



# Course Participants' Complaints Policy and Procedures

Version 1.2

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| <b>Policy Approver</b> | QAC               | <b>Effective Date</b> | 12/02/2018 |              |          |

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Institute for Education (IfE) is committed to providing high quality education and services to all course participants. The IfE aims to provide a supportive environment and to be responsive to concerns when they are raised. We recognise that problems may arise from time to time about teaching-related or service-related provision. Therefore, course participants are encouraged and expected to raise any problems or issues with the IfE immediately so that we have an opportunity to discuss these with the course participant at an early stage. This prevents things becoming more complex and difficult to resolve. The IfE takes seriously all problems and issues raised and aims to deal with them in a timely, fair and consistent way. It will ensure that the course participants are not disadvantaged as a result of raising an issue with the IfE.

## 2 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 To manage course participant complaints effectively and efficiently, and to use feedback to improve practice.
- 2.2 Course participant satisfaction is enhanced through the provision of an effective complaints management system.
- 2.3 The principles of natural justice shall apply to course participant complaint management:
- All parties to a complaint shall have the right to be heard;
  - All relevant submissions and evidence shall be considered;
  - Matters that are not relevant shall not be taken into account; and
  - The decision maker shall not be biased or appear to be biased.
- 2.4 Analysis of course participant complaints shall contribute to continuous improvement of the IfE's policy and practice.

## 3 Complaint Handling Principles

This policy sets out the following principles that govern how the IfE handles complaints:

### 3.1 Accessible and User-focused: clearly communicated, easily understood and places the complainant at the centre of the process:

- 3.1.1 Complaints are valued and respected as a right and responsibility; complainants should feel supported;

3.1.2 Complainants and respondents are listened to carefully and treated with respect;

3.1.3 Complaints are treated in confidence where possible.

**3.2 Simple and Timely: involves limited steps and wherever possible seeks early resolution to the satisfaction of all:**

3.2.1 Complaints are addressed within reasonable timescales;

3.2.2 Where timescales cannot be adhered to (arising from complex complaints, for example) complainants will be kept informed of reasons for delay and projected timescales;

3.2.3 Employees will be trained and empowered to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity as appropriate.

**3.3 Robust and Fair: provides thorough evidence-based investigations in which the complaint handling principles are consistently applied:**

3.3.1 No complainant shall suffer any bias or prejudice as a result of making a complaint.

**3.4 Supports improvement: analysis of outcomes will support improvements in service quality and decision making.**

3.4.1 The Course Participants' Complaint Policy and Procedures is clearly articulated and published. It aims to reflect and enhance a culture of good service delivery and decision-making;

3.4.2 There will be consistent recording of information about complaints in order to identify trends and inform improvements;

3.4.3 The procedures and their outcomes will be regularly reviewed.

## **4 Complaints**

4.1 The subject of the complaint should relate specifically to one or more of the following, or comparable issues:

- Failure of the IfE to meet obligations;
- Misleading or incorrect information on IfE's website and other information provided by the IfE;

- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision or administration
- Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the IfE;
- Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the IfE
- Complaints relating to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff are associated with the [Course Participants' Grievance Policy and Procedures](#) within the IfE. If the complaint is within the scope of the Course Participants' Grievance Policy and Procedures and informal resolution is not appropriate then a formal investigation in accordance with the policy will be undertaken.
- Complaints about the behaviour of course participants towards other course participants are within the scope of the IfE's [Course Participants' Conduct Policy and Procedures](#).

