

SECTION A10

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Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Trá Lí
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRALEE

Student Complaints Procedures

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Procedure 1 – Objectives

The objective of this procedure is to provide students with a user-friendly avenue through which to have complaints regarding the Institute, its employees or its students, or facilities addressed in a meaningful and constructive way.

The procedure is based on the principle that the favoured avenue for complaint resolution is informally between the individuals directly involved. It is also recognised that for a variety of reasons complaints may not always be resolvable in this way and will require mediation by third parties. The procedure provides a formal mechanism to address this eventuality.

In implementing this procedure the Institute Management is committed to ensuring that both the interests of students and those of staff are safeguarded. In particular, it is recognised as essential that:

- complaints from students are handled in all instances, in so far as is possible, in a co-operative rather than an adversarial way. Towards this end every effort will be made in each instance to arrive at a solution by consensus among the relevant parties.
- complaints are at all times handled in a sensitive and confidential manner, with due recognition of the personal implications for both students and members of staff involved.
- the reputations and professional integrity of members of staff of the Institute are protected from unsubstantiated complaints.
- prejudiced responses to complaints, by way of comment or otherwise, are avoided at all times particularly by those to whom formal complaints are made in the first instance.
- there be full disclosure to the staff members concerned of any records on complaints involving them maintained within the Institute.

- academic standards are safeguarded at all times from being undermined by any misuse or mishandling of the complaints procedure.
- the principles of natural justice are applied when dealing with complaints.
- there be full disclosure of any records maintained within the Institute of complaints involving staff members to the staff member concerned.

In the event that it is determined that a complaint is made which is unfounded and of malicious intent, the complainant will be referred to the Institute Disciplinary Committee, and may be liable to suspension, expulsion or such other penalty as the Disciplinary Committee has decided.

The Academic Council will review the operation of these procedures at the end of each academic year.

Procedure 2 – Summary of Types of Complaint

Category A - Subject

Type: subject difficulty; style/pace of delivery; textbooks; format/content of continuous assessments and subject examinations; facilities; coverage of syllabus; level of material covered; health and safety.

Origin: class representative(s).

Initially dealt with by: Lecturer.

Category B - Course

Type: general course issues; course workload; timetabling; course facilities (classroom, laboratory, workshop, library; computers); health & safety; textbooks; procedures, rules & guidelines for continuous assessment/assignment; course examinations; project scheduling.

Origin: class representative(s).

Initially dealt with by: Head of School/Department; Course Board.

Category C - Student Services

Type: general facilities; canteen; library; computer laboratories; parking; academic services; admissions; registration; examinations; grants; fees; administration of student support services; graduate placement; health centre; disability; access; chaplaincy; accommodation; sports; societies.

Origin: individual or Students' Union.

Initially dealt with by: Administration Officer (Student Services).

Category D1 - Personal (Student/Staff)

Type: poor attendance; inappropriate behaviour; drink/drugs; bias; discrimination; harassment (including sexual harassment and bullying).

Origin: individual or class representative(s) or Students' Union.

Initially dealt with by: Head of School/Department; Administration Officer (Student Services).

Category D2 - Personal (Student/Student)

Type: inappropriate behaviour; drink/drugs; bias; discrimination; harassment (including sexual harassment and bullying).

Origin: individual or class representative(s) or Students' Union.

Initially dealt with by: Administration Officer (Student Services).

Procedure 3 – Complaints Procedure

Category A - Subject

Type 1: textbook; format/content of continuous assessment and subject examinations; coverage of syllabus; level of material covered.

Type 2: facilities; health and safety.

Type 3: perceived subject difficulty; style/pace of delivery.

Origin: Class representative(s).

Initially dealt with by: Lecturer.

Note 1: A student who experiences difficulty with a subject on an individual basis is not the subject matter of a complaint. Such matters are dealt with in the normal way through discussion with lecturer/tutorial support/other student services supports.

Note 2: This procedure is not to be used where a student has a disagreement in relation to his/her continuous assessment result. The Examination Recheck/Review procedure is to be used in such cases.

1. The class representative(s) will request a meeting with the lecturer to discuss the matter. This meeting which should normally be arranged within three working days. It is the responsibility of the class representative(s) to ensure that matters are raised with the lecturer as soon as possible.

The meeting should be constructive, with a view to resolving the matter.

2. Where a resolution is not possible the class representative(s) will arrange a meeting with the Head of School/Department through the School Secretary, and submit the complaint in writing to the Head of School/Department.

