

Student complaint protocol

1. Introduction

Students – both undergraduate and postgraduate – are members of IOB. As such, they are entitled to be treated with respect by the academic, administrative and professional staff of IOB. Moreover, they are entitled to expect that the systems in place in IOB are appropriate for their purposes and not unfair or unnecessarily onerous for them.

Just as students deserve respect, so also, staff of IOB must be treated with respect. Therefore, complaints which are shown to be malicious or vexatious or where false information is knowingly submitted will be dismissed, and students making such complaints may be subject to disciplinary action.

The complaints system will operate in accordance with the principles of natural justice, equity and fairness.

2. Scope of Complaints Policy

If you are currently registered as an IOB student or within three months after the final examination or otherwise leaving IOB, you are eligible to use these procedures. Student complaints may come under a number of headings.

They may be concerned with:

- Teaching and academic facilities and services
- Student support services
- Administrative services
- Alleged actions or inaction by IOB or a member of its staff

Complaints about matters which have a dedicated mechanism for hearing complaints such as results of academic assessments should be addressed via the Assessment Appeals procedure.

3. Procedures for dealing with Complaints – Informal Procedures

As a general principle, it is desirable that complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible. Therefore, students who have a complaint should begin to deal with it within 30 days of the events complained of happening or being experienced. IOB response is designed to take place within a similar time frame.

It is desirable that complaints be dealt with in an informal manner as quickly and at as low a level as possible. Therefore, if a student has a complaint against the actions or inactions of an individual staff member they should quickly approach that person, explain their concerns and seek an immediate resolution by discussion.

If the staff member concerned refuses to engage with them meaningfully or if the matter is not resolved at this first stage, the student complainant may approach the line manager or the Head of School – the respondent – and discuss their concerns. At such a meeting, the student may ask for the assistance of a student support professional. The line manager/Head of School should seek to resolve the issue by discussion with the respondent and the complainant. If necessary, they may seek the support of a trained mediator to assist in this process. If a mutually acceptable outcome is achieved as a result of this discussion or mediation, a brief written record will be prepared, signed by both parties. A copy of this record will be kept on file by the line manager/Head of School and by the Student Complaints Office.

If a mutually acceptable solution can not be reached, the complainant may decide at this stage to invoke the formal complaint procedures

4. Procedures for dealing with Complaints – Formal Procedures

Students may normally invoke the formal complaints procedures only when the informal procedures have been exhausted. In certain exceptional cases, they may proceed directly to the formal stage.

Students making a formal complaint should consult with the Student Complaints Officer and obtain a copy of the Student Complaint Form. They must fill out this Form in which they will provide the name of the person complained of – the respondent – and comprehensive details of the complaint. A copy of this form will be sent to the respondent and will be kept on file in the Student Complaints Office.

On receipt of a completed Student Complaint Form, the Complaints Officer will, within 15 days, appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint. The Investigating Officer will normally be a senior colleague who has had no prior involvement in the matters under dispute nor has any close relationship with the complainant or respondent.

The Investigating Officer will try by all appropriate means to determine the facts behind the complaint. He or she will make a judgement on the gravity of the circumstances, taking into account the importance of any rules which have been infringed and the behaviour which is appropriate for members of a university community in their dealings with one another. In the course of the investigation, the Investigating Officer may interview both parties to the dispute and any third party who may be in a position to assist in the investigation. At any such interview, the parties may be accompanied by any other member of IOB community – staff or student.

On completion of the investigation, the Investigating Officer will prepare a written report for the Student Complaints Officer. This report should include recommendations on measures to be taken to resolve the complaint. The Complaints Officer shall forward a copy of the report to the parties to the complaint and shall determine whether both parties accept the report and its recommendations as a fair outcome of the proceedings. If either party is unsatisfied with the report of the Investigating Officer or with the remedial actions taken arising from the report, they may appeal to the Student Complaints Appeals Committee.

5. The Student Complaints Appeals Committee

No complaint can come before the Student Complaint Appeals Committee unless the appellant has filled out the appropriate form in which details of the original complaint are given and the reasons why the report of the Investigating Officer is not accepted are explained. The Appeals Committee will consist of three members drawn from a panel of members, which has been approved by IOB. No member of the panel will have had any prior involvement with the matters under dispute.

The Appeals Committee members will be supplied with copies of all the documents which have been prepared in the course of the procedures to date. The Committee shall determine its own procedures but may invite oral submissions or further written submissions. Its decisions shall be transmitted to all parties to the dispute under consideration and may be transmitted to the appropriate university authorities if its decisions have implications for the development of relevant procedures and processes.

There shall be no further avenue for appeal within IOB.

6. Student Support Professional Staff

Additional advice on the operation of the Students Complaints system may be obtained from various student support staff in IOB.