



STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Valid from: October 2023
Date of next review: September 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Complaints Policy and Procedure has been developed in accordance with the principles established by “UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals” published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA); and the “Good Practice Framework: handling student complaints and academic appeals” developed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
- 1.2 This policy applies to:
- all students at Metanoia Institute including those on certificate programmes, validated programmes, Institute Diploma programmes, short courses and CPD.
 - Students who are no longer enrolled on a programme can make a complaint within **3 months** of their leaving date.
- 1.3 Metanoia’s complaints policy and procedure is designed for situations where an applicant, student or alumni is dissatisfied with the decisions and/or actions of Metanoia Institute, 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. **A complaint must be made within 3 months of the event.**
- 1.4 A complaint is different from an **academic appeal (which covers assessment issues)** or a complaint regarding clinical practice which would be covered by clinical ethics procedures.
- 1.5 Our Complaints Policy seeks to provide guidance for individual students regarding the processes involved in submitting a complaint to the Institute. You may also find it helpful to refer to the Student Complaints guidance for an overview of the procedure (Appendix 1). The Policy can be found on the website and Moodle.
- 1.6 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 doing so will not adversely influence their progress, studies or their learning, teaching or training experience.
- 1.7 We will consider complaints brought by a group of students. All members of the group should be named when the complaint is raised, however a single member must be nominated as the representative. The Institute will communicate directly with this individual and they will need to liaise with the rest of the group.
- 1.8 We will not investigate anonymous complaints unless they are supported with compelling evidence for us to do so. The outcomes of any such complaint may be necessarily limited.
- 1.9 Admissions Procedure Complaints - A complaint may express serious concern about any aspect of the admissions process; however, applicants have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the Institute. Complaints against a decision may only be submitted on grounds of procedural irregularity or if there is evidence of any action or decision which is not consistent with the Admissions Policy or policies regarding equality or equity.
- 1.10 Metanoia Institute is committed to providing a fair and efficient admissions service and applicants will not

be disadvantaged in any way because they have used this complaints procedure.

1.11 We will restrict the circulation of personal information relating to a complaint to the people directly involved in its investigation and resolution. Reports and letters referring to the circumstances of a complaint will, as far as possible, anonymise those involved and will not directly name staff and students.

2. Informal Student Complaint - Early Resolution (Stage 1)

2.1 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 (Stage 1). Although this stage is informal, we would recommend that students keep their own record of the key events, times, and people involved, both in relation to a complaint and, the steps taken to try and resolve it. We will also keep such records.

N.B:

A formal complaint (Stage 2) will be considered upon completion of Stage 1 (early resolution) of the process.

If the complaint's process is bypassed and the complainant sends a complaint direct to a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the complainant will be referred to the Complaints Policy and Procedures; there is no exception to the rule, the Policy/procedure must be followed, the approach underpins good practice and aligns with the HE sector and external regulator.

2.2 Steps to follow:

2.2.1 Students who wish to notify the Institute of a complaint must contact a staff member directly within 3 months of the event to which it relates (or, if it relates to a series of events, within 3 months of the latest event in the series).

2.2.2 A student should discuss their complaint as soon as possible directly with the person concerned. Alternatively, they may wish to speak to the Registrar (registrar@metanoia.ac.uk) who can advise who they should speak to in the first instance. All Staff and Tutors must alert the Registrar of informal complaints for recording purposes and an administrative record of communications will be kept.

2.2.3 If a student feels unable to approach the person concerned in the informal way detailed above, they may also contact the relevant Director of Studies or Faculty Head who will make notes about the complaint and speak with any members of staff concerned. The Registrar must be informed of these communications.

2.2.4 If your complaint is against/involves the Director of Studies, please refer the matter to the Head of Faculty. If the complaint is against/involves the Head of Faculty, please refer the matter to the Director of Education. Please contact the Registrar (registrar@metanoia.ac.uk) if you are unsure who to approach.

2.2.5 Where appropriate, and if agreed by the parties involved, a mediation meeting can 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 the Registrar or their nominee.

2.2.6 If a student agrees that a complaint has been satisfactorily resolved, the staff member who either mediated or who responded will write to the student and the Registrar to confirm the agreed outcome.

3. Formal Student Complaint (Stage 2)

3.1 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.

3.2 Steps to follow:

3.2.1 The complainant makes a preliminary submission to the Registrar (registrar@metanoia.ac.uk) outlining a summary of the complaint within 10 working days of the meeting where the grievance could not be resolved.

3.2.2 In order for a complaint to be considered, the Student Complaints Form Stage 2, **must** be submitted directly to the Registrar (**this can be done via Moodle or contact the Registrar, registrar@metanoia.ac.uk, if you are unable to access Moodle for a form to be emailed**). The purpose of the form is to help focus on the key areas of the complaint and on what outcome(s) a complainant is seeking. It also gives a clear, formal record of the complaint.

3.2.3 The complaint will be passed to a staff member who is familiar with the operation of this Complaints Policy. They will begin to investigate on the basis of the information provided by the student.

3.2.4 More extensive details of the complaint may be sought from the complainant which could include a face to face meeting or a response in writing. Any meeting may be in person or via video call and will be attended by an independent note-taker who will supply a summary of the discussion to the investigator and the complainant. The complainant may be accompanied by another individual of their choosing (but excluding legal practitioners). As part of the investigation, the investigator will inform the student of its scope and will be clear about what it is feasible for the Institute to offer in terms of delivery and remediation. Complainants should respond to requests for additional information within 10 working days.

3.2.5 The details from the complainant will then be forwarded to the subject of the complaint, or others involved, for responses which may be received either in writing or verbally. This should be completed within 10 working days. The investigator may also speak to other staff or students who can supply relevant information or clarifications.

3.2.6 The investigator will prepare a report summarising the evidence. In addition, they may recommend an outcome which will be either (i) Complaint dismissed; (ii) Complaint upheld; (iii) Complaint partially upheld. In the case that options (ii) or (iii) are being recommended, they may also suggest remediation which may be offered. The investigator may recommend that a panel is convened if they are unable to recommend an outcome.

3.2.7 The report and the recommendations will be considered by a senior staff member who has not been involved in the complaint. If, having reviewed the evidence, they are unable to confirm an outcome due to insufficient information or contradictory statements, they may either:

direct the investigator to seek further information

or

convene a hearing

3.2.8 In the event that a hearing is convened it will be heard by the staff member identified in 3.2.7 and one other senior staff member who has not been involved in the complaint. This staff member may be from a different faculty or validating university which awards the programme which the student is enrolled on. All relevant parties will be invited in turn, either in person or via video call, to give

verbal statements and may be questioned. All attendees may be accompanied to the hearing by another individual who has not had any previous involvement in the case, and who does not have a vested interest in the outcome. No party may be accompanied by a legal practitioner. All parties will be provided with the investigator's report prior to the hearing. The hearing may proceed in the absence of the complainant if they are unwilling to attend or are unable to do so in a reasonable timeframe.

- 3.2.9 An independent note taker will be in attendance at any hearing and their summary of the proceedings will be appended to the investigator's report.
- 3.2.10 Within 10 working days of receiving all available information and, if required, holding a hearing, the senior staff member(s) will confirm one of the following outcomes, (i) Complaint dismissed; (ii) Complaint upheld; (iii) Complaint partially upheld. They will also identify any remediation or undertakings to the complainant which are to be made. The Investigator will write to the complainant with the outcome and the reasons for the decision. The final investigator's report will be enclosed.
- 3.2.11 The Quality Standards and Support Manager and the Registrar are responsible for ensuring that any resulting actions are achieved within the agreed time frame.
- 3.2.12 Regardless of the outcome of Stage 2, if a student is satisfied with the outcome and decides not to progress to Stage 3 (Formal Appeal), they are entitled to request a Completion of Procedures Letter within one month of the written notification of the outcome. This letter will state that the Institute's formal procedures have not been completed.

3.3 This stage of the Complaints Process will be completed in 40 working days from receiving the Complaints Form. In certain circumstances it may not be possible to meet this deadline, particularly where information may be delayed by staff leave or due to time taken to set up a hearing. If the decision will take longer, the Institute will regularly keep the student informed of progress.

4. Formal Student Appeal (Stage 3)

4.1 In the event that a complainant is not satisfied they may lodge a formal appeal for a further review of the complaint. Any such request will only be considered on the following grounds: (i) at Stage 2, the complaint was not considered in line with this Complaints Policy; or (ii) the complainant has new material evidence which they were unable, for valid reasons, to disclose at an earlier stage; or (iii) the decision made at Stage 2 is unreasonable and not in accordance with the facts of the case.

