



The Students Complaints Policy & Procedures

September 2023

To be reviewed in September 2024

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1 The Student Complaint Procedure

The information below regarding the Student Complaint Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Students' Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy.

1.01 Making a Complaint

The following sections explain what 'making a complaint' means, and what to do if a complaint is not resolved satisfactorily.

Level 1: Local Level (informal resolution). Registry or Finance

Level 2: Safeguarding Officer or Education Department

Level 3: Trustee's Link (Principal)

Level 4: Middlesex University

Level 5: OIA

After the internal College processes have been exhausted, students have the opportunity to have their complaint independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

1.02 Expected Time Limits

The OIA Good Practice Framework stipulates that the handling of complaints will normally be completed within 90 calendar days of the start of the formal stage (Level 2).*

	Student	Complaints and Conduct Team	Investigation
Level 1	Complaint should be raised within 1 month of cause for complaint	Registry or Finance Department	Normally, a response will be communicated within 6 weeks of notification of the complaint. If this is not possible, an alternative timescale will be issued to the complainant within the 6 weeks.
Level 2	Complaint should be raised within 1 month of outcome of Level 1	Students' Safeguarding Officer or Education Department will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days of receiving it.	*Indicative timescales for this stage are that a response will be sent within 6 weeks of receipt of the complaint form in the Safeguarding Officer or Education Department. If this is not possible, an alternative timescale will be issued to the complainant.

Level 3	Complaint should be raised within 10 working days of outcome of Level 2 complaint	Trustee's Link (Principal) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days of receiving it.	*Indicative timescales for this stage are that a response will be sent within 4 weeks of receipt of complaint form in the Trustee's Link (Principal). If this is not possible, an alternative timescale will be issued to the complainant.
Middlesex University	Complaint should be raised once the Procedures have been saturated	No direct involvement with the complainant. Completion of Procedures letter will be provided to the student	Variable
OIA	Complaint should be raised within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter	No direct involvement with the complainant	Variable

Complaint structure highlighted in the handbook, matters can be raised with Middlesex link tutor once the procedures have been saturated. If you are considering submitting a complaint against the decision, then please contact Dr Mesbahi as the Islamic College link tutor or Dr Siebers as Middlesex University link tutor.

If a student fails to proceed within the given deadlines of the complaints procedure they may not be able to progress through the internal complaints mechanisms of the College.

The procedure has been separated into the Responsibilities of Students and the Responsibilities of those involved in the handling of the complaint on behalf of the College.

1.03 Responsibilities of Students

1.03.01 Level 1: Local Level (informal resolution) – Registry or Finance Department

Students are expected to try to resolve a complaint directly, informally and quickly with the person/department concerned. In some circumstances, in the first instance, you may prefer to approach a different member of staff, e.g., the Programme Leader.

Students should raise the complaint within 1 month of the unsatisfactory circumstances occurring, at the latest. The sooner the matter is raised, the better. Students are expected to explain clearly what the problem is and what outcome they are seeking. If student is dissatisfied with the outcome and is seeking a different outcome, then the complaint can be escalated to level 2.

1.03.02 Level 2: Safeguarding Officer or Education Department

Students should complete the Level 2 Complaint Form with the Safeguarding Officer or Education Department of the Islamic College depending on the nature of the issue the student is concerned about within 1 month of notification of the outcome of Level 1.

Students must provide a clear explanation as to how they attempted to resolve the issue initially at the informal Level 1 stage. Students' explanation should, at the very least, include specific dates, a named member of staff to whom the complaint was reported and the reason why the complaint was not resolved to the students' satisfaction at Level 1. Students will be required to provide a copy of any written Level 1 resolution communication that they are in possession of, or evidence of completion of the informal resolution stage of this procedure.

Students' complaint must be substantiated by evidence. This may comprise one, or a series of the following types of evidence: a timeline of events, reference to relevant policies, procedures

and/or regulations, letters, emails, independent medical evidence, reports by professionals, witness statements, screenshots, the outcome of an investigation, etc. Any evidence or appendices relevant to the complaint must be submitted at the same time as the complaint form and clearly referenced and labelled.

It is the student's responsibility to make the case. Complaints will not be accepted for further investigation if:

- the rationale for the complaint is unclear
- evidence is not provided
- important dates, times and other details necessary for determining the eligibility of the complaint are not included.

Students are required to ensure that any evidence not written in English is translated and provided at the same time as the complaint paperwork.

If the submission is unclear or unnecessarily long, students will be asked to resubmit the form in a manner that enables proper consideration of the complaint to take place. Students should submit the completed form to the Safeguarding Officer or Education Department of the Islamic College, depending on the nature of the issue the student is concerned about.

