

Complaints Policy

Revised January 2019 (due for review April 2020, TQE)

MPA is proud of its staff, faculty and quality of teaching. If students however, do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by MPA in accordance with this Procedure.

MPA's complaints policy and procedure is designed for situations where a student/applicant is dissatisfied with the decisions and/or actions of the College, 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.

This is different from an Academic Appeal (which covers assessment issues). Please see Academic Appeals Policy as required.

Our Complaints Policy seeks to provide guidance for individual students regarding the processes involved in submitting a complaint to MPA. You may also find it helpful to refer to the Student Complaints flowchart for an overview of the procedure.

The Policy can be found on the website, referenced in the Academic Regulations and in the Quality and Standards Manual.

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

Admissions Procedure Complaints - MPA 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.

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 MPA. 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.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution - it is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

For complaints of an academic nature, relating to HE provision at MPA, please consult the HE study handbook for UCA complaints procedures to be used once the internal mechanisms at MPA have been exhausted.

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. 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.

Steps to follow:

- 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 your Head of Year or the Head of Welfare. In both cases Registry will be informed and keep an administrative record of communications (all Staff are asked to alert Registry of informal complaints for recording purposes)
- Students are advised that if the matter cannot be resolved in this informal way detailed above, you can also contact the relevant Course Leader who will make notes about your complaint and speak with the member of staff concerned, keeping Registry informed of communications
- Should you wish to notify MPA of your complaint, you are asked to inform Registry staff directly within 28 days of the event to which it relates (or, if it relates to a series of events, within 28 days of the last event in the series).
- 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 Registry and the appropriate Head of Year.
- If you have an issue that you wish to raise in relation to your classes/training please do so promptly, in the first instance, with your tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the learners' satisfaction. If the tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult MPA management.
- Complaints made directly to MPA will usually be referred to the relevant tutor unless MPA management deem it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within one month, or in the event that the tutor and student fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, learners will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint - If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents/learner should put the complaint in writing to Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action.

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.

Steps to follow:

The complainant makes a preliminary submission to the Principal outlining a summary of the complaint within 10 working days of the meeting where the grievance could not be resolved.

In order for a complaint to be considered at Stage 2, we ask that you use the Student Complaints Form (see Appendix) is completed. 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.

The Principal will investigate the complaint within 10 working days of the submission. More extensive details of the complaint may 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.

The documentation will then be considered by the Principal. Please note that at this stage, materials are only made available to the parties themselves, MPA staff involved in the response and the relevant Course Leader for further consultation. If further clarification is required to confirm/ establish any facts or claims, the Principal 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).

After 15 working days following the consideration of all available information the Principal will make one the following decisions, (i) Complaint dismissed; (ii) Complaint upheld; (iii) Complaint partially upheld.

If parents/students are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Formal Appeal - If students seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to MPA Senior Management (c/o Head of Academic Quality and Curriculum). Any communications at this stage would be best in writing and must in any case set out the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 response you are able to request a further review of the complaint.

Steps to follow:

- 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 & Curriculum. 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.
- This request must be received by the Head of Academic Quality & Curriculum within 10 working days of receiving the outcome at Stage 2.
- The Head of Academic Quality & Curriculum will then liaise with a Senior member of staff not previously involved with the case, to convene a panel with a member of staff from the Teaching and Quality Enhancement (TQE) Committee to investigate the complaint within 20 working days of the submission.
- The appointed staff 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 and the complained against by relevant Staff and / or the complainant. All parties may be accompanied to the hearing by another individual of their choosing (but excluding legal practitioners).
- After 15 working days following the consideration of all available information the appointed Senior staff member will make one the following decisions: (i) Complaint dismissed; (ii) Complaint upheld; (iii) Complaint partially upheld.

- The Senior staff member and nominated TQE staff member will submit a joint report in writing to the Head of Academic Quality & Curriculum 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.
- The Senior staff member and the Head of Academic Quality & Curriculum are both responsible for ensuring that the conditions are met within the agreed time frame.
- Once these internal procedures have been concluded a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be issued.

External Oversight (Stage 4)

In the event that the complainant is still not satisfied, they may apply to the relevant Awarding Partner and /or lodge an external appeal with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within three months of receiving notification that MPA's internal procedures have been completed.

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 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 MPA and stating the reasons for seeking redress from the OIAHE.