4.2 Steps to follow:

- 4.2.1 In order for a complaint appeal to be considered, the Student Complaints Form Stage 3 must be completed and submitted to the Registrar (**this can be done via Moodle or contact the Registrar, registrar@metanoia.ac.uk, if you are unable to access Moodle for a form to be emailed**). The purpose of the form is to help focus on the key areas of the complaint responses that are being appealed. It also identifies any specific remedies the complainant is seeking.
- 4.2.2 This form must be received by the Registrar within 10 working days of receiving the written outcome of Stage 2.
- 4.2.3 A member of the Senior Leadership **Team** will then review the complaint including all of the submitted materials and the outcome in view of the criteria in 4.1
- 4.2.4 Within 20 working days following the consideration of all available information the reviewer will decide whether to uphold or reject the formal appeal.
- 4.2.5 If the appeal is upheld, the complaint will return to stage 2 for re-consideration with an explanation

as to why this decision has been made. The resumption of stage 2 may be conducted with the same senior staff as previously or with different ones according to the findings of the review of the appeal. The reviewer will write to the student to inform them that their complaint is being re-considered.

4.2.6 If the appeal is rejected the reviewer will write to the student to explain why.

4.2.7 Once the Institute's internal procedures have been concluded a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be issued.

5. External Oversight (Stage 4)

5.1 If a complainant is a (or was) a student on a Higher Education course awarded by either Metanoia Institute or Middlesex University, then they may be able to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). This route is not available to complainants who are raising concerns relating to admissions onto any course or to students who are not on a programme leading to an undergraduate or a postgraduate award.

5.2 Complaints to the OIA will only normally be considered for students who have fully completed the Institute's procedures and have a Completion of Procedures Letter. They must be raised within 12 months of the date on this letter.

5.3 Information, eligibility rules and how to request an external review are available at: www.oiahe.org.uk . Complainants may contact the OIA electronically, by telephone or by mail using the details found at <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/contact-us/>

6. Applicant Complaints

6.1 Metanoia Institute is committed to considering all applications to study with us fairly and in a way which ensures equality of opportunity. Our policies and procedures relating to admissions have been written and approved taking into account national educational and professional standards and best practice.

6.2 Complaints will only be upheld where there is evidence that our published policies or procedures have not been followed. Changes to admissions outcomes will only be made where the findings from the complaint shows a material irregularity which would have changed the decision made. Applicants may not appeal admissions decisions or request the review of academic or professional judgement involved in making them.

6.3 Initial Applicant Complaint -: Stage 1

6.3.1 In most cases, we expect and aim to resolve concerns at an early opportunity and in the simplest way.

6.3.2 Applicants should put their complaint in writing and send it to the Director of Studies (DoS) for the programme to which they applied. The nature of the complaint should be detailed, and the desired outcome should be included. This should be sent within 15 working days of the event prompting the complaint or the written admissions decision.

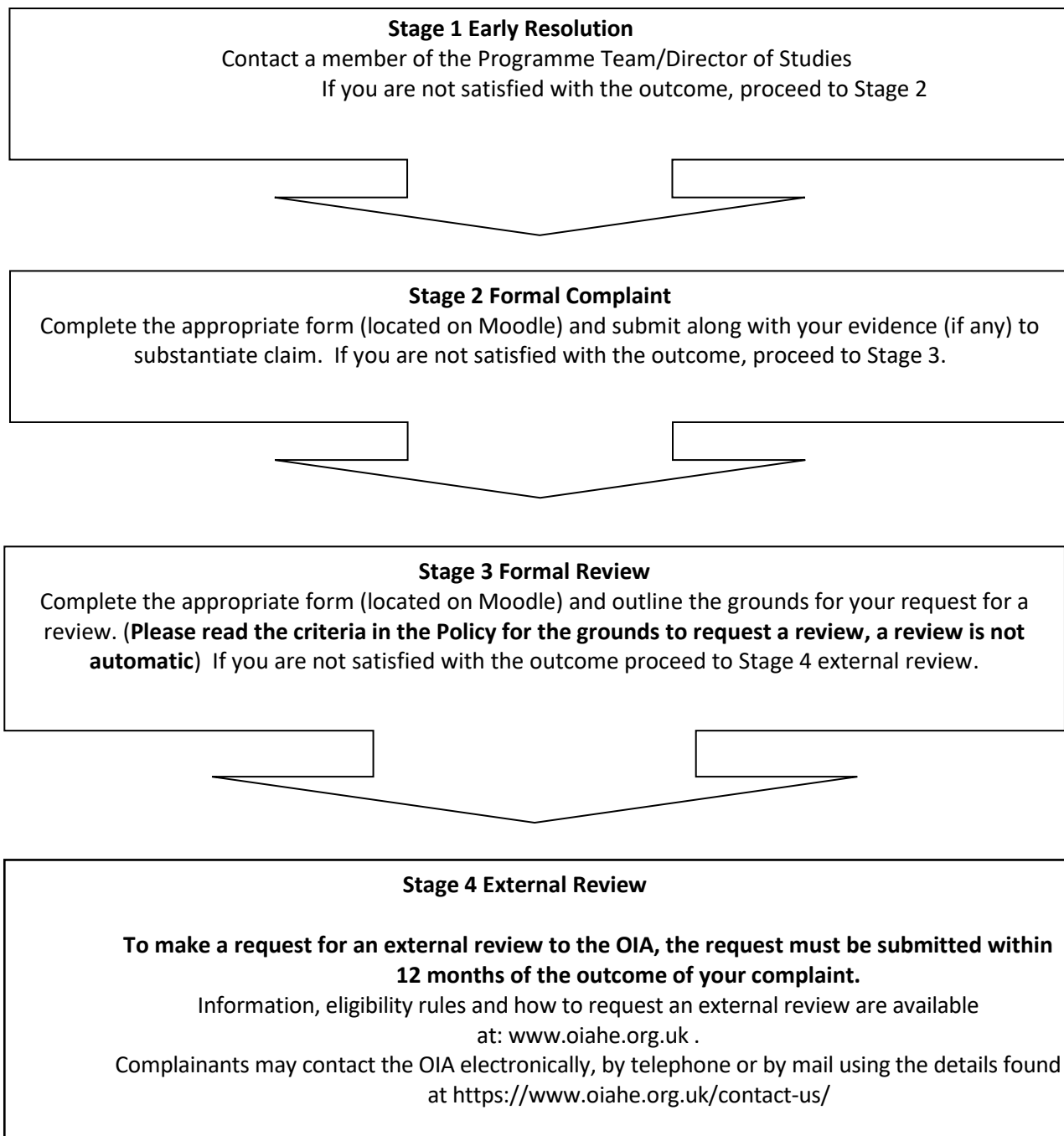
6.3.3 The DoS will forward the complaint to the Faculty Head who will review its merit. In the event that the Faculty Head was directly involved in the admissions process for the complainant, they will nominate an alternative, neutral senior staff member to conduct this review.

6.3.4 The outcome of the complaint will be decided on within 15 working days of its receipt. The applicant will be informed of the outcome in writing with a copy being sent to the Registrar. If the complaint is fully or partially upheld, the applicant will be informed whether their application will be reviewed or whether the existing decision will stand.

6.4 Applicant Complaint Review -: Stage 2

- 6.4.1 If the applicant is not satisfied by the response to their complaint, they can request that it is reviewed. A request for review should be submitted to the Registrar (registrar@metanoia.ac.uk) within 10 working days of receiving the written outcome of the complaint.
- 6.4.2 The Registrar or their nominee will review the handling of the complaint to ensure that each element of it has been considered and that the outcome is reasonable given the evidence. This will not constitute a fresh consideration of the complaint.
- 6.4.3 If this review finds any irregularity in the handling of the complaint, it will be returned to the staff member who made the original decision to re-consider. In exceptional circumstances the Registrar may request that the complaint is considered by another member of staff who has not previously been involved.
- 6.4.4 The outcome of the review and any changes to the outcome of the complaint will be provided within 15 working days. Where the review has meant that the outcome of the complaint has changed, the applicant will be informed if this has changed the decision regarding their application.
- 6.4.5 On completion of this Stage, the complaint will be considered to be closed.

Complaint's Process



POLICY INFORMATION

All policies to go through MI governance.

Section 1 - to be completed by policy proposer and forwarded to Committee Servicing Officer.

Policy Title:	Complaints Policy & Procedure
Author:	Updated by Joanne Smith
Rationale: <i>Outline the purpose of the policy, and its scope e.g. credit-bearing provision</i>	This is the complaints policy for students at Metanoia Institute. It allows students to raise situations of concern and to seek redress. It also allows the Institute to manage complaints and to ensure that information is collected so that lessons may be learned. Amendments to enhance clarity of the process and to reflect the new role titles.
Consultation undertaken: <i>List all groups and/or committees where consultation was undertaken e.g. students, administration, external advisor, QSC, etc.</i>	This policy has been updated taking into account sector good practice including the OIA Good Practice Framework. There has also been a consultation with staff who have been recently involved with complaints.
Resource implication: <i>Outline the potential financial, human and technological resource implication of the policy</i>	None

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Section 2 - to be committed by receiving committee

Recommending Committee:	Quality and Standards Committee
Circulated to:	Students, academic team, Registry

Approved:	DD-MM-YY	Date for adoption:	September 2023
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Version and Document Code:		Date for review:	11/10/25
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Proposed document code: Committee acronym + year of approval e.g. QSC2019/2