

Higher Education

Complaints Policy & Procedure

2024/2025

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Introduction

- 1.1. Tameside College (We) is dedicated to fostering a positive and supportive learning environment for all students. In line with this commitment, we have developed a Higher Education (HE) Complaints Policy and Procedure that aligns with the guidelines set out by the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator's \(OIA\) Good Practice Framework](#) and the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\) UK Quality Code](#). This policy underscores our institution's accountability and dedication to resolving concerns in a fair, transparent, and efficient manner.
- 1.2. Our HE Complaints Policy emphasises accessibility, ensuring that all students (You) can easily comprehend and navigate the procedures. We uphold principles of fairness and impartiality throughout the complaints' resolution process, conducting thorough and objective investigations. Timely resolution is a priority, and we adhere to clear timelines at each stage. Through the alignment with OIA and QAA standards, we reaffirm our commitment to maintaining the highest quality of education and addressing concerns with integrity and diligence.

Purpose of the Policy

- 2.1. We are committed to ensuring that you are satisfied with the programmes, services, and facilities we provide. We will ensure that you are able to express your views on your experience of the College in order that high levels of customer satisfaction are achieved. We support this aim by ensuring that we manage our customer care procedures in a transparent and effective way and meet the requirements of the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education for student complaints](#).
- 2.2. You have the right to complain without fear of reprisal or victimisation. We will treat each complaint seriously, impartially and within our set timescales.
- 2.3. We are committed to endorsing and support the principles of the [Equality Act 2010](#) and we believe that all individuals should be treated with fairness and respect regardless of their gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, sex, ethnicity, religion or belief, age, disability or marriage and civil partnership.

- 2.4. This policy and procedure are available on our website under the [Policy and Procedures page](#) and is referenced in [our Terms and Conditions and Student Handbook](#).

Scope

- 3.1. The policy applies to all enrolled or previously enrolled HE students who either intend to, are currently or have attended a course at Tameside College including students studying on an Open University (OU) Partnership programme.
- 3.2. If you are studying a programme with Huddersfield or Chester University, please follow the policies highlighted in [Appendix 1](#).
- 3.3. This policy covers:
- concerns about admissions decisions,
 - misconduct and disciplinary outcomes,
 - deferral and withdrawal outcomes,
 - administrative complaints,
 - concerns about teaching or
 - other complaints about college services
- 3.4. This policy **does not** cover concerns about decisions made by an academic body, for example:
- Concerns about marks and/or classifications
 - Considerations of extenuating circumstances or extension requests
 - Academic misconduct outcomes
 - Factors affecting your performance which you wish the Board of Examiners to consider.
- 3.5. The above concerns are dealt with under our [HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#).
- 3.6. Complaints procedures are separate from disciplinary procedures. The purpose of the complaints' procedure is to investigate complaints with the aim of satisfying complainants, while being fair to all and to learn any lessons that may improve future service delivery. Should a complaint identify information about matters which indicate a need for disciplinary investigation (for example, allegations about other

students), a case for considering disciplinary investigation can be suggested at any point during the complaints' procedure. Consideration of whether disciplinary action is warranted is a separate matter for management outside the complaints procedure and must be subject to a separate process of investigation. Where it is decided to take action under the [HE Acceptable Behaviour Policy and Procedure](#), the complaint investigation will continue to be taken forward.

- 3.7. If you feel that your complaint falls under the HE Acceptable Behaviour procedures and would like further advice on how to raise your concerns, please contact the HE Quality Officer at hequality@tameside.ac.uk.
- 3.8. Our [Whistleblowing Policy](#) covers disclosures made in the public interest.

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

- 4.1. All staff members play a crucial role in the implementation of the Higher Education Complaints Policy. It is their responsibility to be aware of the policy, assist students in understanding the complaints process, and, when necessary, facilitate the initial resolution of minor concerns. Timely reporting of complaints to the HE Quality Officer is essential for maintaining transparency and ensuring that appropriate actions are taken.

Assistant Principal

- 4.2. Responsible for overseeing the development, review, and updates of the HE Complaints Policy. Collaborating with relevant stakeholders, including the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the HE Quality Team, the Assistant Principal ensures that the policy aligns with regulatory requirements, industry standards, and the specific needs of the institution.
- 4.3. Involved in conducting periodic reviews to address emerging issues and improve the effectiveness of the complaints resolution process.
- 4.4. Considers the formal complaint recommended outcome put forward by the investigator and signs off the complaint response.

