**Complaints Policy 2025-26**

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| **Document Control Information** |  |
| Version control | **1** |
| Owned by:  | University Secretary/Head of Student Casework |
| Latest amendment on: |  June 2025 |
| Approved by: | Academic Board |
| Approved on: | 4 June 2025 |
| Coming into effect on: | 1 September 2025 |
| Review date: | 1 June 2026 |

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# **Part 1 –** **Introduction**

## **Policy Statement**

1. The University is committed to providing high-quality teaching and support. We encourage an environment of continuous improvement, listening and being responsive to students’ feedback. In some circumstances, we may fall short of the excellent service and learner experience we aim to provide. When this occurs, students may have concerns or feel dissatisfied with their experience and may wish to raise this formally. While early resolution is encouraged wherever possible, students should not be discouraged from pursuing a formal route if needed. The University operates a Student Complaint process that is lawful, transparent, fair and proportionate. This ensures that students can exercise their right to raise a complaint without detriment, while enabling the University to use feedback to improve teaching, learning, and the wider student experience. This Complaints Policy outlines how the University manages complaints, and the steps involved in raising a complaint.

## **Guiding Principles**

1. We encourage concerns or dissatisfaction to be raised as early as possible to support timely and effective resolution. Where issues are raised, they will be handled within a reasonable timeframe.
2. Complainants should be able to raise complaints without detriment, and we recognise that some students, particularly those from under-represented or marginalised groups, may face additional barriers when raising concerns. The University is committed to ensuring that all students can raise issues safely, without fear of discrimination, bias, or negative consequences. The [Students' Union](https://www.londonmetsu.org.uk/) is available to support students with complaints, provide guidance, and offer procedural advice at each stage of the process.
3. The University is committed to making this Policy clear and accessible. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments may be made to the procedure on a case-by-case basis, in line with the Equality Act 2010, to meet individual needs.
4. To ensure fairness, each case will be considered on its own merits. This Procedure should be read alongside the General Provisions set out in Part 2 of this document.

## **Confidentiality and Reporting**

1. The University will process all information in accordance with its Student Privacy Notice and the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Appeals will be managed with an appropriate level of confidentiality and by staff trained in handling sensitive information. Personal information will only be shared with those who need it to investigate or respond to the appeal.
2. We recognise that raising a complaint or appeal can be emotionally challenging. Wherever possible, we will limit the number of individuals involved, and no third party will be informed beyond what is strictly necessary to obtain relevant information or to meet our regulatory or legislative requirements.
3. Outcomes and recommendations from complaints may be shared with relevant internal bodies (e.g. Academic Board, Board of Governors) to support institutional learning, transparency, and continuous improvement. However, any personal information will be removed and handled in accordance with the University’s Privacy Notice and data protection legislation.

# **Part 2 - Scope**

## **What can be complained about under this Policy?**

1. The University defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about something the University has done or not done in relation to teaching, services, or student support that have been provided. This includes complaints that the University has limited or infringed a student’s freedom of speech within the law.
2. The Complaints Policy **cannot** be used to:
	1. Third-party complaints (e.g. from a parent, guardian, spouse, or relative) unless exceptional circumstances apply, or a reasonable adjustment is required under the Equality Act 2010. In such cases, written authorisation and valid reasoning from the complainant must be provided.
	2. Raise complaints about Assessment Board or Engagement Panel decisions for progression, assessments and awards. Any issues regarding these decisions should be raised by way of the Appeals Policy and Procedure.
	3. Challenges to academic or clinical judgment, including marks awarded, degree classifications, research methodology, course content or outcomes, or feedback adequacy.
	4. Raise complaints about students’ conduct or against other students at the University. Any such issues should be raised by way of the Student Conduct policy.
	5. Raise a complaint regarding Data Protection. This should be raised in the first instance with the Data Protection Officer for the University.
	6. Issues outside the scope of this policy, including cases where another regulation or procedure is more appropriate. In such cases, students will be signposted to the correct policy.
	7. Raise issues that:
		1. have already been the subject of a completed legal claim in any court or tribunal,
		2. are the subject of ongoing legal proceedings, unless those proceedings have been put on hold, or
		3. which have already been raised in a pre-action letter of claim, which the University is preparing a response to.

If a complaint raises the same issues as ongoing legal proceedings or issues contained in a letter of claim, the complaint will not be investigated unless ongoing legal proceedings are put on hold, or the Complainant confirms that they do not require a response to the letter of claim. If a Complainant has already received a response to their letter of claim, they can raise the same issues in a complaint.

* 1. Raise issues relating to arising from a complainant’s employment with the University.
	2. Reconsider a complaint or aspects of a complaint that has already been considered through the Student Complaints policy.
	3. Complain against the Students’ Union. Such complaints should be made by way of the Students' Union Complaints Procedure.
1. Examples of issues that can be raised under this Complaints policy include:
	1. The University has not met its obligations, including those outlined in student handbooks or course specifications.
	2. Inaccurate or misleading information in promotional material, website content, and other published University information.
	3. Concerns about teaching, programme delivery, or academic administration, where they do not involve academic judgment.
	4. Inadequate quality of learning resources, facilities or learning provision.

11.5 Incidents that cause disruption to the normal delivery of a course or student support, where insufficient mitigations have been made to alleviate or prevent any detriment or distress.

* 1. Bullying or harassment, or sexual misconduct and
	2. Procedures relating to finances, immigration processes or student support.
1. Any consideration or definition of a complaint relating to ‘harassment’ under this policy is defined as either:
	1. Harassment, including sexual harassment, includes unwanted behaviour or conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment because of, or connected to, one or more of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation; and/or
	2. a course of conduct conducted on at least two occasions that harasses one other person, or a course of conduct that harasses two or more persons at least once each. References to harassing a person include alarming the person or causing the person distress.
2. When applying the definition in paragraph 14, as under section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, it will usually only be considered as harassment if:
	1. The person knows the conduct amounts to harassment of the other; or
	2. A reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to harassment of the other person.
3. This Complaints Policy operates alongside the University’s [Single Source of Comprehensive Information](https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/centre-for-equity-and-inclusion/harassment-hate-crimes-and-sexual-misconduct/condition-e6-student-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/) regarding Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Policy and the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice. The Student Complaint Policy is reviewed annually to ensure consistency and alignment with broader University policies. In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between this policy and the single source of information, the latter shall take precedence. This policy is not intended to override or undermine any existing University policy or legal requirement.

## **Freedom of Speech**

1. London Metropolitan University recognises the paramount importance of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. The University acknowledges their vital role in fostering a culture of vigorous and open debate within the law, while being mindful of the University’s values as stated in its Strategy. While these freedoms encompass even unpopular or challenging ideas, they do not extend to violence, threats, intimidation, or discriminatory speech. We champion honest dialogue, respectful engagement with diverse viewpoints, and responsible expression within a safe and inclusive community. Our detailed Freedom of Speech Code of Practice provides further guidance on upholding these principles. In the event of a conflict between the contents of this policy and the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, the provisions of the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice will prevail.
2. In cases where there is an allegation of harassment, discrimination or misconduct in the context of:
	1. the content of higher education course materials, including but not limited to books, videos, sound recordings, artwork, and pictures; or
	2. statements made and views expressed by a person as part of teaching, research or discussions about any subject matter which relates to the content of a higher education course. There will be a presumption that such expression **is** unlikely to constitute harassment or misconduct, unless it can be shown otherwise through clear evidence or reasoned argument.
	3. In the absence of further evidence to prove so, the case may not be progressed.
3. In additon to the presumption in paragraph 13, to ensure a safe environment for all, on a case by case basis the University will consider:
	1. The perception of the person who is at the receiving end of the conduct.
	2. The other circumstances of the case.
	3. Whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have the effect under scrutiny.
	4. Whether any investigation would unreasonably discourage, inhibit the legitimate rights or lawful conduct of a Responding party due to the either perceived possible or actual repercussions.

