

## COMPLAINTS POLICY: ACADEMIC-RELATED MATTERS

### Policy

1. Situations may arise where students are dissatisfied with an aspect of their academic experience or service at UGM Manchester. UGM Manchester welcomes feedback from students. If there is a genuine problem, UGM Manchester officials need to be informed about it in order to respond appropriately.
2. The Complaints Policy: Academic-Related applies when a student has a complaint or concern about an academic matter or academic services not related to a specific grade or set of grades for a module or programme.
3. This Procedure does not cover any of the following:
  - Matters relating to examination and assessment performance and academic judgement (see Academic Appeals Procedure);
  - Complaints that have already been investigated and resolved;
  - Complaints lacking disclosure of adequate grounds
  - Academic appeals against Assessment Board decisions (see Academic Appeals Procedure);
  - Grievances from members of staff;
  - Data Protection matters;
  - Matters covered by the Freedom of Speech Policy;
  - Complaints relating to the admissions process;
  - Complaints about student conduct;
  - Complaints relating to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks;
  - Matters which are subject of criminal investigation or legal proceedings until such time as those proceedings are concluded;
  - Complaints submitted outside the timescale stated within this Procedure.
4. There are many informal routes by which a student may voice a concern. In the first instance, a student is encouraged to speak to their module lecturer, the module leader, give comments in the course evaluations or, if the concern is of a general nature, a student may raise their concerns at the Student Staff Liaison Committee. If these routes do not help, then a student may wish to initiate a more formal complaint.
5. Where a complaint is raised by a number of students, it can be dealt with as one collective complaint, in the following circumstances:
  - i. The case is conducted through a lead student to facilitate the progress of the complaint

- ii. The names of all students who wish to bring the complaint forward are disclosed as part of the complaints process. Confirmation should be given of the individual nominated as the lead student who will act as the facilitator for the complaint during all stages of the Procedure.
6. The information in this document outlines the procedure to follow if there is a complaint. This document does not override the wider legal obligations of UGM Manchester or to employees under contract, or the obligations of students and employees to UGM Manchester.
7. All complaints will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with GDPR requirements and UGM Manchester confirms that bringing a complaint or raising an issue will not have a negative impact on a students' academic treatment.
8. If a student's complaint involves more than one faction or members of UGM Manchester, then one person will be designated to respond to the complaint with consultation from the relevant parties. If it is found that the complaint involves an appeal, the student will be pointed to the relevant appeals policy.
9. Any student using the complaint process to bring frivolous or vexatious matters to UGM Manchester's attention may be subject to disciplinary action. This is also inclusive of complaints which are repetitive or harassing in nature, or where students or their representatives are aggressive, offensive or abusive.
10. Any student found to have provided fraudulent evidence or falsified a claim will be subject to disciplinary action.
11. Academic-related complaints may include, but are not limited to, issues or complaints related to:
  - the design, content, or organisation of a specific class or programme;
  - course or programme delivery, such as lack of professionalism, including lateness or absence; late return of work; inadequate or insufficient academic support; inappropriate behaviour; poor classroom conduct; lack of attendance at established lecture sessions etc.;
  - academic resources, including: academic facilities, library resources, IT learning resources;
  - academic advising and/or personal tutoring;
  - official UGM Manchester academic policies or procedures in general and not deriving from issues related to an individual case.

### **Who can complain?**

12. Any student who is currently registered at UGM Manchester, or who have recently (20 working days or less) finished their studies can follow the complaints procedure.
13. Where complaints are against UGM Manchester, the student would need to file the complaint directly with that institution first, the complaint may later be escalated to the validating partner's main campus.

### **Stage I: Early Resolution Stage**

14. Students wishing to make an academic related complaint need to first raise it with the relevant member of staff who is responsible for dealing on a day-to-day basis with the matter that is a cause for concern. For example, if the issue relates to a module, the first point of contact would be the module lecturer or module leader, who will attempt an informal resolution.
15. If the student is uncomfortable raising the complaint with the relevant member of staff or if the issue falls outside of their remit, they should direct their complaint to the Head of Education Operations.
16. If the student complaint is related to an issue outside of the remit of the Head of Educational Operations, such as academic support, the complaint should be directed to the Assistant Director of Studies.
17. The student is also encouraged to contact the Academic Registrar who will advise on the UGM Manchester's complaints procedures.
18. A response should be provided to the student in writing, usually within 10 working days of receipt of the notification of concern, and the student will be informed of how they can take their complaint to the next stage of the process, should they wish to do so.

### **Stage II: Formal Stage**

19. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of a review or proposed solution, they may make a formal complaint to the Assistant Director of Studies or Academic Registrar using the Formal Complaint Form (attached as an Appendix to this note).
20. The complainant must provide a detailed description of the issues, an explanation as to why they are unhappy with the previous response and, where possible, provide evidence to support the complaint. It should also indicate what outcome the student is looking for by making a complaint. The student should provide this within 10 working days of receiving the Stage I informal written response.
21. The Academic Registrar will appoint an Investigating Officer who is unrelated to the case. The Investigating Officer will investigate the complaint and provide a report to the Dean or Academic Registrar. Following this, the Investigating Officer will normally provide a Stage II outcome letter, including a proposed resolution, to the student within 30 working days of being appointed. In exceptional circumstances, a further delay may occur if further investigation is required. The possible solutions will vary depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcome being sought by the student. A copy of the complaint file, including the response to the student, may be stored by the Director of Studies Office for quality monitoring purposes.

