



Student Complaints Procedure

Academic Appeals Procedure

Complaints Procedure

Istituto Marangoni recognizes there may be occasions where students wish to raise legitimate complaints relating to their course, or the facilities and services provided by the School. It is important to both students and staff to know that such complaints will be dealt seriously and transparently, and without fear of recrimination. To ensure this, Istituto Marangoni has in place a Student Complaints Procedure which details procedures and parameters for making a complaint, alongside what action may be taken in response to complaints.

This procedure is designed to ensure that all student complaints are heard and responded to in a matter that is fair, transparent, timely and based on the consideration of relevant evidence. It will safeguard, as far as reasonably practicable, the interests and well-being of any student making a complaint and of Istituto Marangoni staff who may named or otherwise involved in a complaint.

Principles and scope

Through this policy, the School commits to:

- treat complaints with the seriousness they deserve;
- deal with complaints in a timely manner;
- ensure that complainants will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint;
- handle complaints in confidence and only give people the information that is required to investigate and resolve the complaint properly;
- answer all aspects of a complaint and ensure that the response is clear.

What is covered by the Complaints Procedure?

Istituto Marangoni Complaints Procedure covers learning opportunities for registered students and actions by the School or failures by it to act on services it provides for its students or which are provided by others on its behalf.

All information submitted in relation to complaints shall be dealt confidentially, and only disclosed as necessary to progress the complaint. All parties (including students) are expected to honour confidentiality on complaints. All personal information shall be handled in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

Istituto Marangoni undertakes to students that making a complaint in good faith about any aspect of the learning opportunities or services it provides for them will not compromise or otherwise affect their standing with the School, prejudice their progress, or how they are treated by it or its staff.

A complaint may include, but is not limited to:

- Perceived failure by Istituto Marangoni to follow an appropriate administrative process or satisfactorily apply an institutional policy;
- Dissatisfaction with Admissions processes;
- Perceived failure of Istituto Marangoni to meet obligations outlined in Programme Handbooks;
- Concerns about the quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided by Istituto Marangoni;
- Concerns about organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of Istituto Marangoni (including placement providers);
- Perceived deficiencies in academic provision (e.g. scheduling of classes, amended submission dates, submission procedures for assessed work, inconsistent advice, provision of feedback, quality or frequency of supervision);
- Perceived deficiencies in standards of service, for example, support facilities or administrative services;
- Perceived misinformation about an academic programme;
- Dissatisfaction with the level and availability of pastoral support;

- Inappropriate behavior of a member of staff or contractor;
- Allegations of harassment, bullying or victimization.

Where a student submits multiple complaints relating to the same issue, the School reserves the right to treat the matter as a single complaint.

Timescales

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible in order to ensure prompt investigation and swift resolution. Students who wish to make a complaint must invoke the informal (stage one) complaints procedure within one calendar month of the incident that has given rise to the complaint.

Students who wish to make a formal complaint must do so within three calendar months of the incident that has given rise to the complaint.

Students who have left the School (including recent graduates) may make a formal complaint within three calendar months of their registration ending.

Who can complain?

Complaints will normally be dealt with within three calendar months from receipt of a formal (stage two) complaint, but the School reserves the right to make a reasonable extension to this timescale during student vacation periods. For complaints that are about serious matters (for example, involving the health, well-being or personal security of a student and / or other students or staff) the School may consider whether to take the matter immediately to the formal (stage two) of the complaints procedure.

Complaints can be made by existing students including students undertaking placement, students on approved periods of suspension, or recent graduates.

Complaints may be raised by individual students, or a group of students can raise a collective complaint if they have experienced the same problem. For complaints from groups of students it is helpful if the group can identify a spokesperson through whom it can communicate with the School.

Each member of the group must provide their student ID number and consent to participate in the group complaint. They must also be able to demonstrate that they have been personally affected by the matter.

Suspension or termination of a complaint

If a student's complaint overlaps with other School regulations or policies, advice should be sought from the Academic Registrar about how to progress the complaint, if at all. The progress of a complaint through any stage of this procedure may be suspended for a reasonable period.

The School reserves the right to suspend a complaint's investigation in the event of a student taking the case to law during or prior to engagement with this Procedure. The investigation will resume upon completion of any legal proceedings and outcomes of the process are known. In such cases, the 90-day completion period will be reset.