## **Who can complain using this Policy?**

1. Under this policy the University will investigate complaints made by:
	1. Current students (including apprentices).
	2. Applicants, who have applied but not yet accepted an offer; and
	3. Former students
2. A person is considered a student once they have accepted an offer from the University.
3. An applicant is defined as someone who has applied to the University has not yet accepted an offer at the University. It is recognised that an applicant may become a student during a formal complaint investigation.
4. For the purposes of this policy a student, applicant or former student who has made, or wishes to make, a formal complaint will be referred to as a complainant.
5. If an employer of an apprentice wishes to raise a formal complaint with the University, then this should be directed to the Complaints Policy and Procedure for Apprenticeship Employers. Apprenticeship Employers cannot complain under this policy.

## **Time Limits for making a Complaint**

1. All complainants are encouraged and expected to raise any problems or issues as soon as the action or omission occurs, and in any event within 3 months of the problem or issue occurring.
2. Any delay in submitting a formal complaint will need to be fully explained. Formal complaints submitted after 3 months will normally not be considered and will be deemed invalid unless there is good reason accompanied by supporting evidence for the delay.
3. Complainants will be provided with a Completion of Procedures letter, if the complaint is rejected because it has been submitted late or falls under issues that will not be considered under this procedure.

## **Group Complaints**

1. Complainants may complain individually or as part of a group. If complainants complain as part of a group, the complaint form should include:
	1. contact details for each complainant, and
	2. details for up to two group representatives to facilitate communications for the purposes of the formal procedure.
2. Complainants who have made a group complaint may also submit individual statements if they share the concerns of the group, but also wish to raise separate issues that have personally affected them.
3. If a remedy is offered to resolve a group complaint, whether it be financial or otherwise, the lead representatives will be asked to confirm the group’s acceptance of the offer in full and final settlement. Therefore, a complaint will not be considered settled if complainants within the group do not all agree to the resolution and directed to the Review Stage, or the Complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if our procedures have been exhausted.

## **Anonymous complaints**

1. Complainants can report incidents that they have either personally experienced or have witnessed regarding the action or omission of the University’s teaching-related or service-related provision (defined as a complaint) for the purpose of this Policy.
2. Anonymous reports of misconduct, or reports where the complainant has refused consent to share their personal information, will be considered based upon the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the concern, and how the information was obtained and how likely it would be to prove the veracity of the allegation.
3. Choosing to report anonymously means the scope of the complaint is limited therefore, may not be able to be investigated or responded to by the University. However, anonymous reporting may be used to provide statistical information to inform proactive and preventative work, or to allow for monitoring issues across the University.

## **Multiple Procedures**

1. In some cases, the issues raised in a complaint may also fall under another University procedure, such as academic appeals or disciplinary action. Submitting a complaint does not prevent the University from pursuing other procedures with the complainant. If two procedures are to be pursued at the same time, then one procedure may be suspended pending the completion of another. In this instance, Complainants will be informed by the Student Casework Office (or the impartial nominee) which procedure is being pursued and which procedure in being suspended.

# **Part 3 -** **Procedure**

## **Early Resolution**

1. The University aims to resolve complaints fairly, proportionately, and in a timely manner We encourage a culture of listening to complainant feedback. Where appropriate, actions taken in response to feedback may be shared to improve services for the wider student community.
2. The early resolution stage provides the opportunity for complainants to raise concerns before escalating them into a formal complaint. Early resolution is encouraged to address straightforward concerns swiftly and locally without the requirement of completing and submitting a formal complaint form.
3. Early resolution could include attempting to resolve the matter (face-to face or by way of a written dialogued) with the person responsible for the course, subject area or service, or the person considered the most appropriate member of staff. For example, but not limited to:
	1. Teaching related – Module Tutor, Module Leader, Course Leader, Head of Subject Area
	2. Service related – Manager or Head of the relevant Professional Service Department
4. If Complainants are unsure of who to speak to regarding a concern, their [School Office](https://student.londonmet.ac.uk/school-offices/) can be the first point of contact. Complainants can also seek to resolve the matter informally by identifying the [appropriate service](https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/services-and-facilities/) the concern relates to. If Complainants would like to seek advice, they should contact the Students’ Union.
5. Early resolution is an optional stage of this procedure. Although, no timeframe is given, it is expected that complainants should be kept updated in a reasonably timely manner throughout this stage and aimed to be dealt with as the circumstances will reasonably allow.
6. Should complainants be dissatisfied with the response, they should consider making a formal complaint.

