relevant information and determine whether the investigation has been conducted fully and in line with these Procedures and whether the decision and outcome were reasonable in the circumstances.

The decision made at Stage 3 will be communicated to the student in writing normally within 10 working days of the receipt of the Stage 3 Complaint Form being submitted to the Review Officer or within 10 working days of the Review Meeting should that be necessary and if the Review Meeting has delayed the decision making process. On occasions when a Complaint Review Meeting will delay the response, the student will be made aware of the delay.

The Stage 3 - Complaint Review Decision Letter will include a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter. These documents confirm that the University's complaints process has been concluded and detail how a student may raise their complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

If any aspect of the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the Review Officer will consider possible means of redress which will be included in the Complaint Review Decision Letter. Exceptionally the Review Officer may need to undertake further consultation before a final decision can be reached which may result in a delay. In these circumstances the student will be informed of the delay.

## **Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

At the completion of the Complaints Procedure, the complainant will receive a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter from the University. This confirms that the University has completed consideration of the case through its procedures. If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome s/he may request an independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). In such circumstances, the student should forward a completed Scheme Application Form to the OIA (together with the Completions of Procedures letter from the University). The OIA will then review the complaint independently in due course.

The following information should be included within the Completion of Procedures Letter:

The University of Greater Manchester subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may be able to apply for a review of the decision to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right here:  
<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>

You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one here:  
<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers/completion-of-procedures-letters>.

Should you decide to refer to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA on or before [Insert Date].

You can fill in the OIA's complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website [How to complain to us - OIAHE](#)

You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Complaint Form.

## **Remedies**

The University is committed to providing the highest standards of service and maintaining good relationships between all of its students and staff.

Remedies available in response to complaints therefore reflect our desire for student satisfaction and to maintain quality.

When deciding what outcome is best to resolve a complaint, the University aims to provide the response it feels is most appropriate to help a person benefit from a quality service from the University.

Remedies will need the approval of a Head of School, Division or Professional Service or may need to be referred to a member of the University Executive Team and may include the granting of some, all or none of the following:

- i. reconsideration of a decision within University policies and procedures, as if that decision was being made for the first time;
- ii. remission to an appropriate body with the power to authorise the application of an exception to the University's policies and procedures;
- iii. review of a University policy or procedure, with or without suspension of its operation or general cases;
- iv. suspension or cancellation of a fine, penalty or limitation of service;
- v. proportionate reimbursement of monies paid, or a proportionate waiver of monies owed.

In all cases the student is entitled to an explanation.

## **Information which Applies to all Stages of the Procedure**

### **Attendance at Meetings and Engagement with the Process**

Students are encouraged to attend all meetings convened under this Procedure to consider a complaint. If a student does not attend a meeting under this Procedure, without providing good reason in advance, the relevant Head or Officer may decide that the meeting may proceed in the student's absence. In this instance, the complaint will be considered based on the evidence available at the time of the

meeting. If, for good reason, a student is unable to attend a meeting under the Procedure, then the student may request that the meeting is deferred until a later date. This may delay the time taken to reach an outcome to the complaint.

Meetings may take place remotely via Zoom or MS Teams and in such cases all participants are expected to have their cameras turned on.

A student is responsible for paying the costs of attendance at meetings. The University will not reimburse any costs. At any stage of the Procedure, if a student raises a complaint and then does not engage with the process of investigating and/or determining a way to resolve the issue, the complaint will be withdrawn.

**b. Representation at Meetings**

A student may be accompanied at any meeting under this Procedure by a representative who is normally a member of the University of Greater Manchester Students' Union and that representative may speak on the student's behalf. The representative must not be someone who has been suspended or excluded from the University for any reason, and they must be willing to act in the capacity as the student's representative. Normally, legal representation is not permitted. It is the student's responsibility to relay all relevant notices and other communications under this Procedure to their representative. The name of the representative shall be provided to the University before any meeting. Where a representative is attending a meeting on behalf of a student, the meeting will only be required to consider the representations made by the representative during the meeting. Any written or oral representations made by the representative after the meeting cannot be considered.