The Head of School/Department will normally arrange meetings within three working days to discuss the matter informally with the class representative(s) and staff member separately. The discussions should be constructive with a view to resolving the issue. The Head of School/Department may initiate a series of such meetings with the lecturer and class representative(s) in an effort to resolve the issue satisfactorily. Such meetings should normally be completed within ten working days.

Reference should be made to the course documentation as part of this process.

Both class representative and staff member may elect to have their Union representative present at such meetings.

The Head of School/Department should retain records of such meetings, agreed and signed, by both parties and which may be made available to either party on request.

3. Where a resolution is not possible, the following procedure shall apply in order to reach consensus on the matter, and should normally be completed within ten working days.

- ***Type 1:***

The Head of School/Department and Lecturer will meet with a view to referring the matter to an agreed third party for consideration. The third party shall be one of:

–Head of School/Department

–another Lecturer

–an Extern Examiner

taking into account the competence of those involved to deal with the subject matter of the complaint where agreement on a third party is not possible, an Extern Examiner shall be used. The Lecturer shall consult with the third party with a view to arriving at an agreed solution. Where agreement is not possible, the matter shall be referred to the Student Complaints Appeals Board (see Appendix 2) for decision.

- **Type 2:**

Head of School/Department may refer such matters to the Course Board or Institute Executive, or issue an instruction, if deemed appropriate, in matters relating to health and safety.

- **Type 3:**

It is envisaged that, through the use of a student feedback mechanism, the lecturer would be aware of such perceived difficulties, and would have considered appropriate actions and/or discussed the matter with the class group. This procedure is likely to occur only where such feedback mechanism is not operating, or where an issue remains unresolved.

The lecturer will be encouraged to discuss the matter with a colleague of her/his choosing with a view to obtaining a third-party view on the matter. The Head of School/Department should be informed of the outcome of such discussion.

It is recognised that a resolution of an issue of this nature (Type 3) may not be readily available.

4. The complainant and lecturer will be advised in writing of the outcome.

Category B - Course

- Type:** General course issues; course workload; timetabling; course facilities (classroom, laboratory, workshop, library; computers); health & safety; textbooks; procedures, rules and guidelines for continuous assessment/assignment, course examinations and project scheduling.
- Origin:** class representative(s).
- Initially dealt with by:** Head of School/Department; Course Board/Joint Academic Workshops (JAWS).

The Class representatives will notify the Head of School/Department of the issue(s) to be included as an agenda item three working days in advance of the appropriate Course Board/JAWS meeting

Where the Head of School/Department concludes the item is appropriate, it will be included on the agenda.

The matter will be processed through the next course board/JAWS meeting. In accordance with the agreed protocols for discussion of such items (Appendix C).

Where the Head of School/Department concludes the issue is not appropriate to a course board/JAWS meeting, (s)he will advise the class representatives of the appropriate procedure (Category A,C, or D) to follow.

Where the issue cannot be resolved, the Head of School/Department shall notify the Academic Council and/or Institute Executive as appropriate.

Category C - Student Services

Type: general facilities; canteen; library; computer laboratories; parking; academic services; administration of admissions, registration, examinations, grants, fees; student support services; graduate placement; health centre; disability; access; chaplaincy; accommodation; sports; societies

Origin: individual or Students' Union.

Initially dealt with by: Administration Officer (Student Services)

1. An individual may request the Students' Union to act on her/his behalf.
2. The individual or Students' Union should request a meeting with the Administration Officer (Student Services) through the Student Services Office to discuss the matter. This meeting should normally be held within three working days.

The discussion should be constructive, with a view to resolving the issue.

3. The Administration Officer (Student Services) will discuss the matter informally with the staff member(s) or service provider normally within three working days of the above meeting. Where the complaint can be resolved the complainant will be informed.

Where the complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant will be requested to formally make the complaint in writing to the Administrative Office (Student Services).

4. In the case of a complaint in relation to a service, if the complaint cannot be resolved, or if the Administration Officer (Student Services) concludes there is no basis for complaint, the complainant will be so informed.

5. In the case of a complaint in relation to a staff member, the Administration Officer (Student Services) may initiate a series of meetings separately with the complainant and staff member with a view to resolving the issue. This process should normally be completed within ten working days.

The Administration Officer (Student Services) should retain records of such meetings agreed and signed by both parties, and made available to either party on request.