Complainants who wish to pursue a formal complaint at this stage, should complete and submit a Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form and any supporting evidence to the Student Casework Office. If the Casework Office receives an informal concern, and the student consents, the matter may be redirected to the most relevant member of staff for informal resolution, before progressing further.

## **Formal Complaint Stage 1**

1. All complainants who want to make a formal complaint must complete and submit a [Formal Complaint Form](https://student.londonmet.ac.uk/your-studies/student-administration/rules-and-regulations/complaints-procedure/) and supporting evidence to the Student Casework Office.
2. Formal Complaints will be investigated by appropriately trained and experiences and knowledgeable staff from the Student Casework Office. Student Casework Officers that undertake complaints are experienced in casework management, investigations, compliance and have completed mandatory training in data protection, equality and diversity and implementing reasonable adjustments for students.
3. Complainants are asked to clearly state the issues they are raising and to indicate the remedy or resolution that they are seeking. Complainants may be asked to clarify their concerns to ensure accuracy and completeness.
4. As this is an evidence-based process, complainants should include any evidence and relevant materials to support their claim, and to confirm all relevant evidence has been submitted. Examples of the types of evidence that can be provided include, but are not limited to the following:
	1. Relevant correspondance (e.g. letters, emails)
	2. Relevant course or service documentation
	3. Expert reports by professionals or placement reports
	4. Witness statements
	5. Independent medical advice
	6. Relevant social media evidence

Upon receipt of the formal complaint, the Student Casework Office will determine whether:

* 1. The complaint was submitted within the 3 month time limit
	2. The Complaints Procedure is appropriate, or whether the issue should be redirected and dealt with through another University Policy. For example, Mitigating Circumstances, Appeals, staff Disciplinary Procedure, Student Conduct or Fitness to Study.
	3. The matter could still be resolved through early resolution if suitable steps have been identified and progress can be made towards a resolution.
1. If the outcome of this stage is to reject the complaint, then the complainant may proceed to the Final Complaint Review Stage. If the complainant is still dissatisfied, they should submit a request for a review within 10 working days from the date of the decision.
2. After taking into consideration the issues raised, where there are reasonable and valid grounds to progress, the Student Casework Office, (or the impartial nominee) shall investigate the complaint.
	1. The complainant will be informed of the individual conducting the investigation. The investigator will not have been previously involved in the case, to ensure impartiality.
3. The investigator will consider any evidence provided to support the complaint. There may be instances in which additional information is requested as part of the investigation. The timeframe in which to provide additional information is within 5 working days of the request being made.
4. Complainants are asked to provide all the evidence they wish to rely on when submitting the complaint, however, the Student Casework Office, may request a meeting as part of the investigation to discuss the complaint, the evidence provided and any potential resolution. If a meeting is arranged, Complainants shall be given 5 working days’ notice.
	1. Complainants may be accompanied by a friend, peer, or Students’ Union advisor. This person may attend in a supportive capacity, but not as legal representation. The accompanying person’s capacity at the meeting is one of a silent observer.
	2. Complainants that are unable to attend an in-person meeting can be offered a suitable alternative such as a telephone call or, , a Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) video link.
	3. Complainants can request that the meeting be rescheduled on one occasion (within 5 working days of the initial meeting date). Rescheduling however may cause a delay in receiving the complaint outcome. The investigator has the sole discretion to consider requests made outside of the timeframe.
	4. If a complainant chooses not to attend a scheduled/rescheduled meeting, the investigation may continue in their absence, provided reasonable opportunity was given.
	5. Complainants are required to submit details of any witnesses they wish to rely on as part of the complaint investigation.
5. When making any findings, the investigator shall decide any issues on the balance of probabilities, based on the available evidence.
6. A written outcome will be issued within 25 working days of the formal complaint submission by the Student Casework Office, or the impartial nominee. The shall include the findings, the decision in relation to each issue raised and any remedial actions to be taken, if any.
7. In complex cases requiring a longer investigation, the complaint investigation process may take longer than the 25 working days. If the investigation cannot be completed by the expected date, the person investigating the complaint will inform the complainant of the delay and give an indication of when the expected outcome is likely to be received.
8. Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome may wish to escalate to the Final Complaint Review stage.
9. Complaints that do not proceed to Final Complaint Review stage within 10 working days from the date of the Stage 1 outcome letter will be considered as closed. A Completion of Procedures letter can be provided upon request, although Complainants should be aware that the University’s internal processes are not complete at this stage.

