

# ONCAMPUS Student Complaints Policy

## August 2023 v3

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### Introduction

ONCAMPUS hope that all students are satisfied with every aspect of their course and enjoy their time studying with the centre. It is however understood that sometimes the student experience can fall short of expectations. ONCAMPUS aim to ensure that concerns and problems are addressed before they cause greater problems.

#### *Definition of a complaint:*

*A statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.*

The complaint may be expressed informally (verbally) or formally (written complaint). If a student has a complaint about any aspect of their course, the first person they should speak to is their Personal Tutor who will be able to assist, unless their Personal Tutor is the subject of the complaint, in which case the Deputy Centre Head/Head of Learning and Teaching should be their first person to contact.

## **Who can use this procedure?**

This complaints procedure may only be used by an individual who is, or has been, registered and enrolled as an ONCAMPUS student. If a student is no longer enrolled with ONCAMPUS, any complaints must be about events that occurred during their enrolment period and made within the required timescales (see “Student Complaints Procedure” below).

A group of students may use this procedure to make a collective complaint, provided that one student identifies themselves as the main contact for the purposes of all communication. Anyone wishing to make a complaint should do so personally. Where a third party (such as a parent, agent or guardian) makes a complaint on behalf of a student, ONCAMPUS can only address general issues, unless prior written permission has been obtained from the student confirming that such third party is acting on their behalf and consents to their details to be shared and referred to in the specific case. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

## **What complaints are included within this policy?**

Complaints relating to the following are covered within this policy:

- Quality of teaching and provision
- Student experience
- ONCAMPUS centre facilities

Or any other circumstances that relate to the delivery of a programme of study before the point of assessment or the submission of coursework.

There is a separate Academic Appeals policy available to all ONCAMPUS students post-assessment (excluding students that have had their enrolment suspended).

## **Principles**

Complaints shall be treated seriously and students must not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint in good faith. In all cases, it is desirable that complaints are resolved informally and quickly between the relevant parties, and that the formal process is only started if that fails.

Only complaints presented on the appropriate official forms will be dealt with as formal complaints. The official forms can be found on [Moodle](#), however in the event the student is no longer enrolled with ONCAMPUS, the student should contact the Centre directly via email to request a copy of the required forms. When a complaint is reviewed, part of the resolution may involve reporting the circumstances to a Board of Examiners, Academic Board or other academic body for consideration in their decision-making processes.

## Recording and monitoring of complaints

It is important that the number, stage and range of complaints are monitored in order to improve the student experience. The Central Academic Team will record complaints on a central file and report from it (without divulging the details of specific complainants) to indicate the nature of complaints and resultant action.

Such reports will:

- Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure at various levels;
- Feed directly into appropriate ONCAMPUS-wide committees;
- Assist in identifying problems and trends across ONCAMPUS;
- Form the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved;
- Be made available to ONCAMPUS reviewing bodies.

## Student Complaint Procedure

- Stage 1: Local Level
- Stage 2: Centre Head/Director Formal Review
- Stage 3: Final Review by Reviewing Officer (appointed by Chief Academic Officer)

To make a complaint a student must start at Stage 1. The entire complaints process should take no longer than 17 weeks including the appeal/appeal notification Stage 3.

### Stage 1: Local Level

Students are expected to try to resolve a complaint directly, informally and quickly with the person concerned. In most cases, the student's Personal Tutor should be able to help resolve any concerns. In some circumstances, the student may prefer to approach a different member of staff e.g. Course Leader or Deputy Centre Head/Head of Learning and Teaching.

The complaint must be made **within 1 month** of the unsatisfactory circumstances occurring, at the latest. The sooner the matter is raised, the better. The student is expected to explain clearly what the problem is and what outcome they are seeking. The member of staff is expected to listen to the complaint and to try to resolve it in a straightforward, reasonable and prompt manner. Staff dealing with complaints are encouraged to meet with the student to establish the precise cause of dissatisfaction, to explore any solution suggested by the student and to gain a mutual understanding of the issues involved.

Although informal, the member of staff should make clear notes of any meetings and keep a record of the agreed outcome. Notes should be shared with the student and kept on file. The student should be notified that the matter is deemed to be resolved within 3 weeks of

receiving the complaint where possible and advised of the availability of Stage 2 of the complaints procedure, if the complaint is not upheld (rejected).

### Stage 2: Centre Head/Director Formal Review

If Stage 1 does not provide a satisfactory outcome for the student, they can ask the Centre Head/Director to deal formally with the complaint.

The student should complete Complaint Form A (see form on Moodle) to set out:

- What their complaint is about
- What the supporting evidence is
- Why informal resolution (Stage 1) was unsuccessful
- What outcome they would like

Upon completion, the form should be sent to the Central Academic Team via the following email address: [studentcomplaints@oncampus.global](mailto:studentcomplaints@oncampus.global)

The Central Academic Team will only process complaints presented on Complaint Form A where all of these points are covered. A hard copy is available to students who, for reasons of disability, are unable to access the electronic form. Please contact the above email address for further information.

Complaint Form A must be submitted **within 1 month** of notification of the outcome of Stage 1. If the form does not set out clearly and concisely, in a legible manner, the points listed above, the student will be asked to resubmit the form in a manner that enables proper consideration of the complaint to take place.

The Central Academic Team will acknowledge receipt of Complaint Form A within 5 working days. The complaint will be logged and referred to the appropriate person in the centre, usually the Centre Head/Director. If the subject of the original complaint is the Centre Head/Director, then another ONCAMPUS Centre Head/Director will conduct the review. The Centre Head/Director will review the complaint and will be accessible to complainants and staff at all stages of the process. They will ensure that an investigation is carried out before a written response is provided to the complainant.

The investigation and its outcome must be fair and reasonable. The written reply from the Centre Head/Director will follow a standard template. The Centre Head/Director will populate the template and return it to the Central Academic Team, who will send the response to the complainant. If the Centre Head/Director upholds (agrees with) the student's complaint, they may decide on an appropriate solution, bearing in mind the outcome sought by the student.

If the complaint is not upheld (rejected), the student will be notified about Stage 3 of the complaints procedure in which the student can appeal the decision from stage 2. The reply will be sent by the Central Academic Team within 3 weeks of receipt of Complaint Form A. If the investigation will take longer than 3 weeks, the student will be informed of the reason and an expected date of response. Complainants, and individuals named in complaints, will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint at all stages.

### Stage 3: Final Review by Reviewing Officer

Where the Stage 2 complaint was not upheld (rejected), the Stage 3 complaint will be reviewed by the Chief Academic Officer or a relevant appointed senior member of staff (“Reviewing Officer”).

The Reviewing Officer may be asked to review the way a Centre Head/Director handled a complaint. The Reviewing Officer will review the complaint and exercise discretion and judgement as to whether further investigation is necessary.

The student should complete Complaint Form B (see form on Moodle) to set out their grounds for appealing the decision at stage 2 to include:

- Why they believe the decision made at Stage 2 was not fair or reasonable;
- How they believe the procedure for the Stage 2 complaint was incorrectly followed and how this made a significant difference to the outcome of their complaint.

The student must set out the grounds of the complaint by making reference to the above two standards and must provide evidence to support their claim. If the student provides evidence to support one or both of the points above, the Reviewing Officer will arrange for further investigation to take place. In reaching a decision, the Reviewing Officer is expected to be fair and reasonable. A complaint without adequate grounds and evidence will be dismissed.

Complaint Form B must be submitted **within 1 month** of notification of the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint. Upon completion, the form should be sent to the Central Academic Team via the following email address: [studentcomplaints@oncampus.global](mailto:studentcomplaints@oncampus.global)

The Central Academic Team will only deal with complaints presented on Complaint Form B and where one or both of the points above has been addressed. A hard copy is available to students who, for reasons of disability, are unable to access the electronic form. Please contact the above email address for further information.

The Central Academic Team will acknowledge receipt of Complaint Form B within 5 working days. The complaint will be logged and a Reviewing Officer will be appointed. Complainants,

and individuals named in complaints, will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint at all stages. Once a decision has been made, the Chief Academic Officer will send the response to the complainant.

If the complaint is upheld (agreed), both the student and the Centre Head/Director will receive a written explanation of their decision. If the Reviewing Officer does not uphold the complaint, the student will receive a written response giving reasons, and a "Completion of Procedures" letter will be issued. The Reviewing Officer may decide to uphold part, but not all, of the complaint and will respond to the student accordingly.

The reply will be sent within 3 weeks of receipt of Complaint Form B by the Chief Academic Officer. If the investigation will take longer than 3 weeks, the student will be informed of the reason and an expected date of response.

### **Completion of Procedures**

If ONCAMPUS are unable to resolve a complaint to the student's satisfaction, and there are no further steps available to the student, a formal "Completion of Procedures" letter will be issued. This provides a formal confirmation that the student has exhausted the internal complaints procedure.

### **The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs a free, independent and impartial scheme to review student complaints. CEG UFP Ltd (the owner of ONCAMPUS) is a member of the Scheme. Irish ONCAMPUS students can appeal the decision of stage 3 to the OIA. If they are unhappy with the Stage 3 final decision about their complaint.

You normally need to have completed the stages in the ONCAMPUS Student Complaints Policy before you complain to the OIA. CEG UFP Ltd/ONCAMPUS will send you a letter called a "Completion of Procedures Letter" (COP letter) when you have reached the end of the relevant internal processes and there are no further steps you can take internally. You will have 12 months to complain to the OIA, normally from the date the COP Letter was issued. This is a strict deadline and it's worth remembering that the longer you wait to complain to the OIA, the more difficult it can become to put things right.

You can find 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 at: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>

Get in touch with the OIA:

Call: 0118 959 9813

Email: [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk)

Website: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)