



**Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University**

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## **Student Regulations and Procedures**

**Student & Academic Services  
2010/2011**

## **Student Complaints Procedure**

**Manchester Metropolitan University  
All Saints Building  
Oxford Road  
Manchester  
M15 6BH**

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL STUDENTS**

**All students should access their University email account on a regular basis, as this will be used to mail them important information regarding their course, tuition fees, award ceremonies and other matters**

## STUDENTS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The University recognises that students may have legitimate complaints relating to their course, the services or facilities provided by the University, other students, or the staff of the University and it will take such complaints seriously and deal with them in confidence and without recrimination.

Most complaints can be resolved by students pursuing matters informally but directly with the staff or students concerned. Sometimes what seems like a 'complaint' or an 'argument' may be more of a matter of expressing your own needs and expectations or clearing up a misunderstanding. If this is done in an appropriate way, you will often find that people are only too happy to respond and to be given the opportunity to put things right. Indeed, learning how to express dissatisfaction effectively, how to manage disagreement constructively and how to resolve disputes creatively is a very important part of your education and personal development. It is also a very important way by which the University staff come to understand your needs and find out if we are going wrong. So you should never be afraid of saying if something is troubling you.

The provisions of the 'informal procedure' can help you to develop these skills as the need arises.

Only where informal procedures fail should the steps detailed in the formal procedure be followed.

**NB:** Students undertaking postgraduate research degrees (MA or MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorate) have specific educational needs, that are not shared by students on taught programmes and for which they should use the **Research Student Complaints Procedure** available here [http://www.red.mmu.ac.uk/?page\\_id=309](http://www.red.mmu.ac.uk/?page_id=309). However if research students have complaints of a general nature, for example about service deficiencies, rather than about their studies, they may use this procedure instead.

### Informal Procedure

- 1.1 Most complaints and difficulties can be resolved informally and this may be best achieved by your discussing the matter with your course tutor or tutors in the first instance. He or she may then refer you to your Course Leader or your Head of Department, or local service representative (eg Site Librarian) or may pursue it on your behalf.
- 1.2 If you are in doubt as to whom to refer your complaint or would simply like to talk matters over with someone, there are ombudsmen at each campus. They are independent people who have experience of mediation and dispute resolution. They may be able to help you to clarify the issues and explore how the problem might be resolved. They can give you advice or support you, perhaps in helping you to find the confidence or techniques to do

this yourself, or, if you want, to mediate between you and the member(s) or staff or student(s) concerned. If you have a particularly serious complaint they will help to raise it in the right place and through the right procedure, so it is swiftly dealt with.

- 1.3 You can also seek advice from the Students' Union. If appropriate, the Students' Union may contact the relevant University staff on your behalf.
- 1.4 If, having pursued the matter informally, you believe that your concerns have not been appropriately addressed, then you may follow the formal procedure set out below. You may find it helpful to take advice from the Students' Union before you do so.

### **Formal Complaint Procedure**

- 2.1 This procedure is intended to help resolve students' complaints. It is not intended as a prescription of stages to be followed in every case and should be used as flexibly as possible to ensure complaints are considered swiftly and fairly.
- 2.2 Please set down your complaint in writing and submit it to your Head of Department (or equivalent), who will normally respond within 10 working days. This length of time may be necessary to enable the Head to investigate the matter with appropriate colleagues.
- 2.3 Your Head of Department may invite you to discuss the matter in person, but in any event you should still receive a written response.
- 2.4 If, following receipt of the written response from your Head of Department, your complaint remains unresolved, you can request a meeting with him/her to discuss the matter further. You may be accompanied at this meeting by a Students' Union representative or friend who may participate in the discussion on your behalf. The Head of Department may involve other members of staff in the meeting if he/she considers it appropriate to do so.
- 2.5 Following the meeting, which should take place as soon as is reasonably possible, your Head of Department will provide you with a written statement of its outcome.
- 2.6 If at this stage your complaint still remains unresolved, then you should refer it in writing to your Dean of Faculty or appropriate Service Head. You should let your Dean or appropriate Service Head have copies of earlier correspondence and any other relevant papers. The Dean of Faculty or appropriate Service Head will normally respond to you within 10 working days and may request to see you to discuss the matter personally. In any event, you will

receive a written response from the Dean of Faculty or appropriate Service Head.