Head of Quality

- 4.5. The Head of Quality will select a college manager to act as an impartial investigator for the formal complaint investigation.
- 4.6. Ensures that the complaints process is fair, confidential, and conducted in accordance with the complaints procedures.
- 4.7. Contributes to the continuous improvement of the policy based on their insights from individual cases.

Investigator

- 4.8. A college manager will serve as the primary investigator in the formal complaints resolution process, by conducting thorough and impartial investigations into formal complaints, gathering evidence, and liaising with all parties involved.
- 4.9. Ensures that the complaints process is fair, confidential, and conducted in accordance with HE Complaints procedures.
- 4.10. Provide recommendations for resolution to the Assistant Principal for consideration.

HE Quality Officer

- 4.11. Responsible for the day-to-day management and coordination of the complaints procedure. This includes receiving and logging complaints, communicating with complainants and respondents, and guiding individuals through the formal procedures.
- 4.12. Ensures compliance with timelines, maintains accurate records, and provides regular updates to the SLT.
- 4.13. Plays a key role in implementing any recommendations for systemic improvements that arise from individual cases.

Senior Leadership Team

- 4.14. The Head of Quality will nominate an independent member of the SLT to act as the reviewer of cases at stage three. They will carry out the review process in accordance with stage three of the complaints procedures.

- 4.15. Conduct periodic reviews of resolved cases to consider trends, patterns, and recommendations for improvement provided by the Head of Quality and the HE Quality Officer.
- 4.16. Their role includes making strategic decisions to enhance the overall effectiveness of the HE Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Students

- 4.17. You have a responsibility to familiarise yourself with the HE Complaints Policy and Procedure. This includes understanding the steps involved, timelines, and the types of issues that can be addressed through the complaints process. This awareness will empower you to navigate the system effectively when concerns arise.
- 4.18. You are encouraged to engage with staff at the earliest opportunity to resolve issues informally. This collaboration may involve discussing concerns with teachers, or advisors, or relevant other staff members who can provide guidance or address the matter directly. Timely communication can often lead to swift resolutions and prevent the escalation of minor issues.
- 4.19. It is your responsibility to communicate your concerns or complaints promptly and clearly. Providing detailed information about the issue, including relevant dates, individuals involved, and any supporting documentation, helps expedite the resolution process. Open and honest communication is essential for a fair and thorough investigation.
- 4.20. You have a responsibility to report complaints in a timely manner. Delayed reporting can hinder the ability of us being able to investigate and resolve issues effectively. Adhering to established reporting timelines (outlined in the HE Complaints Policy Timeframes below) ensures that concerns are addressed promptly and within the appropriate framework.
- 4.21. If a formal complaints procedure is initiated, you are expected to actively participate in the process. This may involve providing additional information, attending meetings, and respecting confidentiality requirements. Engaging constructively with the investigation ensures that all perspectives are considered and contributes to a fair and impartial resolution.

- 4.22. You are responsible for respecting the complaints resolution process and adhering to the guidelines outlined in this policy. This includes refraining from any form of retaliation or inappropriate behaviour during the course of the investigation in line with the [HE Acceptable Behaviour Policy](#). Respecting the process helps maintain a fair and conducive environment for all parties involved.

Support Available

- 5.1. If expressing your concerns directly to the individuals involved is uncomfortable, an alternative point of contact, such as the [HE Quality Officer](#), can be designated to address your complaint, ensuring a neutral and supportive channel for communication, especially in cases involving sensitive matters like misconduct outcomes.
- 5.2. In situations where completing a written complaint form poses challenges, you have the option to submit your complaint verbally. A designated staff member will assist in documenting your concerns on the complaint form. The completed form will then be shared with you for confirmation before proceeding as a formal complaint.
- 5.3. For individuals requiring reasonable adjustments throughout the complaints process, the [Student Wellbeing team](#) is available to provide assistance. They can support you in implementing necessary accommodations to ensure the process is accessible and equitable.
- 5.4. At any stage of the complaints process, you have the option to appoint an [advocate](#) to communicate and interact directly with us on your behalf. To do so, please submit a written request by emailing the HE Quality Officer at hequality@tameside.ac.uk, specifying your chosen advocate and granting permission for the sharing of relevant data related to your complaint process.
- 5.5. If you need additional support with understanding the procedures or during the process the Student Welfare Support team and the HE Quality Officer will be able to assist you.
- 5.6. It's important to note that the complaint procedure is an internal college process and [legal representation](#) will not normally be necessary, appropriate or helpful.

Policy Principles

- 6.1. We are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of integrity, fairness, and transparency. The Policy Principles outlined herein serve as the cornerstone of our commitment to providing a conducive and equitable environment for all members of our academic community. Grounded in the principles of accountability, these guidelines are designed to ensure that our policies and procedures are not only in compliance with regulatory frameworks but also aligned with our core values of academic excellence and student well-being.

What is a Complaint?

- 6.2. A complaint is defined by the OIA as “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something a provider has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider”.
- 6.3. Complaints can take various forms, ranging from issues related to academic standards, to broader concerns encompassing our policies, staff and/or student conduct, or college facilities.

How to submit a Complaint

- 6.4. If you have a concern that you feel could be a complaint, it is best to talk to a member of staff about these concerns in the first instance. In many cases your concerns can be resolved informally by talking them through with the relevant staff member. If you require assistance with your complaint form or advice on the policy, you should contact the HE Quality Officer at hequality@tameside.ac.uk.
- 6.5. You should submit your formal complaint by using the [complaint form](#) along with your supporting evidence to the HE Quality Officer at hequality@tameside.ac.uk within 20 working days of the incident/issue occurring. Once your complaint is received you will receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days.
- 6.6. The complaint form sets out all the information you need to include to enable the investigation to be started. If the form has missing information or supporting evidence is not attached the process will not start until a completed form has been submitted.

- 6.7. You should include all the supporting evidence and any information you wish to be considered as part of your complaint investigation. Any additional evidence that is submitted at a later date in addition to the original complaint may cause a delay to the investigation and consideration timeframe.

Timeframes

- 6.8. Below are the timeframes for each stage of the complaints procedure:

Stage One: Informal Resolution

- **Submission Deadline:** informal complaint should be raised within 10 working days of the incident/issue occurring (can be verbally or written, please see section 6 for examples).
- **Acknowledgement:** Upon receipt of an informal complaint, the HE Quality Officer will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days.
- **Response:** A response to the Stage One: Informal Resolution will be provided by the HE Quality Officer within 7 working days of the date the matter was raised.

Stage Two: Formal Complaint

- **Submission Deadline:** a formal complaint must be submitted within 20 working days of the incident/issue occurring or within 10 working days from the outcome of Stage One: Informal Resolution consideration, whichever is later.
- **Acknowledgement:** HE Quality Officer will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaints within 3 working days of submission.
- **Response:** A response to the formal complaint will be provided by the Head of Quality within 20 working days of the date the matter was raised.

Stage Three: Tameside Review

- **Submission Deadline:** request for a College Review within 10 working days of receiving the Stage Two: Formal Complaint outcome.
- **Acknowledgement:** HE Quality Officer will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within 3 working days of submission.

- **Response:** The College Review decision will be provided within 10 working days from the date of submission.

Stage Three: Academic Standards Complaint (OU)

- **Submission Deadline:** OU students may submit a request for OU Review within 28 calendar days of receiving the Stage Two outcome if their complaint relates to academic standards.
- **Acknowledgement:** The Student Casework team will acknowledge receipt of the review within 10 working days of submission.
- **Response:** The OU review decision will be provided within 40 working days from the date of submission.

Late Complaints

- 6.9. If you submit your formal complaint or review request after the [timeframe](#) deadline your formal appeal or review request will be considered out of time unless you can provide evidence to support your late submission.
- 6.10. A formal complaint or review request should be submitted within the above timeframes and if you are submitting late, you must provide a reason for the late submission. The following reasons will **not** be accepted (but not limited to):
- Not knowing about the complaint procedures and timeframes
 - Being on holiday or work commitments
- 6.11. If your submission is out of time, you will receive an outcome letter within 20 working days informing you of this and why this decision has been made.
- 6.12. If your formal complaint is out of time, you may request a review of this outcome under stage three if you have grounds to do so. For review requests you can submit an external complaint to the [OIA](#) following the procedures below.

Group Complaints

- 6.13. In instances where an issue arises that affects several students, you may submit a group complaint. The group should nominate a representative and must all agree that this person can speak and liaise on their behalf.

6.14. The response will be focused on the factors affecting the group as a whole and will not detail individual circumstances.

6.15. Should you wish for your individual circumstances to be considered alongside the group complaint, you can submit a separate individual complaint for consideration.

Evidence

6.16. When submitting evidence to support your complaint it must be relevant to the matter you are complaining about and submitted with your complaints form.

6.17. If you are having difficulties obtaining the evidence you require for your complaint submission, you should contact the HE Quality Officer to explain why this is. The HE Quality Officer will consider if your complaint can be reviewed in the meantime while we are waiting for the evidence or whether you can have an extension to the submission timeframe.

6.18. If we have concerns about the authenticity of your evidence, you will raise these concerns with you and possibly with the source of where the evidence came from.

Outcomes

6.19. There are three types of outcomes given for a formal complaint or review request case:

- Upheld
- Partially Upheld
- Not upheld
- Out of time

Upheld

6.20. If your complaint/review is upheld this means that the investigator found evidence to support all the grounds of your complaint. Your outcome letter will detail the next steps and if any action will take place.

6.21. Upheld complaints/reviews will not negatively affect your academic results or your relationship with the college or its staff.

Partially Upheld

- 6.22. Partially upheld complaint/review means that the investigator found evidence to support one or more of your grounds of complaint/review, but not all of them. Your outcome letter will detail the next steps for the upheld grounds of your complaint/review and explain why some of the grounds were not upheld.
- 6.23. You may request a review of your stage two formal complaint outcome under stage three if you have grounds to do so. For review requests you can submit an external complaint to the [OIA](#) following the procedures below.
- 6.24. Partially upheld complaints will not negatively affect your academic results or your relationship with the college or its staff.

Not Upheld

- 6.25. If your complaint/review is not upheld, you will be given the reasons why in your outcome letter and that stage of the process will be closed. You may request a review of your stage two formal complaint outcome under stage three if you have grounds to do so. For review requests you can submit an external complaint to the [OIA](#) following the procedures below.
- 6.26. Not upheld complaints will not negatively affect your academic results or your relationship with the college or its staff.

Out of time

- 6.27. If your complaint/review is considered out of time this means that your complaint/review was submitted outside the [timeframe](#) submission deadline, and you did not have a suitable reason for doing so.
- 6.28. You may request a review of your stage two formal complaint outcome under stage three if you have grounds to do so. For review requests you can submit an external complaint to the [OIA](#) following the procedures below.

Complaints Procedure

Stage One: Informal Stage

- 7.1. In many cases the concerns you raise can be resolved with an immediate explanation and/or solution at local level. Therefore, we recommend that you raise your concerns with the appropriate member of staff in the first instance, if possible, to allow the issue to be resolved informally.
- 7.2. We encourage students to share any concerns as soon as possible to allow for a swift resolution which may reduce the impact on others and allow for the issue to be resolved informally. An informal complaint should be raised within 10 working days of the incident/issue occurring.
- 7.3. An informal complaint should include details regarding the event or issue. These concerns may be raised via multiple channels to a relevant member of staff by:
 - Having a face-to-face conversation,
 - Initiating a phone conversation,
 - Sending a message via Microsoft Teams,
 - Email correspondence.
- 7.4. The HE Quality Officer will create a record of your informal complaint in partnership with the member of staff you raised the informal complaint with and will acknowledge your informal complaint within 3 working days.
- 7.5. The HE Quality Officer will send an email to your college email address in response to your concerns within 7 working days of the matter being raised.
- 7.6. If you feel that the informal stage has not addressed your concerns and you feel you have grounds to do so, you can submit a formal complaint under stage two within 10 working days of the informal complaint outcome.

Stage Two: Formal Stage

- 7.7. If you were unable to resolve your complaint informally or your complaint is considered too serious for informal resolution, you can submit a formal complaint using the [complaints form](#) and send this to the HE Quality Officer at hequality@tameside.ac.uk. The form should be submitted within 20 working days of

the incident/issue or within 10 working days of the informal complaint outcome, whichever is later.

- 7.8. Once your complaint has been received the HE Quality Officer will send you an acknowledgement to the email address given on the [complaints form](#) within 3 working days.
- 7.9. Your complaint should be completed in full and give an accurate summary of why you are complaining and be accompanied by evidence that supports your complaint.
- 7.10. A full investigation will be conducted by a nominated college manager who will act as the investigator for your complaint.
- 7.11. During the investigation all parties involved in the complaint will be given an equal opportunity to present their case. If you are invited to a meeting, you will be able to bring an [advocate](#) with you for support. During any meeting all parties are expected to act reasonably and fairly towards each other and to treat the process with respect.
- 7.12. All information gathered during the investigation will be reviewed by the investigator and the Assistant Principal and a decision will be based on this evidence. Once the outcome has been agreed you will receive an outcome letter via email that will set out:
 - How the complaint was investigated,
 - The evidence that was reviewed,
 - How the conclusion was reached, and
 - If appropriate, the steps we will take to put matters right.
- 7.13. Based on the gathered evidence and policy considerations, the investigator will make a recommendation regarding your complaint to the Assistant Principal for consideration. The outcome of these considerations, along with a detailed explanation of the decision, rationale, and any actions to be taken will be sent to you via the email address given on your [complaint form](#) within 20 working days of receiving the formal complaint.
- 7.14. If the complaint cannot be investigated within this period, the HE Quality Officer will contact you via email to explain what action is being taken and provide an estimated timeframe of when you will receive a full response.

Stage Three: Review Stage (HE Tameside Students)

- 7.15. If you are unsatisfied with the conclusion of your complaint, you have the right to submit a review request of the complaint outcome by email to the HE Quality Officer at hequality@tameside.ac.uk. (**Please note** that if you are an OU Partnership student and your complaint is regarding [academic standards](#) you should refer to the [OU Review stage](#) below.)
- 7.16. You should ensure that your review request is submitted within 10 working days of the stage two outcome and your request should include evidence of one or more of the grounds given below:
- A review of the procedures followed at the formal stage.
 - A consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable.
 - new evidence that could make a difference to the outcome and which you could not reasonably have provided earlier in the process.
- 7.17. Your review request will be acknowledged by the HE Quality Officer within 2 working days of receipt.
- 7.18. The review will not reconsider the original complaint, it will only consider how the complaint was investigated if procedures were followed correctly and if the conclusion reached was reasonable. The original complaint will only be reconsidered if there is new material information provided at the review stage, that could not have been submitted previously (an evidenced reason will need to be given to why it was not put forward in the original case).
- 7.19. The review will be conducted by an independent member of the Senior Leadership Team (reviewer) and invite you to attend a complaint review meeting. You will be given the opportunity in this meeting to put forward your review case. The reviewer will then consider your case and provide an outcome within 10 working days of the meeting to the email provided on your complaint form.
- 7.20. If your review is not upheld your outcome letter will include a completion of procedures information which will conclude the college's complaints procedures (see [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education \(OIA\)](#) section below).
- 7.21. If your review is upheld the reviewer will detail the next steps we will take to put things right in your outcome letter.

Stage Three: Review Stage (Open University Partner Students)

- 7.22. If you are a student studying in partnership with the Open University (OU) and your complaint is related to [academic standards](#), you should submit your review request directly to the OU if you meet the grounds to do so. Your request should be submitted as soon as possible and within 28 calendar days of receiving your stage two outcome to [OU Student Casework Office](#) or by post to The Vice-Chancellor's Delegate, Academic Services, Student Casework Office, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.
- 7.23. **Please note:** If your complaint is related to matters outside academic standards, e.g., a complaint about college facilities or your teacher, you should submit your stage three review request to the college as above ([Stage Three: Review Stage \(HE Tameside Students\)](#)).
- 7.24. You can only request that the OU reviews your complaint if all the following are true:
- You have a legitimate complaint about a service, or lack of service for which your institution is responsible, and this impacts directly and substantively on the academic standards of the OU validated programme on which you are studying. It must relate to a service that you were led to expect would be provided, or an aspect of your access to learning or learning experience with the OU which does not relate to an academic decision.
- and
- You can demonstrate that you have exhausted all appropriate internal procedures open to you at Tameside College.
- and
- That Tameside College's internal procedures and regulations for dealing with complaints were not interpreted or implemented correctly or fairly.
- or

- That the matter has not been properly addressed by Tameside College's own internal procedures.
- 7.25. The [OU Student Casework Office](#) will contact you within 10 working days of this request being received to inform you if your review request is eligible to be considered for review.
- 7.26. For full details of the process and what the OU will consider please refer to [OU Handbook for Validated Awards](#) under Appendix 1: Student Complaints and Appeals Procedures (p149). If the OU considers that you have grounds for a review, they will consider your case within 40 working days of when the submission was received.

[Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education \(OIA\)](#)

- 7.27. Once you have completed all the internal procedures if you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may be able to apply for a review of the matter to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education](#) (OIA).
- 7.28. You will normally need to have completed the complaints procedures before you complain to the OIA (all three stages of the process). If your review (stage three) is not upheld, we will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter automatically. If your appeal is upheld or partly upheld, you can ask for a Completion of Procedures Letter if you would like one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one on the [OIA website: Completion of Procedures letters](#).
- 7.29. If you are studying in partnership with the OU and you have submitted your review to the OU because your complaint related to academic standards, you will receive your completion of procedures letter from the OU and not from Tameside College.**
- 7.30. You must make your complaint to the OIA within 12 months of completing the complaints procedures. The 12-month period will begin from the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.

[Review and Monitoring](#)

- 8.1. We are committed to ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of our complaints policy. Therefore, a systematic and annual review process has been established to

assess the policy's performance. The frequency of these reviews, conducted by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), will be determined to align with the college's needs, OIA and other external bodies best practices. These reviews will take into account feedback from stakeholders, changes in legal requirements, and emerging trends in academic administration.

- 8.2. Stakeholder feedback is integral to the continuous improvement of the complaints process. A structured feedback mechanism will be in place to gather insights from students, staff, university partners and administrators involved in the complaints process. Feedback surveys, focus group discussions, and other methods will be utilised to collect input. The results of these feedback mechanisms will be analysed to identify areas of strength and improvement, guiding adjustments to the policy and its procedures.
- 8.3. To enhance transparency and accountability, we will implement a robust data analysis and reporting system related to complaints. The HE Quality team will compile and analyse anonymised data regarding the frequency, types, and outcomes of appeals (no personal data will be used for these reports). Regular reports will be generated and shared with the SLT, College Corporation and other relevant committees, providing insights into trends, areas of concern, and the overall effectiveness of the complaints process. This data-driven approach will inform future policy revisions and interventions to better support students and maintain fairness in decision-making.
- 8.4. Based on the outcomes of reviews, stakeholder feedback, and data analysis, the institution reserves the right to revise the complaints policy. Proposed revisions will undergo a thorough consultation process involving representatives from teaching staff, administration, and student bodies to ensure broad input. The revised policy will be disseminated widely to the academic community, and any significant changes will be communicated well in advance. This iterative process of review, feedback, and revision aims to create a dynamic and responsive complaints policy that aligns with the evolving needs of the college and its students.
- 8.5. This policy and procedure are available on our website under the [Policy and Procedures page](#) and is reference in our [Terms and Conditions and Student Handbook](#).

Confidentiality & Record Keeping

- 9.1. We are committed to upholding the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved in the complaints process. In line with our [Privacy policy and Data Protection Policy](#) all information related to complaints, including written statements, evidence, and decisions, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Only individuals directly involved in the complaints process, such as the teachers or Programme Lead, investigators, Reviewers, and relevant administrative staff, will have access to this information.
- 9.2. Accurate and comprehensive record-keeping procedures have been established to document all aspects of the complaints process. This includes the submission of complaints, communication between parties, decisions, and any supporting documentation. Records will be securely maintained by the HE Quality Officer and be stored on secure servers with restricted access, and physical records will be stored in a secure location. At the end of the designated retention period, records will be disposed of securely and in accordance with our [Data Retention Policy](#). Access to these records will be restricted to authorised personnel involved in the administration of the complaints process.
- 9.3. You have the right to access all the information presented in your complaint investigation and this will be given to you upon the completion of stage two and stage three alongside your outcome letter.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion statement

- 10.1. At the core of our institution's complaints policy is a steadfast commitment to fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion in full accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#). We are dedicated to eliminating discrimination, advancing equal opportunities, and fostering an inclusive environment for all members of our college community. This commitment extends to every aspect of our complaints process, ensuring that it adheres to the legal obligations outlined in the [Equality Act 2010](#).
- 10.2. Policies are inclusive of all Tameside College Students, Learners, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience,

disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, or trades union membership status.

Related documents

[Data Protection Act 2018](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Data Retention Policy](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[HE Academic Appeals Policy & Procedure](#)

[HE Acceptable Behaviour Policy](#)

[HE Term and Conditions](#)

[OU Handbook for Validate Award](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Concerns Complaints and Complaints](#)

[Student Handbook](#)

[Student Voice](#)

[Students - OIAHE](#) : Office of the Independent Adjudicator information

Glossary

This glossary provides a reference for key terms used in the context of a Higher Education Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Academic Standards: Complaints about academic standards involve concerns relating to curriculum quality, assessment methods or any other aspect of the academic experience that may have affected your academic progress. This **does not** include the competencies of your tutors.

Advocate: An advocate for an internal college process is a person who supports and represents the interests of the student in the college's internal procedures. This advocate can be a fellow student, member of staff or family member.

Complaint: A formal expression of dissatisfaction or discontent lodged by a student concerning an aspect of the educational experience or institutional procedures.

Formal Complaint: A written, structured document submitted by a student or stakeholder to initiate the official complaints process, typically involving specific details, evidence, and a request for resolution.

HE Quality Team: A dedicated team within the institution responsible for overseeing and managing the quality of education, including the handling of complaints.

Informal Resolution: The initial stage of addressing concerns through open dialogue and informal channels before escalating to a formal complaint.

Investigation: A systematic and formal examination of a complaint, involving the gathering of evidence, interviews, and a review of relevant information to determine the facts and reach a resolution.

Investigator: A designated individual responsible for gathering relevant information, conducting interviews, and assessing the facts surrounding the complaint. The investigator plays a crucial role in ensuring a comprehensive and impartial review of the complaint case.

Legal Representation: College internal processes are typically administrative proceedings conducted within the college. Unlike formal legal proceedings, these internal processes are governed by the college's policies and procedures rather than by the legal system. While students can seek support from an advocate who is knowledgeable about the college's policies, legal representation is generally not part of the process.

OIA (Office of the Independent Adjudicator): An independent body in England and Wales that reviews and adjudicates on complaints from higher education students after internal procedures have been exhausted.

QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) UK Quality Code: A set of expectations and guidelines outlining the academic standards and quality expected from higher education institutions in the UK.

Procedural Error: An error in the process followed during the initial decision-making, which may be cited as a basis for an appeal.

Review Stage: The stage in the complaints process that allows the complainant to seek a review of the outcome if they are dissatisfied with the initial resolution.

Stakeholder: An individual or group with a vested interest in the institution, including students, staff, faculty, and other relevant parties.

Student Wellbeing Team: A support team within the institution that provides assistance to students facing personal challenges and ensures their well-being throughout their academic journey.

Timeframes: Specific periods within which certain actions or responses are expected to occur during the complaints process.

Validation Awards: Accreditation or approval granted by a validating body to an institution or program, ensuring that it meets specified academic standards.

Working Days: Days within a week excluding weekends and public holidays, often used to measure timeframes in the complaints process.

Reviewer: An independent member of the Senior Leadership Team responsible for conducting a review of the complaint outcome during the review stage.

Appendix 1: Partnership University Complaint Procedures

If you are studying with one of our University Partners, please refer to their Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures below:

Course code	University	Link to regulations	Section
MHF018MQ MHF019MQ MHF020MQ MHF021MQ	Huddersfield	Student complaints procedure - University of Huddersfield	13
MHF009MQ MHF017MQ MHF021MQ	Chester	Student Complaints about the University Student Support and Wellbeing University of Chester	