### **Stage III: The Review Stage**

22. If the student is not satisfied with the result or proposed resolution by the Investigating Officer, they may request a review of the decision of their

complaint to either the Academic Registrar or the Dean (whichever has not previously been involved with the matter).

23. Where appropriate, a request for review may be submitted to the main campus of the validating partner institution for the consideration of the Quality Transformation Unit (QTU).
24. The grounds for further review are:
  - new evidence exists that could not have been reasonably presented in the previous stage; and/or,
  - a procedural irregularity occurred in the conduct of the complaints process; and/or,
  - a decision was manifestly unreasonable or influenced by prejudice or bias, or perception thereof, on the part of the decision-maker(s).
25. The Academic Registrar or the Dean will review the complaint and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action within 10 working days of receiving the request. This will determine whether the investigation has been conducted fully and in line with these Procedures and whether the outcome was reasonable in the circumstances.
26. The decision made at Stage 3 may be to return the complaint back to Stage 2 if for example additional information has been made available or of the Academic Registrar or the Dean deem that procedural irregularities or an unreasonable decision have been made. In this case, the Stage 2 decision may be modified or overturned at Stage 3.
27. Should a significant or cross-institutional issue be identified, it may need to be referred to a relevant UGM Manchester committee (such as a Programme Board or the UoB Manchester Academic Board) or executive UGM Manchester manager, as appropriate.
28. The decision made at Stage 3 will be communicated to the student in writing in a Stage 3 Outcome Letter and a Completion of Procedures Letter. Receipt of the Completion of Procedures Letter concludes UGM Manchester's complaints process and the letter includes details about how a student may raise their complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
29. If, upon the conclusion of UGM Manchester's institutional procedures and those of the relevant validating university, the student remains dissatisfied with the decision, they may take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>). Students must first have exhausted all appropriate internal procedures at UGM Manchester and relevant validating university before approaching the OIA.

### **Advice and Support**

30. A student may ask for informal advice and support at any time, on a range of issues, academic and non-academic. If you would like more information, contact the Academic Registrar.



## Appendix 1

### Stage 2 Academic Complaint Form

Before completing this form, you are strongly advised to consult with your tutor or other relevant member of staff in an attempt to informally resolve the issue/matter.

- Before completing this form, you should familiarise yourself with the UGM Manchester's Academic-related Complaints Policy.
- Your responses should be word processed and be clear and concise.
- All correspondence will be sent to the email address you provide on this form.
- An acknowledgement email will be sent to you after you have submitted your form within five working days. Unless there are any problems with your complaint, the next email you receive will be informing you of the outcome of your academic-related complaint. This usually takes 2 weeks from the date that your form and all supporting evidence is received.
- You should only submit data relating to living third parties if it is strictly necessary for the consideration of your case. Please DO NOT include other people's data if it's not relevant to your case.
- Please ensure that this form and all relevant sections of it have been completed before you submit it to the Director of Studies Office.

## STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM – FORMAL/STAGE 2

This form is to be completed for all complaints to be dealt under Stage 2/Formal Stage of the Student Complaints Procedure and should be sent to

UGM Manchester Director of Studies Office, Email: [complaints@manchester.ugm.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@manchester.ugm.ac.uk)

*Complete in block capitals or type.*

### DETAILS OF COMPLAINT – TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

<b>Section One; Student Information</b>	
Name:	Student Number:
Programme:	Level;
Address for correspondence in connection with the complaint ..... ..... Postcode..... Telephone Number ..... E-mail.....	
<b>Section Two; Outline of complaint</b>	
<b>What happened?</b>	
<b>When did it happen?</b>	
<b>Who was involved?</b>	
<b>How was the student affected?</b>	
Please explain here what steps you have taken, with dates, to resolve your complaint informally at Stage 1	

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Please explain why you are dissatisfied with the response you have received at Stage 1

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**Section Three; Evidence**

Circumstances cited in your complaint must be supported by independent evidence, where available.

This form must be accompanied by all evidence that you wish to be considered.

Evidence will be shared with employees of **UoB Manchester** who will process and review your submission.

You should ensure that where evidence relates to third parties that you have their permission for this information to be disclosed.

Please **list** below the documents that you are submitting. Please submit your evidence as separate document(s) with clearly labelled identifying file names. All documentation must be in English or be accompanied by certified translations.

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**Section Four; Summary**

**This section MUST be completed. Your form will ONLY be processed if this section is completed.** This summary must be completed as **UoB Manchester** will use the information in your summary as a starting point in considering your academic-related complaint.

Please summarise the main points of your case, preferably in bullet points in no more than 200 words. Do not refer to the rest of your form.

Please indicate below, without prejudice, what outcome or further action you are expecting. UGM Manchester can only consider outcomes which are reasonable and which are allowed by the partner University's Regulations, UGM Manchester Policies and Procedures.

<b>Element of complaint</b>	<b>What outcome are you hoping for?</b>

**Declaration**

I declare that the information given in this form is true, and that I would be willing to answer further questions if necessary.

Signed:

Date:

Following section of form to be completed by relevant staff

Date form received:	Date form acknowledged:
Date form sent to ADOS/Academic Registrar:	DOS Officer:

Details (and date) of person appointed to investigate:					
Date investigation was completed:					
Decision on complaint:					
<i>Please tick relevant selection below – if multiple decisions on multiple elements of a complaint please provide details as necessary</i>					
Upheld		Partially Upheld		Not Upheld	
Please include further details if relevant					
Date of letter to complainant advising outcome:					
(NB letter should inform complainant of further stage of Complaints Procedure and grounds for taking the matter further)					