

# COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Metanoia's complaints policy and procedure is designed for situations where a student/candidate/applicant is dissatisfied with the decisions and/or actions of Metanoia Institute, or its staff, in relation to programme content and/or delivery, learning and teaching, administrative policies, procedures and processes and/or the conduct of a member or members of staff.
- 1.2 This is different from an academic appeal (which covers assessment issues) or an ethical complaint (which covers fitness to practise issues in respect of academic staff).
- 1.3 Our Complaints Policy seeks to provide guidance for individual students regarding the processes involved in submitting a complaint to the Institute. You may also find it helpful to refer to the Student Complaints flowchart for an overview of the procedure (APPENDIX). The Policy can be found on the website, Moodle and in the Quality and Standards Manual.
- 1.4 Students are reminded that if problems arise, all parties are encouraged to try to resolve these as soon as possible. We are committed to learning from complaints, and to identifying enhancements to the overall student experience wherever possible. Complainants can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. If a student wishes to make a complaint they should be assured that making a complaint will not influence their progress, studies or their learning, teaching or training experience.
- 1.5 Admissions Procedure Complaints - Metanoia Institute is committed to providing a fair and efficient admissions service and applicants will not be disadvantaged in any way because they have used this procedure.
- 1.6 A complaint may express serious concern about any aspect of the admissions process; however applicants are reminded that they have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the Institute. Complaints against a decision may only be submitted on grounds of procedural irregularity or if there is new information which may have affected the decision (with reasons why it was not made available at the time of application), or if there is evidence of any action or decision which is not consistent with the Admissions Policy or Equal Opportunities Policy.

## 2. Informal Complaint - Early Resolution: Stage 1

- 2.1 In most cases, we expect and aim to resolve problems at an early opportunity and in the simplest way. The process we use is described by Early Resolution (Stage 1). Although this stage is informal we would recommend that you keep your own record of the key events,

times, and people involved, both in relation to your complaint and, the steps taken to try and resolve it. We will also keep these records.

## 2.2 Steps to follow:

- 2.2.01 In the first instance if possible, you should discuss your complaint as soon as possible, directly with the person concerned. Alternatively, you may wish to speak to the Registrar. In both cases the Registrar will keep an administrative record of communications (all Staff and Tutors are asked to alert the Registrar of informal complaints for recording purposes)
- 2.2.02 Students are advised that if the matter cannot be resolved in this informal way detailed above, you can also contact the relevant Faculty Head who will make notes about your complaint and speak with the member of staff concerned, keeping the Registrar informed of communications.
- 2.2.03 Should you wish to notify the Institute of your complaint, normally you are asked to inform the Registrar directly within 3 months of the event to which it relates (or, if it relates to a series of events, within 3 months of the last event in the series). If events being complained about pre-date this policy, we reserve the right to decline the complaint.
- 2.2.04 Where appropriate, and agreed by the parties involved, a mediation meeting will be set up to discuss the complaint and to see if it is possible to resolve it at this stage. This would be coordinated by the Registrar.

## 3. Formal Complaint (Stage 2)

3.1 In the event that the process detailed above does not lead to a resolution, or if the complainant wishes to pursue the matter formally in the first instance, then the following procedure will apply; this allows for further and more structured investigation.

### 3.2 Steps to follow:

- 3.2.01 The complainant makes a preliminary submission to the Registrar for the Head of Academic Quality outlining a summary of the complaint within 10 working days of the meeting where the grievance could not be resolved.
- 3.2.02 In order for a complaint to be considered at Stage 2, we ask that you use the Student Complaints Form (see Appendix), submitted directly to the Registrar. The purpose of the form is to help focus on the key areas of the complaint and on what you would like to happen. It also gives us a clear, formal record of the complaint.
- 3.2.03 The Head of Academic Quality will investigate the complaint within 10 working days of the submission.
- 3.2.04 More extensive details of the complaint will be sought from the complainant. These will then be forwarded to the person complained against for a response, who has 10 working days to respond to the complaint.

- 3.2.05 The documentation will then be considered by the Head of Academic Quality. Please note that at this stage, materials are only made available to the parties themselves, the Head of Academic Quality and the relevant Faculty Head for further consultation. If further clarification is required to confirm/ establish any facts or claims, the Head of Academic Quality will endeavour to acquire such additional information from either of the parties; this may involve a short interview with the parties concerned, at which they may be accompanied by another individual of their choosing (but excluding legal practitioners).
- 3.2.06 After 15 working days following the consideration of all available information the Head of Academic Quality will make one of the following decisions, (i) Complaint dismissed; (ii) Complaint upheld; (iii) Complaint partially upheld.
- 3.2.07 The Head of Academic Quality and the Registrar are responsible for ensuring that the conditions are met within the agreed time frame.

#### **4. Formal Appeal (Stage 3)**

4.1 In the event that the complainant is not satisfied, they may lodge a formal appeal for a further review of the complaint. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 response you are able to request a further review of the complaint.

4.2 Steps to follow:

- 4.2.01 In order for a complaint to be considered at Stage 3, we ask that you complete the Student Complaints Form (see Appendix) and submit directly to the Head of Academic Quality. The purpose of the form is to help focus on the key areas of the complaint and responses that need further investigation. It also gives us a clear, formal record of the complaint and identifies any specific remedies the complainant is seeking.
- 4.2.02 This request must be received by the Head of Academic Quality within 10 working days of receiving the outcome at Stage 2.
- 4.2.03 The Head of Academic Quality will then appoint a Faculty Head, not previously involved with the case, to convene a panel with a member of staff from the Quality and Standards Committee to investigate the complaint within 20 working days of the submission.
- 4.2.04 The documentation will then be forwarded to the Faculty Head. Please note that at this stage, materials are only made available to the parties themselves and to appointed Faculty Head and the nominated staff member from the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC).
- 4.2.05 The appointed Faculty Head and QSC staff member will review all of the submitted materials and may decide to conduct a hearing to which all relevant parties would be invited to give verbal statements. Questions may be posed to the complainant by the Faculty Head and by the QSC staff member. Questions may be posed to the complainant by the Faculty Head, the QSC staff member and by the

complainant. All parties may be accompanied to the hearing by another individual of their choosing (but excluding legal practitioners).

- 4.2.06 After 15 working days following the consideration of all available information the appointed Faculty Head will make one of the following decisions: (i) Complaint dismissed; (ii) Complaint upheld; (iii) Complaint partially upheld.
- 4.2.07 The Faculty Head and nominated QSC staff member will submit a joint report in writing to the Head of Academic Quality and the Chair of the QSC who will inform the parties of the outcome. Where a complaint is upheld with a number of conditions the reports should stipulate a timescale in which the issues that have been identified should be addressed.
- 4.2.08 The Faculty Head and nominated QSC staff member are both responsible for ensuring that the conditions are met within the agreed time frame.
- 4.2.09 Once the Institute's internal procedures have been concluded a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be issued.
- 4.2.10 Please note that there is a separate process for handling Student Appeals relating to Academic issues, assessment, progression or awarding concerns.

## 5. External Oversight (Stage 4)

- 5.1 In the event that the complainant is still not satisfied, they may lodge an external appeal with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within three months of receiving notification that Metanoia Institute's internal procedures have been completed.
- 5.2 At this point, a student who is dissatisfied with the final decision concerning his/her case may be able to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) for a review of the case. Information and eligibility rules are available at: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk) or you can write to: Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, Third floor, Kings Reach, 38-50 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AA, United Kingdom enclosing a copy of the final decision of Metanoia Institute and stating the reasons for seeking redress from the OIAHE.

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