## 5 Early Resolution

- 5.1 Most issues are straightforward and can usually be resolved in a timely manner. The course participant should raise issues at the time they arise and should try and resolve them with the members of staff most directly involved with the concern. Early resolution is taken to mean by agreement with the appropriate IfE's staff without needing to complete and submit a Course Participant Complaint Form.
- 5.2 The course participant should speak to or email the member of staff most directly involved with the problem or issue that they may have. This is likely to be one of the following:
- Lecturer
  - Course Coordinator
  - Senior Manager Course Co-ordination and School Professional Development
  - Manager Student Affairs
- 5.3 If the course participant is not sure who to speak to, or they does not feel able to approach the person most directly involved, then they is advised to send an email at [ife.admissions@ilearn.edu.mt](mailto:ife.admissions@ilearn.edu.mt) .
- 5.4 Concerns will be dealt with promptly, sympathetically and with respect for privacy and confidentiality. The complainant will receive a response through personal contact, usually via email. It is to be noted that sometimes the requested resolution might not be feasible or appropriate, or the IfE may not be able to make changes

straight away. We also recognise that where you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may wish to move to faculty resolution stage.

## **6 IfE Resolution**

- 6.1 Complaints that are identified as requiring investigation by the IfE will be handled by the Student Affairs Committee. Investigations, may also be referred to another Board / Committee of the IfE.

## **7 Submitting a Complaint**

- 7.1 Complaints should be submitted using the [Complaints Form](#). The IfE will log all complaints and acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant within five (5) working days.

## **8 Investigation**

- 8.1 The Student Affairs Committee will review the complaint, taking account of any documentation furnished by the complainant. If necessary, the Student Affairs Committee may refer the case to another Board / Committee of the IfE.
- 8.2 Where a complaint is formally submitted through a Complaints Form, the Manager Student Affairs may direct the appellant to try resolve the matter in an amicable manner without resorting to a formal process.
- 8.3 The Student Affairs Committee will communicate the outcome(s) of the investigation in writing within fifteen (15) working days from the acknowledgement receipt of the complaints form.
- 8.4 Where the timeframe of fifteen (15) working days for resolving the complaint cannot be met, the complainant will be notified of the delay.

## **9 Ombudsman Resolution**

- 9.1 If the course participant is still dissatisfied with the IfE's decision or the way the complaint was handled, after a full investigation, they can resort to the Office of the Ombudsman.

- 9.2 The Office of the Ombudsman cannot normally investigate:

- A complaint that has not completed the complaints processes and procedures of the IfE;

- Events that happened, or that the complainant became aware of, more than a year ago;
- A matter that has been or is being considered in court.

The course participant can contact the Ombudsman at:

*Address:*

Office of the Ombudsman  
11, St Paul Street  
Valletta VLT 1210  
Malta

*Telephone:* 2248 3200

*Email:* [office@ombudsman.org.mt](mailto:office@ombudsman.org.mt)

## 10 Exclusions

10.1 Challenges to the academic judgement of a member of staff and/or School.

10.2 Cases better suited to consideration under the [Appeals Policy and Procedure](#), including:

- A concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding course participant progression, academic assessment and awards;
- Dissatisfaction about the outcome of an academic misconduct or discipline process;
- A concern about a decision made under specific regulations;
- A concern about an IfE's decision relating to an extenuating circumstance claim on the basis of a procedural irregularity;
- Disagreement with a policy/regulation rather than its application. In this instance, the matter should be raised by the course participant with the relevant course participant representative to raise it at the Learning Community forum, or another appropriate committee or group.

10.3 Exclusion or termination of candidature

10.4 Decisions of the IfE's Academic Board, Research Ethics Committee and Appeals Board.

10.5 Course participant conduct (refer Course Participant Conduct Policy and Procedures);

## 11 Learning from Complaints

11.1 The IfE is committed to continuously improve its processes. In view of this, the IfE monitors complaints as well as course participant satisfaction feedback which can serve as basis for programme review and process tuning.

## 12 Relevant Documents

- [Appeals Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Complaints Form](#)
- [Course Participant Conduct Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Course Participants' Grievance Policy and Procedures](#)

## 13 Version history

| Originator | Version | Date       | Changes Done                   |
|------------|---------|------------|--------------------------------|
| QA Dept.   | 1.0     | 12/02/2018 | Initial Release                |
| QA Dept.   | 1.1     | 21/04/2018 | Updates to the Policy          |
| QA Dept.   | 1.2     | 30/03/2023 | Gender mainstreamed the policy |