Students will normally receive an outcome letter within 6 weeks of receipt of their level 2 complaint form by the Registry or Finance Department or Education Department of the Islamic College depending on the nature of the issue the student is concerned about. If the investigation will take longer than 6 weeks, students will be informed of the reason of the delay and an expected date of response.

If students are dissatisfied with the outcome, they can escalate their complaint to level 3 on the following grounds:

- occurrence of a procedural irregularity in the handling and/or the investigation of the Level 2 complaint and/or;
- possession of additional evidence which may have affected the outcome at Level 2 but was unavailable at the time of the original Level 2 investigation and/or;
- existence of compelling argument to demonstrate that the outcome at Level 2 was unreasonable. Claims of this nature must be corroborated by evidence and a clear rationale for the unreasonable nature of the decision. Claims that amount simply to an expression of dissatisfaction with the decision will not be considered.

1.03.03 Level 3: Trustee's Link (Principal)

Students should submit the Level 3 Complaint Form within 10 working days to the Registry of notification of the outcome of the Level 2 complaint.

Students must set out the grounds of the complaint by making reference to the above standards, and must provide evidence to corroborate the claim, including proof of why new evidence being presented was not available at the time of the submission of your level 2 complaint. Students should submit the completed form to the Registry.

Students will normally receive an outcome letter within 4 weeks of receipt of the level 3 complaint form to the Registry. If the review will take longer than 4 weeks, students will be informed of the reason and an expected date of response.

1.04 Middlesex University Complaints Procedures

Once the complaints procedures at the Islamic College level have been exhausted, Students should submit their complaints to Middlesex University if they feel that the Islamic College has not answered the issue at its Level 3 Complaint procedures.

To follow this route, students should consult Middlesex University “Complaints in relation to collaborative partner institutions” (<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/policies/complaints/>). Apart from this route, a further route is also available to students if they are still not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

1.05 Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Once the internal complaints procedure has been completed, if students are still not satisfied with the outcome, they may take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA operates externally to the College. It will not normally look at a complaint unless and until all relevant internal complaints procedures have been exhausted. Further information is available from the OIA website.

1.06 Completion of Procedures

As required by the OIA, if the Islamic College is unable to resolve a complaint to the student’s satisfaction, and there are no further steps available, the Islamic College will issue a formal "Completion of Procedures" letter. This provides a formal confirmation that the student has exhausted the internal complaints procedure and is required before a complaint may be considered by the OIA.

1.07 Other procedural points

Hard copies of complaint forms are available to students who, for reasons of disability, are unable to access the electronic form. Please contact Students’ Safeguarding Officer for further information.

Students have the right to bring a supporter to meetings arranged during the formal stages of the procedure. The supporter must be either; an Education Adviser, a fellow student, a member of staff, or any external observer. The supporter may take notes on the student's behalf, make representations on the student's behalf and ask questions, but may not answer questions on behalf of the student.

1.08 Responsibilities of those involved in the handling of the complaint on behalf of The Islamic College

1.08.01 Level 1: Registry or Finance Department

Staff dealing with complaints are encouraged, whenever practical, to meet with the student to establish the precise cause of dissatisfaction, to explore the remedy sought by the student and to foster a mutual understanding of the issues involved.

The member of staff, dealing with complaints, is expected to listen to the complaint and try to resolve it in a straightforward, reasonable and prompt manner.

Although informal, the member of staff, dealing with complaints, should make notes of any meetings and keep a record of the agreed outcome. Notes should be shared with the student. The student should be notified that the matter is deemed to be resolved and advised of the availability of Level 2 of the complaints procedure, if the complaint is not upheld or the student is dissatisfied with the attempt at resolution.

1.08.02 Level 2: Safeguarding Officer or Education Department

On the receipt of a level 2 complaint at the Safeguarding Officer or Education Department of the Islamic College, depending on the nature of the issue that the student is concerned about, the Safeguarding Officer, will undertake an initial evaluation to check that the complaint is submitted under the right procedures, within the appropriate deadlines, and in the required format with corroborative evidence.

The Safeguarding Officer or Education Department of the Islamic College, depending on the nature of the issue the student is concerned about, will administer the complaint and will be accessible to complainants and staff at all stages of the process. The complaint will be referred to the appropriate person in the respective Departments. If the subject of the original complaint is the Director of any of the Departments, then another member of the Senior Management Team will conduct the review. If the subject of the complaint is a member of the College's Senior Management Team, another member of the Senior Management Team will conduct the review who is not associated to the complaint in any manner what so ever.