## **Final Complaint Review Stage 2**

1. Complainants who wish to proceed to the Final Complaint Review should complete and submit a [Final Complaint Review Form](https://student.londonmet.ac.uk/your-studies/student-administration/rules-and-regulations/complaints-procedure/) to the Student Casework Office within 10 working days from the date of the outcome letter.
2. The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) has the sole discretion to consider complaint reviews outside of the specified time limits but only in exceptional circumstances. Complainants must provide a clear explanation and any supporting evidence when submitting a late complaint review..
3. It will be the final decision of the University if the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) rejects the exceptional circumstances, or considers the matters being pursued are vexatious or without substance. In such instances, a Completion of Procedures letter will be provided within 10 working days of receipt of the Final Complaint Review.
4. A complaint must have been considered at the Formal Complaint stage before it can be escalated to the review stage. Complaints submitted directly to the Student Casework Office at this stage will be sent back to the Formal Complaint stage for consideration.
5. The Final Complaint Review will be considered by the Head of Student Casework or nominee. A nominee will be chosen where the Head of Casework is not available, or there is a conflict of interest, such as being involved in the issues that led to the formal complaint. The nominee will be a member of the Student Casework Office, or suitably trained member of staff.
6. This stage does not involve a reinvestigation or reconsideration of the original complaint or serve as a second opinion. A request for review will only be considered by the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) on the following grounds:
	1. There has been a procedural error in applying the Policy when the complaint was investigated, impacting fairness.
	2. There have been other irregularities when the complaint was investigated which has demonstrably impacted the outcome of the complaint to the detriment of the Complainant. For instance, not all aspects of the complaint were addressed, the information provided in the outcome was considered incorrect, or the evidence provided was not taken into consideration.
	3. There is new essential evidence that could not be made available when the formal complaint was submitted or investigated that would have significantly affected the outcome of the complaint. In such instances Complainants are expected to provide an explanation as to why the evidence is being submitted at this late stage of the procedure.
	4. The outcome decision was upheld or partially upheld but the decision or the proposed remedy was unreasonable or disproportionate.
7. Complainants should clearly set out the grounds on which a review is being requested and how the grounds apply.
8. The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) shall refer to paragraph 59 to determine that there are valid grounds for the review. The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) can reject a complaint review if the review falls outside of the grounds stated above. In such instances, a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be provided within 10 working days of receipt of the Final Complaint Review.
9. Valid final Complaint reviews will be considered by the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) within 25 working days. The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) shall either:
	1. Reject and uphold the original Stage 1 complaint decision at the review stage. Complainants will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter.
	2. Uphold or partially uphold the complaint review submitted and propose a resolution or a revised resolution.
	3. Uphold and overturn the Formal Complaint outcome decision. Recommendations will be made to the School or Professional Service Department for reconsideration. Complainants will receive a written response from the School or Professional Service Department to explain how and when any recommendations by way of remedy will be implemented. A remedy can include an apology.
	4. Complainants can request a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter where a review outcome decision is upheld. A Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will not automatically be issued to Complainants following on from an upheld outcome.
	5. If the investigation cannot be completed by the expected date, the Student Casework Office will inform the Complainant of the delay and give an indication of when the expected outcome is likely to be received.