The School may, in exceptional circumstances, terminate a complaint at any stage where a student's behaviour in relation to the complaint or investigation is deemed unacceptable or disruptive, or where a complaint is deemed to be vexatious or malicious. In such cases, the School may also invoke the disciplinary procedures in the Student Code of Conduct.

Making an Informal (Stage One) Complaint

When a student is dissatisfied with the action or lack of action by the London School to deal with unsatisfactory learning opportunities or services, they should raise their complaint directly with their tutor, their Programme Leader or the person who has provided them with a service that they think is not satisfactory. At this stage, complaints may be made face-to-face, by phone, in

writing or by email. Students may appoint a representative to submit the complaint on their behalf. Students are advised to keep a record of any complaints made at this stage. This opens an informal (stage one) complaint, intended to deal with straightforward complaints swiftly and at a local level.

When making an informal complaint the student should explain to the relevant member of School staff or the service provider the reason for their complaint and the resolution they are seeking. A resolution might take the form of one or more of the following: an explanation why something happened in the way it did; an undertaking that there will be no repetition of the cause of the complaint; an appropriate apology from the individual or from the London School or the service provider and which results in a mutually satisfactory outcome.

A member of staff at the London School who receives an informal complaint from a student (including a complaint from a student about a service provided for the School by an independent contractor) will forward it to Quality Assurance Office in order for it to be logged on the School Complaint register and immediately report this to their line manager and the Director of Education, who will advise them how to proceed and ensure that the facts of the complaint are noted. They will also check subsequently whether progress is being made towards resolving the complaint. The School will attempt to ensure that informal complaints are resolved as quickly as possible and within no more than 30 days.

If the student is not satisfied with the resolution to their complaint that is proposed or they consider that the matter is not being dealt with in a timely manner (for example, more than 30 days have passed from the point at which they made their informal complaint without a resolution being proposed) they may escalate the matter and make a formal (stage two) complaint.

Making a Formal (Stage Two) Complaint

A formal (stage two) complaint may be appropriate where the student has declined to engage in the informal complaint stage for good cause; is dissatisfied with the resolution proposed to their complaint at the end of the informal stage; or the grounds for the complaint are serious and/or complex and require a more formal procedure. In this context, 'good cause' may include concern about the safety or well-being of students and others if the matter is not dealt with formally and promptly.

Formal complaints must be raised as soon as possible after the event that has given rise to the complaint: this makes gathering facts easier and evidence more reliable. Formal complaints should normally be raised within three calendar months of the matter that has given rise to the complaint. For the School to make an exception to this requirement the student will need to show good cause as to why they were unable to raise the matter within the normal time.

To make a formal complaint the student needs to complete a complaints form.² The form should detail the grounds for the complaint, together with a statement of what has been done by the student to attempt to resolve the complaint. All supporting evidence must be submitted at this stage as there is no provision to lodge a new complaint or evidence after this stage. When it is completed, the Complaint Form should be sent to the Office of Director of Education. An email address is: Mevin Murden: m.murden@istitutomarangoni.com. Students who need help in completing the Complaint Form may seek help from a representative or Student Services.

Supporting evidence for a formal complaint might include:

- Independent medical evidence
- Financial information
- Witness statements
- Material that has been given to the student by the School or a member of staff that describes the service or support they were to receive which the student considers to be have been misleading.

In all cases, students making a formal complaint should make

and keep a copy of their completed complaint form and each item of supporting evidence that they submit with it: this is for their own subsequent use. When the student submits their completed complaint form and supporting evidence to the Office of the Director of Education this marks the start of the formal (stage two) complaint procedure.

When a formal complaint has been submitted, the student will receive an acknowledgment, normally within five working days. If the student has not pursued the informal process and does not provide a satisfactory explanation as to why the informal stage has been avoided, the Director of Education may refer the complaint back to the student to be taken through the informal stage.

During all stages of the procedure, students may be accompanied to meetings by a member of the School - usually a fellow student. To avoid any conflict of interest, a student may not be accompanied by an academic or administrative staff member from their department.

The Investigating Officer

The Director of Education will assign a relevant member of the School's academic or professional staff who has had no material contact with the student or the matter under investigation to act as the 'Investigating Officer' for the complaint. For matters to do with any teaching and learning support (including lecturing or tuition), the Investigating Officer is normally the Programme Leader.

The Investigating Officer must be able to undertake the investigation without actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

The Investigating Officer will, in the first instance:

- Contact the student to confirm that they will be conducting the investigation;
- Advise any relevant members of staff of the nature of the complaint;
- Obtain any relevant documentation from Stage 1;
- Invite the student to a meeting to review and clarify the terms of the complaint;
- If the student chooses not to attend a meeting, confirm to the student in writing the issue to be investigated.

The purpose of conducting an investigation is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint and to provide a full, objective and proportionate response to the student representing the School's clear position.

All parties shall be given at least 3 working days' notice of a meeting with the Investigating Officer. A meeting may be postponed if a student can provide good reason for non-attendance. Failure or inability of a student to attend a re-arranged meeting will not preclude the Investigating Officer from reaching a conclusion.

Audio and/or visual recording of meetings is not normally permitted. If, due to exceptional circumstances it is agreed in advance that a student is permitted to record a meeting, the recording is confidential and must not be copied or disseminated in any way.

Following completion of an investigation, the investigating Officer shall produce a written report outlining the process followed, details of any evidence gathered and any additional information for consideration. This will then go to the School Director of the final review.

Where a complaint is not upheld, a student will be informed in writing of the reasons.

Where a complaint is upheld, the outcome will provide explicit detail of what action the School will take to resolve the issue and any timescales for implementation.

Completion of Procedures (COP) Letter

The School will issue a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter after the internal complaints procedures have been completed.

The issue of a COP letter serves the following purposes:

- It fixes the date when the student completes the School's internal complaints procedures
- It clarifies the issues considered by the School under those procedures
- It advises the student of the possibility of bringing a complaint to the OIA and of the timescale.

If the complaint is not upheld at this formal stage and the student does not request a review, the School will issue a COP letter.

Review (Stage 3) by Manchester Metropolitan University ('The University')

A student may request progression of a case to the Review Stage on the following grounds:

- That the correct procedures were not followed in the consideration of their case through the earlier stages of the procedure;
- That the outcome of the formal stage of the Student Complaints Procedure was not reasonable;
- That there is new material evidence that for good reason was not available at the earlier stages of the Procedure.

Where a student at the London School is studying for a University award and has received an outcome from a formal complaint that they regard as procedurally flawed, unfair or unreasonable they may request a re- view by writing to the Student Case Management Team at the Manchester Met University (emails should be sent to complaintsappeals@mmu.ac.uk) to state this within 10 working days of the date of the written notification of the dismissal of the complaint by the IM School's Director. In their letter to the Manchester Met Student Case Management Team the student should state clearly the grounds for seeking a review.

The review stage is not an opportunity for a rehearing of the original complaint. The review stage does not reconsider the case and no new or additional complaints can be added at this stage.

The senior member of staff with responsibility for the Student Case Management Team will initially consider whether the grounds for Review have been met and retains a right to refuse the Review Stage where:

- no prima facie case has been made out in respect of the grounds identified above

The decision made by the Stage 3 Reviewer is final. At this point, internal procedures are completed. If the complaint is not upheld, a Completion of Procedures letter will be sent to the student. Where a complaint is upheld or part-upheld at Review Stage, a Completion of Procedures letter will only be issued at the request of the student.

Stage Four - Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

The role of the OIA is to review individual complaints by students against higher education providers. They have no regulatory powers over providers and cannot punish or fine them.

Before the OIA can consider a complaint, a student will need to have taken the complaint through the internal complaints procedures of the provider (stages one, two and three).

Once the student has completed all of the internal procedures, he/she should receive a Completion of Procedures letter from the University.

If the student is not satisfied with this final decision and would like

the OIA to review the complaint, he/ she should complete an OIA Complaint Form.³ The OIA must receive a signed Complaint Form within 12 months of the date of the COP.

Examples of the types of complaints the OIA can look at include:

- Academic appeals⁴
- Extenuating circumstances
- Teaching and facilities
- Student accommodation
- Research supervision (though this may be better dealt with as an appeal)
- Welfare
- Discrimination - race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religious belief
- Bullying and harassment
- Placements
- Maladministration
- Procedural irregularities
- Unfair practices
- Disciplinary matters, including plagiarism
- Fitness to practice processes.

Confidentiality / Personal Information

The confidential nature of information provided by students will be respected by the School in accordance with data protection requirements. Normally, such wishes will be respected unless to do so would be against the best interest of the School community or the interest of safety or security to any person.

Academic Appeals

The academic appeals procedure is governed by the policies and procedures of Manchester Metropolitan University (here, 'the University' means Manchester Met) and applies to:

- The final stage of all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes where the recommendation concerning an award is made by an Assessment Board of the University (and thus a Committee of the Academic Board)
- All intermediate stages of programmes where student progress is at the discretion of the University.

This procedure provides for:

- Early resolution of students' assessment-related issues and concerns through a Programme Leader or Student Services drop ins
- Early review of assessment-related matters through the School Exceptional Factors Reviewers
- Formal consideration of academic appeals through University Appeals Panels
- The review of decisions of University Appeals Panels on limited grounds.

What is an Academic Appeal?

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality>) define an academic appeal as: 'a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progress, assessment and awards.'

That is, it relates to the outcome of an assessment or an examination, or to a student's progression and may be based on:

- A procedural irregularity in the assessment process
- Bias or perceived bias
- Extenuating circumstances and where, with good reason, the academic body was not made aware of a significant factor relating to a student's assessment when it reached its original decision.

The following are not normally considered to be legitimate grounds for an academic appeal:

- Where academic judgement is questioned. That is the decision made by academic staff on the quality of the assessed work or on the criteria applied to mark the assessment (rather than the administrative marking process);
- Where a student disagrees with the conclusions reached by the individual or panel which considered his / her mitigating (extenuating) circumstances.

You may find that if you have specific concerns about the services the School provides for your wider learning opportunities, including teaching and supervision, that it would be better to make a complaint rather than an appeal.

Any student who is registered with Istituto Marangoni for an accredited award with the University can make a formal academic appeal as can any student who has recently left the School. Any student making an appeal may do so with the help of a representative.

All students making an appeal should observe the timescale given below.

Where the issues raised affect a number of students, then they may submit an appeal as a "group appeal". Here it is useful of one student is nominated as the spokesperson to act as the representative for the group.

Timescale

A student may make an academic appeal within 14 calendar days

of publication of grades on the Student Extranet.

A student who has left the School may also make an academic appeal within the same timescale. Students are encouraged to use Programme Leader or Student Services drop ins before beginning a formal academic appeal.

What are the grounds for Appeals?

A student may use this Procedure where s/he considers that the following grounds apply:

- That his/her performance in examinations or other forms of assessment was adversely affected by exceptional factors which he/she did not submit to the Assessment Board prior to its making a final decision on his/her assessment. In such cases, the student's claim must be supported by acceptable contemporaneous medical or other appropriate evidence. Little or no weight may be attached to medical certificates or other evidence obtained some time after the occurrence of the exceptional factors on which the appeal is based.
- A material error had occurred in the conduct of their assessment, or that examinations or assessments or the proceedings of the Assessment Board or other relevant body were not conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations or that some other material irregularity in the conduct of their assessment had occurred and that the error, conduct or irregularity was of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether their result might have been different had it not occurred.

In addition, in all cases that are considered through the formal and the review stages of this Procedure, consideration will always be given to whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias, and whether the outcome is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

A student may also appeal against a decision of an Assessment Disciplinary Committee, on more or more of the following grounds:

- That there were exceptional factors that he/she did not submit to the Assessment Disciplinary Committee prior to its making a final decision
- That the proceedings of the Assessment Disciplinary Committee were not conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations or that some other material irregularity had occurred and that the conduct or irregularity was of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the decision of the Assessment Disciplinary Committee might have been different had it not occurred.
- That there is a new material evidence that they were not, for valid reasons, able to submit at an earlier stage of the process;
- That the penalty imposed was disproportionate, or not permitted under the procedure.

A student may also appeal against the decision of an Exceptional Factors claim on either or both of the following grounds:

- That the decision on their Exceptional Factors claim was not reasonable (including any decision that their claim or supporting evidence was submitted too late to be considered);
- That the correct procedures were not followed in the consideration of their claim.

Results Drop in support

After students have been notified of their results, they will be given the opportunity to discuss and clarify their results and / or discuss any concerns with the appropriate staff. Drop in sessions with PLs and / or Student Services are normally held at the School, but in exceptional circumstances,

discussion may be by video conferencing, telephone or email. Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the academic support sessions before reaching a decision about whether to proceed with a formal academic appeal.

How do I submit an Academic Appeal?

All appeals and requests for review of assessment-related matters should be submitted to the University, as the basis for the consideration by the Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panels and the University Appeals Panel. This should be done using an academic appeals form and then submitted by email to the Student Case Management Team (complaintsappeals@mmu.ac.uk) along with supporting evidence. When submitting an academic appeal form via email, please do not forget to include IM Student Services in the email (academic.services.london@istitutomarangoni.com). For more information, please see the link: <https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/student-case-management/guidance-for-students/academic-appeals/>

Checklist for making an Academic Appeal

- Is the issue best dealt with as an appeal or as a complaint?
- Have you submitted the appeal on the correct form?
- Have you included copies of any relevant evidence (please retain copies for your own use too)?
- Have you stated how you would like the issue to be resolved?