Both complainant and staff member may elect to have their Union representative present at such meetings.

6. Where the complaint has not been resolved, the matter shall be referred to the Registrar.
7. If resolution is still not possible the matter shall be referred by the Registrar to the Student Complaints Appeals Board.

Category D1 - Personal (Student/Staff) – Non Academic Issues

Type: poor attendance; inappropriate behaviour; drink/drugs; bias; discrimination; harassment (including sexual harassment and bullying);

Origin: individual or class representative(s) or Students' Union.

Initially dealt with by: Head of School/Department; Administration Officer (Student Services).

Note: The staff member may arrange a meeting with a member of the Student Support Services function (Chaplaincy, Health Centre, Counselling) or a lecturer of the Institute, who may deal with the student directly. If the circumstances involve of another staff member, the matter will be referred to the Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services), and the procedure below will apply.

1. The individual (who may be accompanied by a member of the student support services or a Lecturer) or class representative(s) or Students' Union will arrange a meeting with Head of School/Department (in relation to School based staff) through the School Secretary or with the Administration Officer (Student Services) (in relation to Central Administration Staff) through the Student Services Office.
2. The individual or class representative(s) or Students' Union will advise the Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services), as appropriate, in writing, of the nature of the complaint.
3. The Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services) will notify the staff member of the complaint. The Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services) will arrange meetings normally within three working days, to discuss the matter informally with the individual/class representative/Students' Union and staff member separately. The discussions should be constructive with a view to resolving issue. The Head of

School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services) may initiate a series of such meetings with the staff member and student in an effort to resolve the issue satisfactorily, which should normally be completed within ten working days.

The Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services) will retain minutes of such meetings, agreed and signed by both parties, and available to either party on request.

The individual, class representative(s) or staff member may elect to have their Union representative present at such meetings.

4. Where the issue cannot be resolved, the Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services) will refer the matter to Personnel.

Note: Where the matter refers to a non-academic staff member outside the School/Administration Office Staff, the Head of School/Department or Administration Office (Student Services) will refer the matter to the appropriate Head of Function, who will then replace “Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services)” in 2 to 4 above.

Category D2 - Student/Student

Type: Inappropriate behaviour; drink/drugs; discrimination; harassment (including sexual harassment and bullying);

Origin: Individual or class representative(s) or Students’ Union.

Initially dealt with by: Administration Officer (Student Services).

Note: The student may arrange a meeting with a member of the Student Support Services function (Chaplaincy, Health Centre, Counselling) or a lecturer of the Institute, who may deal with the student directly. If the circumstances necessitate the involvement of another student or students, the matter will be referred to the Administration

Officer (Student Services), and the procedure below will apply.

1. The individual (who may be accompanied by a member of the Student Support Services or a Lecturer) or class representative or Students' Union will arrange a meeting with the Administration Officer (Student Services) through the Student Services Office.
2. The individual or class representative(s) or Students' Union will advise the Administration Officer (Student Services) in writing of the nature of the complaint.
3. The Administration Officer (Student Services) will arrange to meet the students concerned separately, normally within three working days.

The discussions should be constructive with a view to resolving the issue. The Administration Officer (Student Services) may initiate a series of such meetings in an effort to resolve the issue satisfactorily. These meetings should normally be completed within ten working days. The Administration Officer (Student Services) may involve other members of the Student Services function as appropriate.

The Administration Officer (student services) will retain records of such meetings agreed and signed by both parties and made available to either parties on request.

4. Where the issue cannot be resolved the matter will be referred to the Registrar for consideration by the Institute's Disciplinary Committee or for referral to the appropriate student support function (e.g. Chaplaincy, Health Centre, Counselling etc.).

Appendix 1 – Reporting & Records

Each Head of School/Department and the Administration Officer (Student Services) will prepare annually a summary of complaints handled during the Academic Year. A complaint will only be reported if it has been received in writing by the above persons.

The summary report will include:

- Name of School/Department
- Number of complaints received
- Nature of complaints by category
- Status of Complaints (number resolved; origins; not resolved)
- General Comments/Recommendations

The report will be forwarded to the Registrar who will collate the information and present same to the Academic Council, along with a similar report from the Student Complaints Appeals Board.

The Academic Council shall review the procedures at the end of each academic year.

Records of meetings will be retained by the Head of School/Department or Administration Officer (Student Services) for a period of five years. The parties involved will have access to records of meetings at which they were present.