## **Completion of Procedures**

63. At this point of the process, complainants have completed the University’s internal procedures. Students or Former students who remain dissatisfied with the outcome have the right to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Applicants typically cannot submit a complaint to the OIA.

## **Early termination of a complaint**

1. The University may terminate or suspend a Formal Complaint or Final Complaint Review without giving an outcome where:
	1. The complaint or complaint review is an inappropriate or improper use of the complaints procedure (including where it has been made with the intention of causing harm; is being pursued, regardless of its merits, to harass, annoy or subdue somebody; or lacks any serious purpose or value);
	2. there is unreasonable delay or non-cooperation by the Complainant.
	3. the complainant has tried to mislead the University with regard to their complaint; or
	4. the complainant has acted aggressively, or offensively, or abusively, or unreasonably persistently, or has made unreasonable demands during the investigation or review.
2. The Student Casework Office processes acts as a mechanism for internal review, and act in a fair manner. Therefore, the Student Casework team cannot advise in relation to informal complaints or provide mediation.

The person investigating the complaint should be someone a reasonable person would not consider previously involved in or affected by the matters raised by the complaint.

# **Part 4 – Specific Provisions**

## **Complaints about Staff**

1. Where complaints relate to staff conduct and may invoke the University’s Disciplinary Procedure, the Complainant will be asked to consent to share their complaint with relevant parties. If consent is withheld,, safeguarding procedures will take place regardless, and complainants will be informed how this limits the scope of the investigation on a case-by-case basis.
2. Cases involving staff may be referred to Human Resources for assessment by the Student Casework Office to determine whether some or all aspects should be investigated under the University’s staff Disciplinary Procedure.
3. The Student Casework Office will investigate aspects of the complaint that do not relate to staff conduct, alongside the staff Disciplinary Procedure. However, in complex instances the Student Casework Office may pause the complaint until other procedures are completed. Where it has been determined that Casework can consider aspects related to staff conduct, the staff member may be asked to provide evidence, however this process sits outside of the Disciplinary Procedure.
4. Complainants should be aware that disciplinary outcomes involving staff are not usually disclosed due to HR policies. However, so far as it is reasonable, following investigation of the matter whether under the staff disciplinary policy or under this Complaint Policy, the Student Casework Office will provide the complainant with an outcome that deals with the substance of the core aspects raised and whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld. If Human Resources determines that further investigation is not required, the information provided in the complaint may still be used for statistical purposes, and for staff training.
5. Due to the complex nature of staff conduct complaints, it is likely that the case will take beyond the 25-working day timeframe, however the University will aim to keep the complainant informed of any delay.

## **Collaborative/partner institutions**

1. Complaints regarding partner or collaborative institutions should be submitted following the procedure of the institution in which the Complainant is based. Complaints from students of partner or collaborative institutions will only be accepted at the University Final Review Stage where students have reached the end of their processes. The University will not reinvestigate or reconsider the complaint against partner institution’s, but review whether the complaint was investigated in accordance with their procedures and that those procedures align with those of the University.

## **Complaints relating to placements**

1. Specific concerns about placement provision, or students on placement can either fall under the jurisdiction of the University or under the host institution or company.
2. In the first instance, a complaint should be taken up informally with either the appropriate member of staff or with the Placement Supervisor. This may be done by the complainant concerned, another student, the Placement Supervisor, or another academic member of making the complaint.
3. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to make a formal complaint, the matter should be put in writing on a Formal Complaint Form and supporting evidence to the Student Casework Office in line with the above procedures.
4. If staff from a placement site have concerns regarding a student they may wish to pursue the issues raised under policies such as Fitness to Practice, Student Conduct or Fitness to Study Policies depending on the concern.

**Formal Complaint Procedure Flow Chart**