

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 48 – STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. This procedure applies to:
  - Complaints arising from a student’s educational experience, other than disputes relating to assessment and examinations (see below);
  - Complaints in respect of academic and/or administrative support or other services provided by Arden University or at an Arden University study centre;
  - Complaints regarding alleged harassment by staff of Arden University or an Arden University study centre;
  - Complaints arising from alleged discrimination by staff of Arden University or an Arden University study centre in relation to gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or otherwise.
2. This list is not exhaustive. Complaints falling outside those listed above will be considered and investigated at the discretion of the University.
3. This procedure does not apply to:
  - Candidates wishing to appeal against an academic decision; separate procedures exist for such appeals. Candidates should also note that appeals against the academic judgement of examiners cannot be accepted.
  - Disciplinary matters; these will be dealt with in accordance with separate procedures in place within Arden University.

### **STAGE ONE: INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

4. Wherever possible, the University would wish to see any complaint resolved as close as possible to its point of origin, and with a minimum of formality. If a student is not satisfied with the conclusion of the informal resolution or where informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, he/she should refer to Stage Two: Formal Complaint (point 5 below).

### **STAGE TWO: FORMAL COMPLAINT**

5. Formal complaints should be submitted in writing to the Director of Student Achievement.
6. The Director of Student Achievement will confirm receipt of the complaint to the student, normally within two working days.

7. The Director of Student Achievement may request additional information or evidence from the student, in which case the student will be notified in writing and given five working days to respond.
8. A formal meeting will be convened by the Director of Student Achievement to consider the complaint, normally within five working days of receipt of the complaint.
9. If the Director of Student Achievement is unable to reach a conclusion, the complaint will be deferred to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and a further meeting will be convened to discuss the issues, normally within five working days.
10. A response will normally be provided to the student within ten working days of receipt of the complaint. If there is a genuine need for a response to be provided in a shorter timescale than this, the student must make this clear, including the reason, at the point of submitting the formal complaint.
11. The outcomes available are as follows:
  - That the complaint be upheld in whole or in part;
  - That the complaint be rejected
12. The student will be issued with a formal letter confirming the outcome of the investigation into the student complaint. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, he/she should refer to Stage Three: Review of Outcome (point 11 below).

### STAGE THREE: REVIEW OF OUTCOME

13. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two investigation of the complaint, he/she may request a review of the outcome within ten working days of the written confirmation received following Stage Two: Formal Complaint.
14. A request for review may be on limited grounds, including but not confined to:
  - A review of the procedures followed at the formal stage;
  - Consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable in all the circumstances;
  - New material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.
15. The request for review should be submitted in writing to the Head of Quality within ten working days of dispatch of the Stage Two: Formal Complaint outcome letter. Students should provide full details on the grounds on which the review is being

requested and indicate within their correspondence why the outcome of the Stage Two: Formal Complaint was not satisfactory.

16. The Head of Quality, or his/her nominee, will acknowledge receipt of the complaint normally within five working days. Where appropriate, the Head of Quality may consult with the Director of Student Achievement to obtain evidence of facts relating to the complaint.
17. Requests for review will be considered by the Complaints Review Panel. The Complaints Review Panel will be chaired by an external member of the Academic Board and will include the Chief Executive Officer and the Registrar. The Quality Manager or his/her nominee will act as Secretary to the Board. The meeting may be held in person or remotely via telephone or videoconference if necessary.
18. The Complaints Review Panel may request additional information or evidence from the student, in which case the student will be notified in writing and given five working days to respond.
19. The outcomes available are as follows:
  - That the complaint be upheld in whole or in part;
  - That the complaint be rejected
20. The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review within ten working days of the meeting of the Complaints Review Panel.
21. In the event of a complaint being upheld whole or in part, recommendations should be made in respect of remedial action required. A report on the matter and any actions arising will be referred to the next meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee.
22. The decision of the Complaints Review Panel is final. In the event that the student is not prepared to accept the decision, the student will be advised, via the outcome letter, that he/she has the right to take his/her complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education.