

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The levels of service that students, prospective students and applicants can expect from the School are outlined in course information and other publications and on the School's website. If a student, prospective student or applicant has a complaint relating to a specific issue regarding the delivery of teaching or other services provided by the School, then they should submit a complaint, following the formal complaints procedure.
- 1.2. Students will not be discriminated against or suffer any recrimination as a consequence of making a complaint. It is important however that students adhere to official procedures, as this will assist the School to deal with concerns as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- 1.3. This complaints policy is part of the School's process of quality review and improvement. Complaints are considered as useful feedback rather than criticism and are valued. Any comments about this policy should be referred to the Head of Student Services.

2. Policy detail

- 2.1. The Complaints Procedure should be read in conjunction with this policy. Complaints may only be made by a person in direct receipt of a service delivered by the School (see also 2.5).
- 2.2. Complainants must submit complaints within the timescale stated within the complaints procedure. If there is a delay in submitting a complaint, the complainant may be asked to explain the reason for the delay, and the delay may be grounds for the complaint to be rejected. If significant time has passed, it may be difficult and/or impossible for a fair and proper investigation of the circumstances and detail of the complaint.
- 2.3. As far as possible complaints should be raised initially with the person responsible. Every effort will be made to facilitate early resolution and it should be possible for the majority of complaints to be resolved quickly and effectively at this informal level.
- 2.4. The Director has no role with regards to the receipt or consideration of student complaints; any complaints sent directly to the Director will not be investigated. The School will not forward any letters of complaint to the Director.
- 2.5. The School's relationship is with the student, irrespective of who pays the student's fees. Therefore, students should also note that, under Data Protection legislation, the School cannot deal with third party complaints without the written permission of the student unless a third party has been formally authorised or instructed to act on a student's behalf (this includes complaints made by a student's parent(s) or spouse).

Whilst correspondence will then be copied to the student (unless specifically directed to the contrary by the student), the School will only deal with the single individual authorised to act on the student's behalf in respect of a complaint.

- 2.6. Complaints cannot be made anonymously. If another person is named in a complaint, they have a right to know what is being alleged, and to know who is making the complaint. However, all complaints will be dealt with sensitively, in the spirit of conciliation, and as far as possible, confidentiality will be maintained.
- 2.7. The School expects that students will not engage in making mischievous, frivolous or vexatious complaints. If a complaint is deemed to fall into this category it will be rejected and the student will receive a written response outlining why. Students should also be aware that if they raise a complaint against a member of staff that is found to be vexatious or malicious, they may be liable to disciplinary proceedings.
- 2.8. Where a complaint involves alleged misconduct on the part of a staff member, it should be referred to the Head of Employee Relations and Business Partnering to review whether any immediate action is required under the School's Disciplinary Policy for staff. Students should be aware that where a serious allegation against a member of staff is made, the School may have a duty to investigate this, regardless of whether the student wishes to formalise their complaint. It may also be necessary to refer some serious complaints to Human Resources even where these have been reported outside of the timescales set out in the complaints procedure.
- 2.9. Whatever the nature of the complaint, complainants can expect it to be dealt with promptly and fairly and in accordance with the School's policies and procedures. The time limits set out in the complaints procedure will normally be followed. However, where for good reason, this is not possible, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.
- 2.10. Every complaint will be carefully considered and complainants will be told the reasons for any decision. The School hopes that the complaints policy will enable all complainants to find a satisfactory resolution to any problems. However, complainants should not expect that consideration of a complaint will always produce their preferred outcome. Provision of some services may be dependent on resources or policy decisions at School.
- 2.11. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued upon the completion of the internal complaints procedure.
- 2.12. If a complaint is received by the Director, the Chair of the Board of Governors, or another such office-holder, it will be referred to the Head of Student Services.

3. Matters which are not covered by the School's Complaints Procedure

- 3.1. Issues covered by other School policies cannot be dealt with under the Complaints Policy. For example, this policy cannot be used to appeal against a decision made

under the Student Disciplinary Policy or by an Assessment Board. Students wishing to make an appeal should read the Appeals Policy and Appeals Procedure.

- 3.2. Complaints about services provided by other organisations should be directed to those providers for resolution.
- 3.3. Complaints about Design School Asia's students will be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Policy.

4. **Franchised Provision**

For franchised provision, where the student is enrolled at the School and is registered on a School-owned course, but the course is delivered by a collaborative partner, the School will make clear to the complainant which matter(s) may be referred to the School directly and which matter(s) should be referred to the collaborative partner for resolution. Typically, any complaint(s) concerning teaching and academic standards should be sent to the School if informal resolution is not possible.

- 4.1. Complaints about professional services, such as accommodation, recreational/catering services, and pastoral care should be directed to the collaborative partner. In such cases, the collaborative partner is responsible for issuing the complainant with a Completion of Procedures letter.
- 4.2. Exceptionally, where the complaint concerns academic standards at the collaborative partner (eg, the quality of teaching), the School may decide to review the complaint under Stage 3 of its Complaints Procedure. The complainant will be notified of this in writing and, in such cases, the School will issue the Completion of Procedures letter.

5. **Public Interest Disclosure Policy**

- 5.1. The Board of Governors has approved a procedure under the UK's *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998*, which is consistent with its commitment to conduct its affairs in a responsible and transparent way. The procedure provides a means by which a member of the School (Governors, staff and current students) can disclose information, which they believe shows misconduct or wrongdoing within the School, without fear of reprisal.
- 5.2. A copy of the procedure and further advice and guidance on invoking the procedure and the scope of the Act can be obtained from the Information Office.

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