A student is responsible for paying the costs of their representative.

**c. Recording of Procedures**

The audio recording of meetings held under this Procedure is prohibited, subject to such reasonable adjustment as may be agreed by the University where required under the Equality Act 2010.

**d. Legal Proceedings**

If a student brings court or tribunal proceedings against the University which may be relevant to that student's complaint, the University will normally suspend consideration of the complaint until the University knows the outcome of those proceedings. If the matters complained about are disposed of in those proceedings, then the University will normally terminate consideration of that complaint.

**e. Appointment of Substitutes**

If any post-holder of the University who is specified in this Procedure (the Specified Postholder) for any reason declines, fails or is unable to take action that is their

responsibility under this Procedure, then the Quality Transformation Unit is able to approve the appointment of a substitute who will be as close as possible to the specified post holder in terms of their position within the University.

f.        Mediation Style Intervention

The option to resolve a complaint by way of mediation style intervention will be open at all stages of the procedure should this be appropriate and desired.

g.        Variations to the Procedure

The University reserves the right to vary any stage in this procedure as it deems appropriate after consultation with the Students' Union to comply with any current legal obligations and best practice.

Where mention is made in this procedure of action by specific post holder or role holder this action may be delegated to an appropriate nominee where warranted by the circumstances, for example, where there is or may be any potential conflict of roles or interests, or the specific post holder or role holder is absent, so long as the nominee has appropriate seniority and/or experience to be able to act on behalf of the specific post or role holder.

## **Disciplinary Action**

Students should note that disciplinary action may be taken against them if they offer or give any University staff money, gifts or any other advantage which is intended to induce or reward impropriety in the consideration or resolution of a complaint. Bribery is a criminal offence and morally wrong and exposes the University and its employees to the risk of prosecution, fines and imprisonment as well as endangering the University's reputation. See the University Anti-Bribery Policy available at: <https://www.greatermanchester.ac.uk/Governance/Docs/AntiBriberyPolicy.pdf>

Any information submitted as part of a complaint which subsequently is identified as fraudulent/vexatious or malicious will be disregarded and the student may be referred for consideration under the Student Disciplinary Procedure or Fitness to Practise Procedure

## **Related Documentation**

The following documents can be found on the University Student Information – Policy Zone (<https://www.greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-policy-zone/>) where other policies and procedures which may be of relevance can also be found including:

- Academic Misconduct Regulations and Procedures
- Appeals Regulations and Procedures
- Car Parking Policy

- Code of Policy and Procedures for Investigation and Resolving Allegations of Misconduct in Research
- Code of Practice Relating to Freedom of Speech and Meetings on University Premises
- Code of Practice Relating to Freedom of Speech and all Planned, Affiliated, Funded or Branded Events Taking Place Off Campus
- Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors
- Fitness to Practise Procedure
- Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures Governing Programmes of Study by Research Leading to the Awards of the University of Greater Manchester
- Regulations and Procedures Governing the Awards of the Degrees of Doctor of Philosophy by Published Work and Doctor of Philosophy by Practice
- Student Attendance Policy
- Student Mental Health Policy
- Students Dignity at Study Policy and Procedure (Bullying and Harassment)
- Student NonAcademic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure □  
Supported Study Policy

## **Monitoring and Performance Procedure**

Schools/Divisions/Professional Services are responsible for maintaining a log of all complaints received and ensuring that appropriate action is taken and that any emerging trends are monitored. The Quality Transformation Unit maintains a summary of Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints submitted in each academic year which permits the progress of complaints to be monitored and delays in the process to be identified and acted upon. The Quality Transformation Unit shall compile an annual management report identifying issues raised through complaints, actions taken and an anonymised profile of complaints for the Education Committee and Senate.