Where students decide to pursue a matter relating to the outcome of their assessment, initial review will be undertaken by the Student Case Management team. Where there appears to be an irregularity or error the Student Case Management Team can recommend to the student's Head of Department, Chair of the relevant assessment board, or Programme Leader that this is addressed. If a change to assessment status is approved, the student will be informed of the change and that their appeal will not proceed to the University Appeals Panel unless they request this.

Where a recommendation of the Student Appeals and Complaints Manager is not approved, the case will automatically proceed to the formal stage of the appeals procedure.

The Student Case Management Team may refer all or part of any appeal for consideration through another procedure such as the complaints or Exceptional Factors procedures.

Where following initial investigation, an appeal appears to fall outside the permitted grounds for appeal, and it is not directed to another procedure, the appeal will not automatically proceed to the formal stage. In such cases an email will be sent to the student explaining why the appeal falls outside the permitted grounds. Students will have 14 calendar days to request consideration at the formal stage. No further action will be taken on the case unless a request for formal consideration is received.

What happens to my Appeal?

The formal stage of the academic appeals procedure will be undertaken by University Appeals Panels, which will be convened and chaired by a senior officer nominated by the Registrar and will also include two academic appeal assessors, the President or another elected sabbatical officer nominated by the Manchester Met Student's Union.

Only those cases that are considered by University Appeals Panel will be formally recorded as academic appeals.

As part of the investigation that is undertaken of every appeal, University Appeals Panels will consider whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias, and whether the outcome is reasonable and proportionate in the

circumstances.

Where the facts and evidence of a case are complex or contentious, the Chair of a University Appeals Panel may invite the student and a representative of the Assessment Board to attend the Panel meeting in order to explain their position. Students will have the right to be accompanied when attending a meeting of a University Appeals Panel.

Review of Academic Appeal

If dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, student may be able to request a review on certain grounds, which might include:

- There were procedural irregularities at the formal stage of the academic appeal
- The outcome of the academic appeal was perceived as unreasonable in certain material ways
- The student can produce new evidence which, for legitimate reasons, they were unable to provide at the earlier stage of the appeal. The student will need to provide a rationale as to why that evidence was not provided earlier in the process.

The reviewer will be an academic Head of Department who had no previous involvement in the particular case s/he is reviewing. Reviewers will be supported by the Student Case Management Team. In all cases, reviewers will also be asked to consider whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias.

The review stage does not normally involve a rehearing of the earlier appeal and students are expected to have exhausted the formal stage before seeking a review. Students are expected to seek a review within 14 calendar days of the issue of a COP letter.

Timescale and communication of decisions

The formal and review stages of this procedure will be completed within 90 calendar days. This 90-day period will begin when a case is received by the central Student Case Management Team.

Summary decisions of the University Appeals Panels, giving the outcome of the appeal with brief details, will normally be sent to students within 7 calendar days of the meeting of the Panel. A report will normally be sent within 28 calendar days of the summary decision. This will identify the evidence used, the findings of fact, the regulations applied, the reason for the Panel's decisions, any remedy that has been identified, and instructions on what to do next.

When an appeal has not been upheld, the student will receive with the report a draft Completion of Procedures (COP) letter and will be given 14 calendar days in which to comment on the report / request a review. If the student does not request a review, then the draft Completion of Procedures letter will become the final COP letter.

Outcomes of reviews will normally be sent to students within 28 calendar days of the central Student Case Management Team receiving the request for a review. Students will also receive a COP letter.

Can I take the matter further if I am still dissatisfied?

If a student is still dissatisfied with the outcome of his/ her academic appeal after the review stage, he/she is advised to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>) within 12 months of the date of the COP letter. In considering academic appeals, the OIA will consider whether the University's procedures were properly followed, whether those procedures were s/he is reviewing. Reviewers will be supported by the Student Case Management Team.

In all cases, reviewers will also be asked to consider whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias.

The review stage does not normally involve a rehearing of the earlier appeal and students are expected to have exhausted the formal stage before seeking a review. Students are expected to seek a review within 14 calendar days of the issue of a COP letter.