The Director of Department concerned will ensure that an investigation is carried out.

The investigation may be delegated to any member of staff. It will not normally be appropriate to keep the name of the person investigating the complaint confidential. The investigation and its outcome must be fair and reasonable. If an investigator who has been allocated by the Director of the Department has prior knowledge of the case and/or there is a conflict of interest, they should inform the Director of the Department immediately.

It may be appropriate for the investigator to meet with the complainant and/or other parties named in the paperwork. Should the investigator wish to meet with the complainant, he/she will contact the student to propose this course of action and secure an appropriate date to meet. The complainant will be offered the opportunity to bring a supporter to this meeting. The supporter must be either; an Education Adviser, a fellow student, a member of staff, or any external observer. The supporter may take notes on your behalf, make representations on your behalf and ask questions, but may not answer questions on behalf of the student.

If the Director of the Department finds in favour of the student, they may decide on whatever redress they think appropriate, bearing in mind the outcome sought by the student.

A report of the investigation will be prepared before a written response is provided to the complainant. The report will be provided to the student with the outcome letter.

If the complaint is not upheld, the student will be notified of the availability of Level 3 of the complaints procedure. The Registry will issue all outcome responses to level 2 complaints.

1.08.03 Level 3: Trustee's Link (Principal)

On receipt of a level 3-complaint form, the Registry will undertake an initial evaluation to check that the complaint is submitted within the appropriate deadlines, meets the grounds for a level 3 review, and is in the required format with corroborative evidence. A complaint without adequate grounds and evidence will be dismissed.

If the student provides evidence to support the stated grounds, the complaint will be referred to the Registrar for review. At this stage, the Director of Education considered the Level 2 complaint and the Registrar will consider the Level 3 complaint. The Registrar will direct the complaint to the Principal's Office, who may appoint an appropriate nominee to undertake the review on his or her behalf.

The review stage will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve further investigation. However, in the case that new evidence has been submitted and accepted, additional investigation may be required. In reaching a decision, the reviewer is expected to be fair and reasonable. If the complaint is upheld, both the

student and the Director of Education will receive a written explanation of the decision.

If the Trustee's Link (Principal) does not uphold the complaint, the student will receive a written response giving reasons and a "Completion of Procedures" letter will be issued. The Trustee's Link (Principal) may decide to uphold part, but not all, of the complaint and will respond to the student accordingly.

1.08.04 Middlesex University

Once the internal complaints procedure has been completed, if the student is still not happy he or she can progress with the complaint with Middlesex University. If this does not yield and results for the student then they will be given a letter for the OIA.

1.08.05 Decisions regarding liability for fees or financial reimbursement

Where the result of the proceedings is that the student should be refunded or waived tuition fees or a payment of compensation to be the appropriate redress following a complaint made by a student, the responsibility for the fees will be transferred to the Finance Department.

1.08.06 Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Once the internal complaints procedure has been completed, if the student is still not happy with the outcome, they may take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

(OIA). The OIA operates externally to the Islamic College. It will not normally look at a complaint unless and until all relevant internal complaints procedures have been exhausted. Further information is available from the OIA website.

1.09 Completion of Procedures

As required by the OIA, if the Islamic College is unable to resolve a complaint to the student's satisfaction and there are no further steps available to the student, a formal "Completion of Procedures" letter will be issued within 28 days of the outcome being determined. This provides a formal confirmation that the student has exhausted the internal complaints procedure. This formal confirmation is required before a complaint may be considered by the OIA.

1.10 Contacts

Registry and the Safeguarding Officer - Tel 202 8451 9993 Ex 231

Office for Independent Adjudicator

Call the Casework Support Team - 0118 959 9813

Monday – Friday 09:00 - 17:00 - Saturday, Sunday, Bank holidays Closed

If you are a student contacting us for the first time, please be ready to answer questions about where you are or were studying, the type of course and award you are/were studying towards, and what steps you have taken so far to pursue your complaint. We will ask you for some details so we can keep a record of your enquiry in case you contact us again.

Email addresses

General enquiries - enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Outreach - outreach@oiahe.org.uk

Postal address - OIA Second Floor, Abbey Wharf, 57-75 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AB

Middlesex University Student Complaints and Grievance Procedures 2023-2024

<https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/student-life/your-voice/formal-complaints-procedure>

[Concerns and complaints | Middlesex University London \(mdx.ac.uk\)](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/concerns-and-complaints)

1.11 Help

Students are encouraged to contact the Safeguarding Officer for assistance at any stage of the procedure.

OIA's Complaints Procedures

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/handling-complaints-and-academic-appeals/the-process/>