## **Training and Support**

Individual advice to students is available from the Students' Union on 01204 900850 or email [info@greatermanchestersu.com](mailto:info@greatermanchestersu.com)

General information to students on the operation of the Student Complaints Procedure is available from the Student Centre and the Quality Transformation Unit. Training and support for University and Students' Union staff in relation to this Procedure is available from the Quality Transformation Unit.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

The University of Greater Manchester is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity, and a supportive environment for all member of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this procedure has been screened in

relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, gender and disability and avoidance of discrimination to other equality groups related to ages, sexual orientation, religion or belief or gender reassignment

## **Monitoring and Review of the Procedure**

These procedures will be monitored by the Quality Transformation Unit. These procedures will be reviewed periodically to ensure relevance and compliance with OIA guidance.

## **Dissemination of and Access to the Policy**

These procedures will be available on the University's website (Student Information – Policy Zone).

<b>Staff Policy – Student Complaints Procedure</b>	
Reference Number: QTU/	
Version number	5
Version Date	August 2025
Author	Caroline Bracewell
Owner	QTU
Responsible person	All Staff, Investigating Officers, Heads of Schools, Division and Professional Services
Approving Committee	Senate
Date Approved	January 2022
Effective From	January 2022
Dissemination Method	Website

Review Frequency	As required to ensure relevance and compliance with OIA guidance
Consultation History	Drafts of the procedure have been considered by: Education Committee Senate; Students Union
Document History	July 2017 - This was re-write of the previous procedure partly in response to an OIA consultation document and subsequent guidance November 2021 – technical changes to accommodate remote operations, removal of HEFCE reference, changes to the nomenclature of roles

#### Appendix A The University of Greater Manchester and our Partner Organisations

- A.1 Complaints about services provided by collaborative partners (for example, those in which University awards are taught under academic franchising arrangements) or other organisations involved in delivery of a student's programme will need to be pursued with the relevant collaborative partner or organisation through the partner/organisation's complaints procedure.
- A.2 Our partners have their own complaints procedures which you will be informed about as part of your induction processes with the partner institution and issues relating to **service provision** will have Stage 1 – The Early Resolution, Stage 2 – The Formal Complaint Stage and Stage 3 – The Review Stage, being conducted by the partner institution.
- A.3 In the case of UK based partners which who are members of the OIA, when a complaint about services has reached Stage 3 – The Review Stage, the partner institution will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter enabling the student to refer their complaint to the OIA should that be necessary.
- A.4 The outcome of such complaints will be reported to the University, annually, for information and quality monitoring.
- A.5 All complaints that relate to **Academic Quality and Standards** will be considered by the partner institution for Stage 1 and Stage 2. If a complaint is not resolved, Stage 3 - The Review Stage, of the complaints procedure will be conducted by the University.
- A.6 In the event that a request for Stage 3 - Review is not eligible for consideration by the University (ie it relates to service provision rather than academic quality and standards), the partner will be asked to consider it under their own procedures at Stage 3.
- A.7 In the event that the University considers a partner complaint under Stage 3 of this procedure, in the first instance the University of Greater Manchester's Academic Quality Manager (or nominee) will confirm that the complaint has been satisfactorily investigated according to the partner's procedures, making such further enquiries

and taking such action as may be necessary, before appointing a Review Officer to consider the case under Stage 3 of this procedure.

- A.8 Once Stage 3 is completed the Review Officer will refer to the University of Greater Manchester, Off Campus Division to manage negotiations and reparative actions with the partner organisation, if appropriate.
- A.9 The University will issue the Completion of Procedures Letter with the Review Decision Letter and if the complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the student, they may wish to pursue it with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (the OIA) (see Section 9).
- A.10 The University of Greater Manchester will only accept requests for review if the complaint relates to Academic Quality and Standards issues e.g. programme delivery, teaching, feedback and learning resources. The University can only review matters which have already been considered at an earlier stage through the partner or organisation's complaints procedure.
- A.11 Exceptions to the above may be made for complaints involving two or more degree awarding bodies, such as under a joint degree, dual degree, or double degree arrangement. In such cases, the complaints procedure to be followed will be detailed in the course documentation provided to the student.



## Appendix B

## Student Complaints Procedure – Flow Chart with Timeline Guidance

