



Treoirlínte do bhaill foirne Gearáin ó Mhic Léinn

Guidelines for Staff Student Complaints

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The following guidelines are here to assist members of staff through each step of the complaints process. A key principle of this procedure is that, in general, complaints are best dealt with at the most local level possible.

Please refer to the Student Complaints Procedure documents for further information.

Timeframes: Please note the timeframes specified for responding to students at each stage.

Supports: Being the subject of a complaint can be a stressful situation for a staff member. Maynooth University provides supports to staff available at [Employee Wellbeing | Maynooth University](#).

Complaints concerning the following can be dealt with under this process:

- Academic, administrative, or student support service processes or procedures.
- The standard or quality of services and facilities provided.
- Unfair treatment by the university or its staff.
- An alleged action or inaction by the university or a member of its staff



This procedure involves three tiers/steps to handle student issues and complaints. Guidelines are provided for each stage below:

[Step 1: Raising the issue informally at local level](#)

[Step 2: Making a formal complaint at department/school/unit level](#)

[Step 3: Making a formal complaint at university level](#)



Step 1: Raising the issue informally at local level

- If a student raises an issue with you please ensure firstly, that it falls within your remit and if it doesn't please refer them to the appropriate person or office. If you are unsure where to refer them, additional guidance can be sought by contacting your head of department or the student complaints officer.
- Please remember that most issues can be resolved at this initial stage if effective communication and engagement is made by both parties.
- Be conscious that students may raise issues either verbally or in writing.
- Please ensure to respond to the student(s) within **5 working days**. If it is not possible to provide a full response within this timeframe, you should acknowledge the concern in writing within 5 working days and explain when a full response will be provided.
- Acknowledge the issue raised by the student(s) and look at it from their point of view in order to understand how it may have impacted them.
- Be courteous towards the student(s) and attempt to find a reasonable solution to the issue raised in a professional and timely manner.
- Please maintain a written record of your attempts to find a resolution as these may be referred to if the issue is escalated to a formal complaint.
- If, having made attempts to resolve the issue, the student remains dissatisfied, please inform them that they may escalate their issue to a formal complaint. This complaint can be submitted to the relevant department, school or unit for consideration.

Step 2: Making a formal complaint at department/school/unit level

These guidelines are relevant to heads of departments/units who have received a formal complaint from a student. Please note that students may submit their complaint in writing or by completing a department/school/unit level complaint form.

- Please remember that student complaints provide the University with valuable feedback and provide us with the opportunity to make improvements to our processes for our student population.
- If you receive a formal complaint from a student or group of students please ensure that firstly, it falls within your department/school or unit's remit.
- If it does not fall within your remit, please refer the student to the correct university process. If you are unsure where to refer the student additional guidance can be provided by contacting the student complaints officer.
- Ask the student or group of students if they have raised their concerns at a local level with the person involved if applicable.
- If they have not, suggest that they do, if it seems viable.
- If they are not willing to raise it locally or have been unable to find a satisfactory resolution after attempting to do so, they can raise the complaint directly at department/unit level.
- If you receive a formal complaint that does fall within your remit, it should be acknowledged within 5 working days.
- The head of department/unit should ensure that there is no conflict of interest in handling this complaint. If they are the subject of the complaint, they should assign another appropriate person within the department/unit to handle the complaint.
- In most cases a full response to the complaint should be provided to the student within 30 working days of receipt of the complaint. In cases where it is not possible to provide a response within this timeframe, an update should be provided to the student within 30 working days and to explain why a full response is not yet available. Further updates should be provided to the student at 20 working day intervals at most.
- Please give the complaint careful consideration and be respectful towards the student/student's point of view and attempt to find an appropriate resolution.
- If it is found that the complaint was justified, please seek appropriate measures to rectify the matter.
- The Office of the Ombudsman provides a guide on the provision of redress for public bodies: [Guide To The Provision Of Redress | Ombudsman.ie | The Office Of The Ombudsman](#)
- If the department/unit has done everything it can and the student or group of students are not satisfied with the outcome, please refer them to the student complaints procedure where they have the option of escalating their complaint at university level.

Step 3: Making a formal complaint at university level

Complaints at this level will be submitted by the student/students directly to the student complaints officer.

- If a complaint is received at this level and falls within its scope, the student complaints officer will ensure that reasonable efforts have been made to resolve the issue at Steps 1 and 2.
- The student complaints officer may be able to resolve the matter or may refer it to another university process if appropriate.
- The university will seek a written response from the person or unit that is a subject of the complaint.
- Additional information will be sought from other relevant sources if available.
- Where the complaint cannot be easily resolved, it will then be summarised and along with the original complaint and supporting material provided, be presented to the complaints committee for consideration.
- While the process is primarily paper based on written submissions, the committee may request an in-person meeting with either or both parties at its discretion.
- If invited to attend an in-person meeting, staff may instead choose to provide written answers. However, in-person may assist the committee in determining the credibility of evidence, and failure to present at an in-person meeting may weaken the credibility of a case.
- Frivolous and vexatious complaints will be rejected by the student complaints officer.
- Complaints deemed malicious by the complaints committee may be referred to the student discipline process of the university.
- The complaints procedure is a mechanism to consider complaints, decide on their merit, and make recommendations about actions. It is not a disciplinary process and is not empowered to take disciplinary action relating to staff or students. Where matters emerge that may merit disciplinary action, the student complaints process may refer these matters to the appropriate staff or student disciplinary process.
- The committee will determine whether the complaint should be upheld (wholly or in part), not upheld or unable to make a determination due to insufficient evidence. The determination of the committee will be communicated to the student/group of students who made the complaint, the staff member or members who were the subject of the complaint, the relevant head of dept/unit and the University Executive.
- Where actions are recommended by the complaints committee, the implementation of these will normally be the responsibility of the relevant head of dept/unit. However, the committee should be informed of the actions taken.
- If a student or staff member believes that there was a material breach of the process in the handling of a complaint by the student complaints officer or the complaints committee, the person may appeal the decision in writing to the Registrar. If the appeal is upheld, the Registrar will ask the complaints committee to review the matter again.

