

## Student Complaints Policy: Frequently asked questions

### 1. What types of complaints can I use this policy for?

- your academic experience at Queen Mary
- Queen Mary services you use on campus
- administrative and support services at Queen Mary
- Queen Mary processes and procedures that affect students

### 2. What type of issues does this policy NOT cover?

- Complaints about the Students' Union
- Issues about your academic progression, assessment results or your award classification
- A complaint about another student e.g. bullying, harassment, discrimination.

### 3. How can I complain about the Students Union?

The Students' Union has its own complaints process, so you need to use that:

<http://www.qmsu.org/>

### 4. How can I complain about academic progression, assessment results or my award classification?

You cannot use the Complaints Policy for this. There is an appeals process specifically to deal with these issues:

<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/students/student-appeals/appeals/index.html>

### 5. How can I complain about another student?

You cannot use the Complaints Policy for this. There is a specific process to deal with these issues, called the Code of Student Discipline:

<http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/docs/policyzone/101884.pdf>

### 6. If Queen Mary agrees I have a valid complaint, can I receive a better mark for my coursework, exams or final award?

No. Outcomes of valid complaints cannot improve your marks or influence your academic progression.

### 7. If I have a complaint, what should I do first?

- First, check that you have done everything you should have done e.g. have you attended meetings you have been asked to go to? Have you replied to

letters or emails? Might things have gone wrong because you have forgotten to do something you were asked to do?

- If your complaint is academic related, speak to your course representative or ask for the issue to be raised at your School's student and staff liaison committee.
- Speak to a staff member in the department you are dissatisfied with. If staff don't know that something has gone wrong, they can't put it right, so it is helpful to you and other students if you can make staff aware of any problems.
- Remember that sometimes, problems happen because of a lack of communication or misunderstanding. Discussing things informally can help everyone to see things from each other's point of view, and can bring new information to light.

### **8. When should I make my complaint?**

You should raise your concerns promptly, so that staff have an opportunity to put things right, and so that the impact on you is as small as possible.

You have a responsibility to let staff know if there is a problem – they can't put it right if they don't know.

For example, if one of your tutors regularly arrives late for a lecture, you should raise it as soon as you realise it is a problem. Don't wait, for example, until after you receive a poor mark to raise your concerns as it would be difficult to determine whether your poor mark was related to your lecturer being regularly late.

### **9. What is the best way to raise a complaint informally?**

- You can either arrange to meet with the relevant member of staff, or you could write to them.
- Write your points down (see 11 below) so that you and the person receiving your complaint can be clear about the key issues. This is a good way for you to decide what you want to say, before you meet with a member of staff to discuss your complaint
- If you decide to meet with a staff member to discuss your complaint informally, it can be helpful to send them your written outline of what your complaint is about, before you meet with them. This will make your discussions more useful for both of you, as they will have a chance to investigate the issues you have raised, before they meet you

- If you decide not to write to the staff member before you meet with them, it can be helpful to send them an email after the meeting, to summarise the key issues that you want to be considered

#### **10. I have raised my problem informally, but I am not happy with the outcome.**

You can use Stage 1 of Queen Mary's Complaints policy to initiate a formal complaint.

#### **11. How should I explain my complaint?**

- Write a clear and concise explanation of what you are dissatisfied with and why
- Use bullet points and short paragraphs to help make the information easier to read and understand
- Try and stick to the facts, rather than your own assumptions or conclusions about what has happened
- Include any evidence you have to support your case
- Explain what the impact the problem has had on you. How have you been affected?
- If there are many details or incidents to include, write a timeline of events in date order
- Try to give the whole picture of what has happened. If you withhold information, this is likely to slow the process down while all aspects of the situation are investigated. It is more helpful to give a clear picture of events from the beginning.
- Be clear about what remedy or outcome would be acceptable to you. For example, would you be happy with an apology? Or, do you just want things to change for students in the future? Or, do you want things to be put right for you? If so, what changes or solutions would you be happy with?
- Make sure the remedy or solution you are asking for is realistic and proportionate. For example, it wouldn't make sense to ask to be moved to a new room in halls, simply because a small repair needs to be made in your room. It would be more reasonable to ask for the repair to be made within a fair time scale
- If you want to ask for financial compensation because you feel you have suffered a financial loss, provide evidence and a clear explanation of the money you have lost.

## **12. What if there are other students who are also unhappy with the same issue?**

You might consider getting together as a group, to discuss making a group complaint. This might be easier than you all submitting separate complaints. One of the group will need to act as the spokesperson.

## **13. Where can I get advice about my complaint?**

- You can get advice on the process for submitting a complaint from the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct office ([appeals@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@qmul.ac.uk)).
- For independent and confidential advice about your complaint, you can get advice from Annie Mitchell who is the Advocacy and Representation Coordinator for the Academic Advice Service in Queen Mary's Students' Union: [annie.mitchell@qmsu.org](mailto:annie.mitchell@qmsu.org) (Annie is a staff member at QMSU, not a student officer)

## **14. How can getting advice help me?**

- Understanding Queen Mary's regulations and policies
- Finding out who to approach to discuss your problems informally, and how best to do that
- An opportunity to think about whether you want to pursue a complaint or not
- How to set out your complaint in a clear and concise way
- Check that you have included all relevant information and evidence
- Understanding what information to include and what not to include. Sometimes, what might feel really important to you, might not be the aspect of your case that has had the biggest impact on you and talking to someone else can help you to structure and organise your complaint

## **15. I feel anxious about the process of making a complaint**

If you are worried about the situation you are in, or you are in a dilemma about what to do, you might find it helpful to speak to a counsellor at the College's Advice and Counselling Service.

This is a confidential service and information you discuss there is not shared with anyone outside the Advice and Counselling Service (apart from some very limited circumstances where there is a serious danger to yourself or others).

See: [www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk)