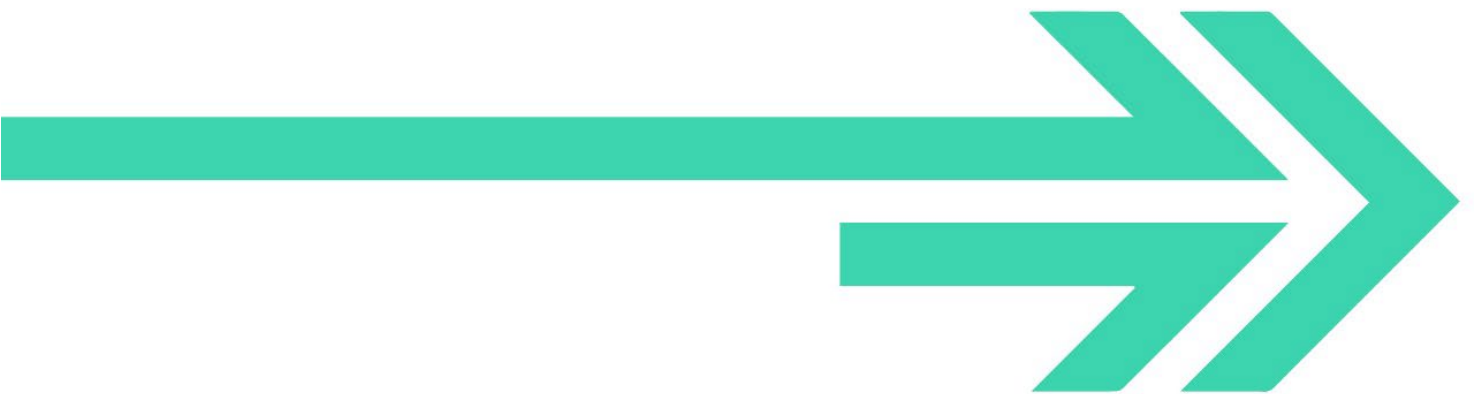




QA HIGHER EDUCATION COMPLAINTS POLICY





1. Introduction

This document describes QA Higher Education's complaints policy. The policy may be used by current and prospective students. The objective of the policy is to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and appropriately and are given careful consideration.

QA Higher Education's Senior Management team has overall responsibility for the complaints policy. It monitors the complaints received and the effectiveness of the policy in addressing them. The Senior Management team will review any common causes or patterns of complaints which emerge.

All programmes and courses delivered by QAHE are covered by this policy, including

- Foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees
- Pre-sessional and pathway programmes

2. Types of Complaints covered by this policy

This is a single complaints policy which can be used to complain about any service QA Higher Education provides. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a certain action, or lack of action, taken by QA Higher Education, or about the standard of service provided by QA Higher Education.

Examples of what can be considered a complaint are listed below. The list is not exhaustive, but complaints are likely to fall under the following categories:

- Complaints arising from the application or admissions process;
- Complaints in respect of academic or administrative support or other services;
- Complaints arising from the educational experience (e.g., poor teaching or supervision);
- The behaviour of another student or member of staff.

3. Areas not covered by this policy

Complaints by third parties (i.e., by individuals or organisations other than the actual complainant) are not normally accepted.

This policy should not be used to request a review of an academic decision, such as an assessment mark, a progression decision such as failing a module or programme termination. These matters should be raised through the appeals procedure. For guidance on the appeals procedure please contact qahe.appeals@qa.com.

Please note you cannot use either the complaints policy or the appeals policy to challenge a decision relating to academic judgement.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines academic judgement as: "*Academic judgment is not any judgment made by an academic; it is a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential. So for example a judgment about marks awarded, degree classification, research methodology, whether feedback is correct or adequate, and the content or outcomes of a course will normally involve academic judgment.*"



4. Stages of the Policy

i. Informal resolution

If a student is considering making a complaint, they are strongly advised to raise the issue informally with the relevant member of staff most concerned with the issue, at the earliest opportunity. For instance, if the complaint is of an academic matter the student may wish to talk to their tutor or programme leader. If the complaint is about a QA Higher Education service, then the student should talk to an appropriate member of staff from that service.

It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved at this stage. To facilitate further investigation the complainant should explain the situation as clearly and as fully as possible, including names, times and dates and any remedy sought.

In cases where a student is unsure of where to raise the issue or where they feel uncomfortable approaching the member of staff directly, they may discuss their concerns with a Complaints Officer who can be reached via the Complaints inbox at qahe.complaints@qa.com. The Complaints Officer will attempt to facilitate communication between the student and the subject of the complaint.

ii. Formal stage

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, a student can pursue a formal complaint. A formal complaint form should be completed in enough detail to enable the complaint to be properly investigated. The complaint form should be sent to the Complaints inbox at qahe.complaints@qa.com. The Complaints Officer will act as an investigator. If the Complaints Officer is unable to action the complaint, due to a conflict of interest or the seriousness of the complaint, they will refer it to another investigator.

The complainant will receive a written acknowledgment that the complaint has been received within 3 working days.

To investigate the complaint, the investigator may request further information and may ask to meet with the complainant. The complainant may bring one friend or supporter (not normally a legal advisor) to any internal meeting.

The Investigating Officer will aim to respond in writing within 15 working days of receiving the formal complaint, detailing how the complaint has been investigated, the evidence used, the conclusion reached, and, if appropriate, the steps taken to resolve the matter. If the timescale becomes extended the complainant will be informed of the progress.



iii. Review by a University Partner

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint and is registered on a programme validated by a partner university, they can request a review by the relevant University Partner. Each University has its own policy for complaints. Details on how to do this can be provided by the QAHE Complaints Officer or can be found in the relevant Programme Handbook.

iv. Review by QA Higher Education

Students or who are registered on a QA Higher Education programme and who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint can request a review by QA Higher Education.

The grounds on which a student or can request a review of the decision are:

- The Investigating Officer made an error in judgement or did not consider all of the evidence available to them;
- The Investigating Officer did not conduct the complaint fairly, and/or not in line with this policy;
- There is new material evidence that could not, for valid and evidenced reasons, be submitted at the time of the complaint;

Student who wish to proceed to a formal complaint review should submit details to the Complaints inbox within 10 working days from the date of the outcome letter. Students are expected to clearly set out the grounds on which a review is being requested. The Complaints Officer will consider late complaints at the review stage in exceptional circumstance.

The final complaint review will be considered by a senior member of staff who has no prior involvement in the matter being complained of. The formal complaint review shall either be rejected, upheld or partially upheld, in which case a resolution or a revised resolution will be proposed.

Students who are dissatisfied by the decision may be eligible for review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). This is an independent body set up to review student complaints and appeals. Information can be provided by the Complaints Officer via the Complaints inbox qahe.complaints@qa.com.

5. Enhancement and improvement

Formal complaints are logged and reviewed on a regular basis. On a quarterly basis, a report is produced for the Senior Management Team that outlines any areas for improvement based on the nature of the complaints received.



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Version 1.0	28/03/22	Director of Quality Assurance	
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