



Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure

2023-24

This procedure concerns a complaint or grievance a student may have against Matrix College.

The Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure describes how Matrix College ensures the equitable, transparent and timely consideration of student complaints or grievances in relation to any aspects of their student experience, student services, administration, financial matters, and information for their programme of study. It is designed to provide a means of examining a grievance or a complaint about an aspect of procedure within the training or where an issue arises between a student and a member of staff. This is different from an ethical complaint.

This Procedure aims to explain the steps that students are required to consider and follow when submitting a complaint or grievance.

Matrix encourages all students to discuss any concerns they may have at the earliest opportunity to avoid delays and unnecessary escalation of matters. Most issues can usually be resolved quickly at the lowest level without going through the complaints and grievances procedures. The objective is to first see if the complaint can be resolved through 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' – that is, frank and informal discussion amongst the people concerned as soon as possible. *This is in keeping with the relational ethos of Matrix.*

These procedures are designed for exceptional circumstances where it has not been possible to resolve the complaint through such discussion. Unless circumstances are exceptional, it is expected that the informal stage will be invoked within six months of the incident that causes the complaint.

Matrix:

- is committed to ensuring that students are not disadvantaged as a result of bringing a complaint.
- expects all parties to act reasonably and fairly towards each other, and to treat the processes themselves with respect.
- confirms that academic decisions with regard to assessment of work will not be altered as a result of any complaints.

If you want to raise a grievance or concern, you should aim to do so within 3 months of the incident or, if a series of events has occurred, within 3 months of the final event in the series. If you submit a complaint after 3 months, you must also include a written explanation for the late submission supported by evidence (if applicable).

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

- a) In the first instance you should discuss your concerns directly with the relevant individual to see if the issue can be resolved:
 - If you do not feel you can do that then you are advised to discuss the issue with your Programme Lead, who becomes your appointed representative.
 - If your concerns are with your Programme Lead, please contact the Principal.

- If the complaint is about the Principal, please contact the Head of Curriculum.
- b) The staff member you have contacted or appointed will make brief notes of your concern and will notify the individual that a concern has been raised. There will be a strong attempt to arrange an informal discussion between parties to find a resolution to the matter.
 - c) If there is no resolution to the issue after a discussion between the parties, a meeting will be set up with three parties present to discuss the issue and see if it is possible to move forward. The third party will usually be the person first approached in (a) above. If this person is unavailable or unsuitable for any reason, Matrix will appoint another third party.
 - d) Any resolutions and actions that are agreed informally in a three-way discussion with the student will be kept on record and communicated to all parties in writing within 10 working days.

If the above fails to achieve resolution the Programme Lead or member of staff can offer advice on whether there might be another route to resolution or, if the issue is serious enough, recommend a move to the formal stage of the complaints procedure.

Issues of concern handled within the informal ADR stage shall be dealt with usually within four weeks in term time (or twelve weeks if it incorporates a holiday break).

If the informal ADR stage does not lead to a resolution, then the matter becomes a complaint and takes on a more formal approach.

Please note: the actions above are usually the procedure, however, it is recognised in some serious circumstances, for instance in complaints of an assault, this may not be an acceptable or expected process. If so, the Formal stage will be in operation from the outset.

Formal Stage

- a) The complainant makes a submission to the Principal outlining a summary of the complaint. Where an ADR meeting has been held as described above but no resolution has been reached, the written summary should be submitted within two weeks of the meeting.
- b) The Principal shall acknowledge receipt of the letter within two weeks.
- c) The Principal, or a person appointed by her, shall provide the student or staff member subject to the complaint copies of the written complaint.
- d) If the complaint is against the Principal, she shall refer it to the External Moderator (or the external Chair of Ethics if there is no External Moderator in post). The external Moderator (or Chair of Ethics) shall refer the complaint to an experienced person who is external to Matrix for assessment. This external independent assessor will be a practitioner of long standing or experience. The student may object to the choice of independent assessor in writing to the Principal (or External Moderator, or Chair of Ethics), and another person will be chosen. Objections may be raised twice only.

- e) The external independent assessor will consider the evidence, written and other. If necessary, they will hold discussions with the complainant and anyone else they think appropriate – they may ask for further information in order to fully investigate the complaint.
- f) Having investigated the complaint over a period of usually no longer than six weeks the external assessor will decide whether:
 - i. The complaint is disallowed. This means he/she thinks there is no evidence to support the complaint, in which case the procedure is complete.
 - ii. The complaint, or some parts of it, are upheld - and some aspect of the organisational or administrative arrangements associated with the training need to be addressed.
- g) The external assessor submits his/her report to the Principal who, in turn, informs the parties of the outcomes. Where a complaint is upheld with a number of conditions and/or requirements, the report should stipulate a time boundary in which the issues identified should be addressed.
- h) The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the conditions are met within the time frame.
- i) The Principal will issue a Completion of Procedures letter at the end of the internal Matrix procedure.

Further (External) Options after/beyond Matrix Procedures

- a) The student may refer the complaint to Middlesex University once all the Matrix procedures have been exhausted. Full details of the process can be found at <https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/student-life/your-voice/formal-complaints-procedure>.
- b) The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review students' complaints. Matrix College is a member of this scheme. If a student is unhappy with an outcome, they may be able to ask the OIA to review the complaint or grievance. There is more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>.
- c) Normally the complaint and grievance procedures must have been completed before a student can complain to the OIA. Matrix College will send a letter called a 'Completion of Procedures letter' when they have reached the end of their processes and there are no further steps to take internally. If a complaint or grievance is not upheld, Matrix College will issue a Completion of Procedures letter automatically. If a complaint is upheld or partly upheld, a student can ask for a Completion of Procedures letter if required. There is more information about Completion of Procedures letter and when you should expect to receive one here <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers/completion-of-procedures-letters>.

Reviewed: June 2023

For review: June 2024