Records will be made available to others only insofar as noted in these procedures for further processing of the complaint e.g. Appeals Board, or if required as part of Court proceedings.

Where a complaint is of a serious nature the Head of School/Department will notify the Executive of the general circumstances of the complaint, as soon as is practicable.

Appendix 2 - Student Complaints Appeals Board

Membership

The Student Complaints Appeals Board consists of:

- Registrar (Chair & Convenor) or Head of Development (Alternate Chair)
- Head of School/Department (nominated by the President)
- Two Academic Staff from a panel of eight nominated by the Academic Council
- Students' Union President or nominee of the President
- A member of the Student Services Office nominated by the Administration Officer (Student Services).

A person shall not be a member of the Board who has previously been involved in the matter under consideration.

Function

To investigate unresolved student complaints referred to it in accordance with the Institute's Student Complaints Procedure.

Operation

The Board shall consider the relevant documentation and shall invite the parties to the complaint to make a presentation to the Board.

The Board may also involve such other persons as it deems necessary.

Decisions

All decisions of the Board shall be by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.

Decisions of the Board are final within the Institute.

Appendix 3 - Course Board/JAWS Protocol

The protocol outlined below is to ensure that this involvement works to the benefit of all concerned, and impacts positively on the course as a whole.

The protocol tries to ensure that only appropriate matters are raised in these fora and that matters of a confidential nature or relating directly to individuals are dealt with through a different procedure, which the Academic Council is currently developing for discussion and agreement.

Course Board Joint Academic Workshops(JAWS)/Student Liaison Groups(SLG)

(a) Student Members

- Student members will notify HOS/HOD of issues which they wish to be included as agenda items three days in advance of meetings.
- HOS/HOD will advise representatives which issues are appropriate for Course Boards/JAWS/SLG.
- Topics for Course Board/JAWS/SLG discussion include: course workload; facilities (classroom, laboratories, workshops, library, computers etc) timetabling; continuous assessment/assignment/project scheduling and rules and guidelines for same; health & safety;
- Student members may not raise issues in relation to individual lecturer performance through the Course Board/JAWS/SLG mechanism. Such issues are appropriate to a student complaints procedure which is being developed.

(b) Staff Members

- Staff recognise that student members represent the class group as a whole, and that views expressed may or may not be the personal view of the student member.
- Staff recognise that issues raised by students are of genuine concern to them, and should be addressed objectively.
- Staff recognise that students members may feel at a disadvantage to staff, and will not direct comment to them on a personal basis.

(c) Chairperson

- Chair will ensure that the above protocols are implemented, and will rule personal comments to/from student or staff members out-of-order.

(d) All concerned agree to discuss issues in an objective manner with a view to achieving a quality learning environment for both staff and students.

Review

The operation of student membership of Course Boards/JAWS/SLG will be reviewed with staff and students at the end of each Academic year.



Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Trá Lí **INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRALEE**

Staff – Student Complaints Procedure

Purpose: The purpose of this procedure is to specify mechanisms for dealing with and resolving a complaint or grievance by a staff member against a student.

Objective: The objective should be to resolve the issue in a constructive manner, as close to the source as possible, with due respect for the parties involved.

Procedure:

1. When a staff member feels that s(he) has a valid complaint in relation to the actions of a student, s(he) will ordinarily in the first instance attempt to resolve the issue directly with the student concerned. This attempt should be constructive with a view to resolving the matter. A satisfactory resolution may be through an apology, a warning in relation to any further occurrence of the incident, or other such approach.

In exceptional circumstances the staff member may feel it necessary to refer the matter, **in writing**, directly to the appropriate Head of Department and/or Head of Function. (Step 2)

2. Where a resolution cannot be reached, the staff member shall consult with and **submit the complaint in writing to**, the appropriate Head of Department and/or Head of Function.

The Head of Department and/or Function shall meet the student, **normally within three working days**, and shall endeavour to resolve the issue.

The staff member or **his/her nominee** may be present at the meeting(s), or separate meeting(s) with staff member/nominee and student as appropriate

The Head of Department and/or Head of Function will retain minutes of the meeting(s), signed by all parties. These minutes are available to either party on request.

3. Where a resolution of the issue cannot be reached, the student shall be advised that the matter will be referred to the Registrar for investigation by the Institute's Disciplinary Committee.

See Appendix A for details of Institute Disciplinary Committee.