- 2.7 If your complaint still remains unresolved, then you should request a formal meeting with the Dean or appropriate Service Head to discuss it further. You may be accompanied at this meeting by a Students' Union representative or friend who may participate in the discussion on your behalf. The Dean or Service Head may involve other members of staff in the meeting if he/she considers it appropriate to do so. The Dean or appropriate Service Head will provide you with a written statement of the outcome of the meeting as soon as is reasonably possible and his/her decision on your complaint will normally be final. However, if having exhausted the University's internal complaints procedure you consider that the University has not followed and/or applied its regulations and/or procedures correctly, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education – see section 6 below for fuller details.

### **Matters Which Are Not the Subject of the Complaints Procedure**

It is important to recognise the limits of the complaints procedure, and what it is not appropriate for.

- 3.1 If you have an academic problem such as, for example, coping with the demands of your course, you should not delay in seeking advice directly from your course tutor.
- 3.2 If you need help and advice with a personal problem, this may be sought from the Student Counsellors (in Student Services) or from the Students' Union. Do not hesitate to seek help or advice on any matter which concerns you.
- 3.3 If you want to appeal against the decision of a Board of Examiners, a separate procedure exists, and you should consult the "Procedure for accommodating requests for review of decisions of Boards of Examiners" ("the Review Procedure")
- 3.4 This procedure cannot be used to appeal against a decision made under the University's Regulations, such as the Rules for Student Conduct or the Review Procedure but the provisions of paragraph 6.1 below may be used for complaints that the University has materially erred in its application of these or other procedures or that it has materially contravened a principle of natural justice or administrative law in so far as any or all of these may have applied in your particular case.

## **Procedural Notes**

- 4.1. If your complaint results in disciplinary action being taken against either staff or students of the University, then the University's disciplinary procedures will be used for this purpose. You may be called to give evidence at the disciplinary hearing, and ask to be informed of the outcome. Once the disciplinary procedures have been invoked, they will take precedence over the complaint procedure.
- 4.2 If your complaint involves students or staff from a Department other than your own, you should refer it to your Head of Department. He or she will then decide whether to refer the matter to the other Head or Dean, or deal with it him/her self.
- 4.3 Should your complaint be against your Head of Department, you should refer it to your Dean of Faculty. In exceptional and serious cases, you may refer your complaint to the Registrar, who will determine how to deal with it having regard to the disciplinary and other procedures of the University.
- 4.4 If your complaint involves one of the services provided for students, the Library or Computing for example, it may be referred to the appropriate Head of Service. If you are unsure about who is responsible for the matter you wish to complain about you may prefer to refer it in the first instance to your Head of Department who will ensure that your complaint reaches the appropriate person.

## **Conclusions**

- 5.1 The procedures above have been established to ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint and to ensure that it is thoroughly and objectively resolved. If, however, you can produce evidence satisfactory to the Registrar of a material error in the handling of your complaint then he/she may either review the matter personally, or request a suitably independent member of the University i.e. a member of the University who has no direct relationship with the person or matter complained about, to do so.
- 5.2 Evidence of any alleged material error should be submitted to the Registrar in writing together with a written statement of all the relevant details of your case and copies of the written statements which you may have received in accordance with this procedure from your Head of Department or Dean of Faculty.
- 5.3 Dissatisfaction with the outcome of the operation of this complaint procedure will not constitute an acceptable reason for a review.
- 5.4 The University recognises that you may not be familiar with the

protocol of this procedure and in the event of your submitting your complaint in another form you will be advised accordingly and your complaint will then be dealt with.

- 5.5 If at any stage your complaint is considered to lack merit or to be frivolous or vexatious then the University reserves the right to dismiss it. Should the University dismiss your complaint, it will provide you with a written statement as to the reasons why it has done so.

### **Independent Referral**

- 6.1 If having exhausted all stages of the University's internal complaints procedure, you consider that the University has failed to consider and respond to your complaint appropriately, you can refer it to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, which provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints. You can obtain further information about the scheme by writing to:

The Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Thames Tower  
Station Road  
Reading  
RG1 1LX

Or by looking at the Adjudicator's website [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

In order to refer your case to the OIAHE, you will require a "Completion of Procedures Letter" from the Registrar (or his/her nominee) confirming that you have exhausted all stages of the University's internal complaints procedure. To obtain this letter, you will need to provide the Registrar (or his/her nominee) with a statement of how your complaint has been dealt with under the University's procedure and provide copies of all relevant correspondence. It is only when you have properly exhausted all stages of the University's procedure that you can be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter.