



Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Aims & objectives

The aim of this student complaints policy (the '**Policy**') is to provide an opportunity for anyone who is or was recently registered as a student at LMA ('**you/your**') to resolve complaints covered by this Policy.

The objective of this Policy is to ensure that student complaints are dealt with fairly and appropriately, by providing clear and accessible information both to staff and students on how the student(s) concerned can make their views known and receive an appropriate response. All complaints will be managed with a regard to confidentiality as appropriate and in accordance with LMA's Data Protection Policy.

At LMA our aim is to support you to achieve your potential. We are fully committed to creating a learning environment which is both supportive and based on real-world industry experience and expectations. We will deliver diverse and enriching opportunities for our students. This means we set high standards and expectations for our students and ourselves. Our hope is that nothing goes wrong, but if it does, we will do all we can to put it right.

We strongly encourage you to communicate with us in relation to what is working and to let us know if you think things aren't going well. In response to that, we will listen to your views and work to understand what is happening. We will do our best to resolve matters at this informal stage. You can speak with your Head of Year, or your Head of Department or a member of the Student Services team. Alternatively, you can talk to your Student Course Rep who can raise any issues, on your behalf, at the LMA Staff Student Liaison Committee Meetings. If, however, you do need to formally complain, you should inform us before the relevant deadline set out in the procedure, and provide supporting evidence. If we can learn from a complaint, to improve the student experience for others, we will.

Who does this Policy apply to?

This Policy applies to all students at LMA.

The term 'student' refers to individuals who are currently studying with LMA, those who are provisionally enrolled on a programme of study offered by LMA as well as those who have left LMA within the last three months.

All staff and students at LMA are expected to be responsible for implementing this Policy.

Types of complaint covered by this Policy

For the purposes of this Policy, the term 'complaint' means an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about LMA's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of LMA.

This Policy covers complaints relating to:

- the quality or standard of any academic or non-academic service provided and delivered by LMA including teaching, any programme of study, or student experience at LMA, and relationships with academic, administrative staff and or support staff. Examples of such complaints can be found in Appendix 1;
- any failure by us to provide a service;
- the application of our regulations and policies, including any administrative or academic processes;
- the behaviour of or any unfair treatment by any member of staff;
- any misleading or incorrect information in our promotional material or other material provided by us; and

- complaints concerning other organisations or contractors providing a service on our behalf.

Matters not covered by this Policy

This Policy does not cover:

- complaints about other students. These in the first instance should be directed to the Head of Department in which the complaining student is studying. Further information about complaints of bullying and harassment by other students can be found in our Student Behaviour Policy, Student Disciplinary Policy and Student Code of Conduct;
- extenuating circumstances applications and academic appeals;
- matters pertaining to employment with LMA or any other matters concerning human resources;
- the provision or quality of services offered by third parties not provided on LMA's behalf;
- a request for information or an explanation of LMA's policies or procedures;
- providing informal feedback (which in the first instance, should be given to your Head of Year or Head of Department .
- making a routine, first time request for a service (which in the first instance, should be given to your head of year or head of department ;
- an FOI request or any request under Data Protection legislation (please refer to our Freedom of Information Policy and Data Protection Policy);
- complaints from anonymous individuals or un-attributable sources;
- an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal; and
- allegations of criminal activity or criminal intent. These allegations will immediately be referred to the Head of Student Services and the Police.

If you are unsure as to whether this Policy covers your complaint, please contact the Principal of the Campus where you are studying.

Who can make a complaint?

Any student can make a complaint.

However, we understand that there may be instances where a student is unable or reluctant to make a complaint without support. We therefore permit students to be represented by third parties. LMA will not accept complaints from third parties unless they are acting as a student's representative.

Anonymous complaints will not be considered under this Policy.

Difference between complaints and academic appeals

An Academic Appeal is defined as a request for a review of an academic decision by LMA.

This Policy cannot be used to challenge any decision relating to academic judgement, such as admissions, appealing an awarded mark; progression or final award. Students wishing to do so must follow the Academic Appeal process and the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy of the relevant validating partner University.

If your complaint raises issues that do not fall neatly into the category of complaint or academic appeal due to multiple or overlapping issues, we will work with you to consider the most

appropriate procedure for you to use. In such a case, please speak to the Principal of the campus] in the first instance.

Guiding principles

This Policy is concerned primarily with the student experience and ensuring the appropriate frameworks are in place to achieve a high quality experience for our students. It also seeks to aid staff by setting out clearly defined processes and procedures, which are both transparent and fair. In investigating a complaint we will adhere as closely as reasonably possible to the following guiding principles:

- complaints should, as far as possible, be resolved early, locally, and informally;
- complaints will be dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner and in line with our policies;
- throughout the process, the focus will be on resolving issues not apportioning blame;
- the investigation, and evidence required, will be proportionate to the issues raised;
- complaints will be monitored and reported on to understand, where possible, the root causes;
- where an investigation identifies problems in our services, we will take steps to prevent any recurrence;
- complaints are managed by a team who will ensure that someone outside of the complainant's course will consider their circumstances, making sure decisions are independent and fair. We understand that it may be difficult to talk about personal circumstances. However, the only people we will share the complaint with are those considering the case;
- staff who investigate complaints must not have been involved in the matters leading to the complaint and must be free from actual or perceived conflicts of interest. An independent investigator will be appointed if appropriate;
- we will expect you to be respectful and honest when making a complaint and we will treat you in the same way;
- you will not be victimised, discriminated against, and should not suffer any disadvantage or reprisals for making a complaint in good faith, and any evidence of recrimination should be brought immediately to the attention of the Head of Student Services;
- repeatedly making the same complaint or knowingly making a complaint which is without merit, or is malicious, is not acceptable. Nor is using rude or abusive language. If, however, a complaint is judged to be malicious or vexatious, the student concerned may be subject to disciplinary procedures. If it is not possible and/or appropriate to deal with the issue at a local level then the member of staff to which the complaint is made may recommend the complaint proceed directly to the formal stage of the complaints procedure (stage 2) outlined below. Only complaints submitted using the Student Complaints Form will be dealt with as formal complaints;
- we may refuse to investigate or to suspend any investigation underway in circumstances where police, legal, court or tribunal proceedings have been initiated in relation to the issues raised in the complaint. Similarly, if there are allegations of a criminal offence, we may refer the matter to the police and suspend our own proceedings until the outcome of any police investigation or criminal proceedings are known, other than where we deem it appropriate to act in the interests of the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and third parties, including visitors;
- Normally complaints must be made within [two weeks] of the issue arising or becoming aware of a reason to complain;

- appropriate information must be given and collected in relation to any complaint and all parties involved must be receptive to requests for further information where necessary. For this reason, we cannot investigate any complaints submitted anonymously; and
- We recognise that making a complaint can be difficult, stressful, and that it requires courage to discuss personal circumstances. For this reason, we advise that you seek advice and support before making a complaint and during the complaints process from a student services advisor. .

Group complaints

A group of students may use the procedure outlined below to make a collective complaint provided that one student identifies themselves as the lead contact and provides contact details for purposes of communication.

It should be noted that a group complaint does not mean all students within the group of complainants will receive the same outcome as a result of the complaint. Any student wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to do so personally.

Reporting, record-keeping, and confidentiality

The consideration and resolution of complaints can provide us with valuable feedback to improve the provision of our services. We therefore keep records of the complaint submission, investigation, outcome, appeal, and any review for three years.

The Head of Student Services will maintain a Complaints Log of all cases brought under Stages 2 and 3 of this Policy and will file an annual report to the LMA Academic Board on:

- the number, type (stage 2 or 3) and the department or service the complaint is about;
- the outcomes of the complaints; and
- any recommendations for amendment to the Policy and procedures.

Where possible, data will be anonymised for reporting purposes so that students are not identifiable. Where it is not possible to record information about a complaint without identifying a student, care will be taken to ensure that only the bare minimum of information is recorded.

If information is shared with us which we are obliged to share due to our Safeguarding Policy or any other legal or regulatory requirement, we will do so.

Information received during the investigation will remain confidential to those involved in the process and those who may need to be consulted in order to reach an outcome. No third party should be told any more than is reasonably necessary to obtain the information required from them. Where a complaint is about a member of staff, details will need to be shared with them to give the staff member the right to respond. If a complaint against a member of staff is upheld, you will be advised of this but we will not share specific personal details affecting individual members of staff, particularly when disciplinary action has been taken.

You are also asked to adhere to an appropriate level of confidentiality until the complaints procedure has concluded.

Process and procedure

Stages of Complaint

Stage		LMA will aim to resolve complaints within:
1	Informal Resolution	2 weeks
2	Formal Review	5 weeks
3	Appeal	3 weeks

In exceptional circumstances we may extend the deadlines outlined above provided that there are clear and justifiable reasons for doing so. In such cases the student will be notified of the extension in writing by LMA which will provide a revised deadline for resolution. LMA is committed to ensuring that all complaints are resolved to completion within 90 days of the initial complaint being received if all stages are required.

Complaints should always start at Stage 1, wherever possible. At all stages of the complaints process, you are encouraged to keep a record of action taken to resolve the complaint and keep copies of any relevant correspondence. All complaints will be regarded as informal until a Student Complaints Form (Appendix 2) has been received by Student Services.

If a student making a complaint has a Student Support Agreement and requires any reasonable adjustments to be made during the complaints process, please contact the Head of Student Services.

Making a complaint

The different stages of the complaints procedure are outlined below. .

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Where possible, we expect you to try to resolve complaints directly, informally and quickly with the person concerned.

In a minority of cases, it may be more appropriate for you to contact your Head of Year, or the Head of Department or Student Services, which will initiate Stage 1 of the complaints procedure.

If you are unsure who you should contact to make a Stage 1 complaint, you should seek guidance from the Principal of your Campus who will be able to advise who is the most appropriate recipient of the complaint in the circumstances.

Complaints at Stage 1 may be made in writing (including via email) or by raising the complaint in person.

All complaints should be made within two weeks of the perceived unsatisfactory circumstances occurring. LMA reserves the right not to progress any complaint which is submitted outside of this deadline.

The student is expected to explain clearly what the problem is and what outcome they are seeking, and the member of staff is expected to listen to the complaint.

Staff dealing with complaints are encouraged, whenever practical, to meet with the student to establish the precise cause of dissatisfaction, to explore the remedy sought by the student and to foster a mutual understanding of the issues involved.

Complaints will, as far as is reasonable, be treated confidentially. Although the complaint is considered to be informal at this stage, the member of staff will take reasonable action to remove the cause of the

complaint and prevent recurrence. It may be, however, that further discussion about the overarching principles of a complaint is required in meetings or committees before the matter can be resolved.

Specific details of complaints or complainants will not be discussed at such meetings.

Where appropriate and proportionate to do so, we will write to you setting out the outcome of our discussions.

Informal complaints will be logged as part of LMA's continuous monitoring and improvement process.

It is expected that most complaints will be resolved at this informal stage. However, if the issue or problem cannot be resolved informally in this way, the student will need to move to Stage 2 of the complaint process.

Stage 2: Formal Review

Where Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Procedure does not provide a satisfactory outcome, you can make a formal complaint within 1 month of the completion of the Stage 1 procedure (or where there is a reason why Stage 1 could not be followed, within 1 month of the event in question taking place). In exceptional circumstances LMA may, at its discretion, process complaints received outside of this time. Complaints or supporting documentation submitted outside of this timeframe should be accompanied by an explanation as to the reason for the delay.

In such cases, you must complete a Student Complaints Form (Appendix 2) to set out:

- what your complaint is;
- what the supporting evidence is;
- why informal resolution of the complaint was unsuccessful; and
- what outcome(s) you are hoping to achieve.

Supporting evidence must be submitted with every complaint form. This may include signed witness statements, letters, emails and any other relevant information. Upon completion, the form should be submitted to student.services@lma.ac.uk

Student Services will only review complaints submitted using the Student Complaints Form, which should be submitted within one month of notification of the outcome of Stage 1. If the form does not set out clearly and with reasonable brevity the points indicated above, you will be asked to resubmit the form within 5 working days, in a manner that enables proper consideration of the complaint to take place.

Student Services will acknowledge receipt of the Student Complaints Form within 5 working days. Student Services will then review the form to determine whether the issue is covered by this Policy, or whether you should be referred to a different policy or procedure.

If Student Services believe that there are valid grounds for a complaint under this Policy and appropriate supporting evidence has been submitted, the complaint will be added to the Complaints Log, and a record stored of the complaint.

A complaint without adequate grounds and/or evidence or that is incomplete will be returned to the complainant for clarification. Once the complaint has been added to the Complaints Log, Student Services will refer the complaint to a designated Investigating Officer who is not connected to the department to which the complaint relates, who will then investigate the matter.

The Investigation:

The Investigating Officer will make reasonable inquiries to establish the facts of the case. Prior to any investigative meetings, it will be made clear to any person whose cooperation is sought that questions,

answers, comments, or the production of documents, relate to an investigation into a formal complaint (Appendix 3).

Any student or member of staff participating in an investigation arising under this procedure has the right to be accompanied by:

- Students - Student representative, parent, friend or disability advocate
- Staff - Trade Union or professional association representative or work colleague

The Investigating Officer must keep Student Services updated at all stages of the investigation. The Investigating Officer will be advised through the process by Student Services where necessary. The investigation and its outcome will be fair and reasonable. If the Investigating Officer decides to uphold the student's complaint, they will confirm this with their investigation report to the Student Complaints Panel who will then decide any action they deem reasonable and appropriate to resolve the complaint, bearing in mind the outcome(s) sought by the student.

The Chair of the Student Complaints Panel will write to the complainant to confirm the outcome of the investigation and inform Student Services, where the outcome can be logged.

Membership of the Complaint Panel:

- Head of Student Services (Chair)
- Senior academic member of staff
- Senior manager from Professional Services
- Student representative
- Minute taker

Where the upheld complaint either expressly or by implication infers incompetence or misconduct by a member of staff, then the matter may be referred to the Principal (London or Liverpool) for investigation. Under the staff disciplinary procedure, the findings of the complaint investigation will not constitute statements of fact, but merely evidence in that investigation. You will be informed of the next stage of the Student Complaints Procedure if your complaint is not upheld or if you feel that the resolution of your complaint is not satisfactory.

The written reply will be sent by the Chair of the Complaints Panel within 5 weeks of receipt of the Student Complaints Form (Appendix 2). In exceptional circumstances, if it is envisaged that the investigation will take longer than 5 weeks, the student will be informed by the Investigating Officer of the reason and an expected date of response.

Complainants, and individuals named in complaints, can request an update of the progress of the complaint at all stages by contacting the Investigating Officer who is leading the investigation.

Stage 3: Referral to the Complaints Procedure of the Validating Partner

Where you believe that the complaints procedures has not been followed correctly or new evidence has been produced that was not considered as part of the original complaint or your complaint has not been appropriately addressed, or the decision regarding the outcome of your complaint is unreasonable, you have the right to refer your complaint to the relevant University who validates your degree. If your degree is validated by the University of Northampton you need to refer to their complaints and appeals process which can be found [here](#). If your degree is validated by Staffordshire University you need to refer to their complaints process which can be found [here](#). When making the appeal via their mechanisms you need to clearly state that you have followed the complaints process at LMA but you are not satisfied with the

outcome. They will then follow the relevant processes for investigating the complaint as outlined in their processes.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Once a formal "Completion of Procedures" letter has been issued by the relevant validating University, if you feel your complaint is still not resolved or that the outcome is unreasonable in relation to the evidence, you may raise your complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA is an independent body that operates externally to LMA and the validating partners. It will not normally look at a complaint until all relevant internal procedures have been exhausted. It should be noted that the role of the OIA is to review the final decision of LMA and the validating Universities; it is not to re-investigate the complaint. Further information is available from the OIA website <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

The Head of Student Services will be notified by the Registry of all complaints referred to the OIA. The Head of Student Services will update the Complaints Log and record accordingly.

Measurement of the Policy's success

The annual number of complaints and appeals reaching Stages 2 and 3 of the Student Complaints Process will be used as a measure of the Policy's success.

Data Protection

By submitting a signed Student Complaint Form, you agree that LMA can process the information it contains for all purposes relating to this Policy and to its application to LMA. Information will be stored and processed in accordance with LMA's Data Protection Policy. It may be disclosed to members of LMA staff where necessary to resolve the investigation and will be stored as part of your application to LMA.

Accessibility

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact Hannah Talbot, Head of Student Services the Disability Officer on 0151 909 9000 or hannah.talbot@lma.ac.uk.

Further information

You may consult Jenni Tyler Maher jenni.tyler-maher@lma.ac.uk (London Principal) / Kevin Sutherland kevin.sutherland@lma.ac.uk (Liverpool Principal) for guidance on this Policy.



Appendix 1

Examples of student complaints

All student complaints should initially be addressed under the informal stage of the Student Complaints Procedure.

The following are examples of complaints that may need to move to the formal stage of the procedure:

- Failure by LMA to meet obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks;
- Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by LMA;
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration;
- Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by LMA; and
- A student with an identified disability is not offered appropriate alternative assessments.



Appendix 2
Student complaint form

First Name

Last Name

Student Number

Address

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City

County

Postcode

Phone number

Email

Date

Nature of complaint

Please set out the key points and summary of your appeal or complaint.

Do you consider this to have been a hate incident?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you selected 'yes' to the above question, please indicate what the incident was related to:

☐ Age

☐ Gender

☐ Race

☐ Disability

☐ Sexual orientation

☐ Religion

☐ Other

If other please state:

Action taken so far

Please set out why you are not satisfied with the outcome of your application decision or are dissatisfied with the response you have received to your formal complaint, attaching any relevant correspondence in support.

Remedy you are seeking

Please set out what remedy or action you would like to see taken and why you consider this remedy or action is appropriate.

Supporting documentation

This may include signed witness statements, letters, emails and any other relevant information. Please state the length of each item of evidence (e.g. number of pages).



Appendix 3

Complaints investigation report: to be completed by the Investigating Officer (please refer to guidelines in Appendix 5)

Report into the Complaint of:

Investigating Officer:

Date of the Report:

Summary of the Complaint:

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Information Gathered: summary of meetings held, notes to be attached

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Meetings Held:

Meeting With:	Date:	Notes Appended:
		Yes/No
		Yes/No
		Yes/No

Conclusions: to support proposed outcome

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The Proposed Outcome form must now be completed by the Investigating Officer and emailed to the Head of Student Services @ LMA along with any notes taken during the process.



Appendix 4

Proposed outcome: to be completed by the Investigating Officer (please refer to guidelines in Appendix 5)

Proposed Outcome:

Practical Outcome:

I can confirm that this is an accurate record of my investigation and I consent for the report to be made available to the complainant/s.

Signed:

Date:

Please return this completed form to: Head of Student Services - student.services@lma.ac.uk



Appendix 5

Guidelines for the investigation of formal complaints: a guide for Investigating Officers

These guidelines are intended to support staff to carry out proportionate, fair and transparent investigations into student concerns. The guidelines take account of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework on Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals (2016) and the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals (2018).

Investigating Officers should approach their role positively, seeing the investigation as an opportunity to put right anything which may have gone wrong and to build a positive relationship with the student.

Following the below principles will support staff to do this.

Objectivity

Investigating Officers should have no previous direct dealings with the complainant and should not be involved in the situation giving rise to the complaint. If a complaint is made about a member of staff, it is important that there is no direct relationship between the staff member complained about and the Investigating Officer, for example a line management relationship. Normally, the Investigating Officer will be a more senior role holder than the subject of the complaint.

Timescales

LMA seeks to resolve student concerns at the earliest opportunity because this maximises the potential for a successful resolution. Sometimes lengthy investigations can limit the scope for LMA to put things right, for example if an investigation goes beyond a progression point. Complaints investigations should not become a grievance in themselves so Investigating Officers will need to respond as quickly as possible and within the timescales outlined in this Policy.

Communication

The Investigating Officer will make an initial assessment of the complaint. In doing so they will normally meet with the complainant to fully understand the complaint and to explain the scope of the investigation. If the requested outcome is not practical or proportionate, the Investigating Officer should sensitively manage the student's expectations from this early stage. The Investigating Officer should also keep the complainant reasonably informed about progress in the investigation and likely timescales.

Fairness

The Investigating Officer should give the student reasonable notice (normally 5 working days) of any meeting, keeping in mind the overall timescales of the Complaints and Appeals Procedure. The complainant should be offered the opportunity to bring a representative along to the meeting. This is limited to a student representative, parent, friend or disability advocate. Should any member of staff be required to give evidence or respond to a complaint, again reasonable notice should be provided of any meeting, keeping in mind the overall timescales of the complaints procedure. The member of staff should be offered the opportunity to be accompanied to the meeting by a member of staff or trade union representative. Should the Investigating Officer determine that the member of staff will be required to comment on specific and substantiated allegations within the complaint, these should be sent to the

member of staff in advance of the meeting. It is acknowledged that some staff may find the process difficult and may experience some anxiety. Support is available through your line manager.

Transparency

Investigating Officers should keep a record of any meetings taking place, including the date of the meeting and those in attendance (Appendix 3). The record of the meeting does not have to be a word for word transcript but should contain sufficient detail to accurately capture the key points of the discussion. Any documentation which the Investigating Officer is relying on in reaching a conclusion should be retained and submitted with the report (Appendix 4). Any documentation arising from the investigation, could be requested by the student through a data protection subject access request, or by the OIA, and therefore should be professional and limited to the scope of the complaint.

Evidence-Based Decision Making

Any disputed or indeterminate facts should be considered by the Investigating Officer on the balance of probabilities. Any conclusions reached by the Investigating Officer should be reasonable in view of all of the circumstances. This means that Investigating Officers should not be selective in the facts that they refer to and should demonstrate that all of the issues have been considered. If the Investigating Officer is not able to reach a finding of fact on the balance of probability, the report should clearly state this, explaining the reason why.

The Investigation Report template (Appendix 3) guides the Investigating Officer to clearly document the process of their investigation, conclusions and recommended outcomes.

Creative and Student Focused Outcomes

Investigating Officers may recommend one or more outcomes to remedy a complaint. Complaint outcomes should be creative and student focused. They should aim, where possible, to return the student to the position they were in before the circumstances giving rise to the complaint. Outcomes should offer a practical way forward for the student and, if necessary, serve to rebuild the relationship between the student and department or service complained about.