

# ALL STUDENTS Student complaints and grievance procedures

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## 1 Introduction

1.1 The ICOM.Ed.Ltd is committed to providing a high quality experience for each student and encourages students to inform it where there is any cause for concern. The ICOM.Ed.Ltd's Student Complaints and Grievance Procedures therefore exist to enable students to make complaints about such matters.

1.2 These procedures seek to ensure that complaints made by students are treated seriously and, if found to be valid, are acted upon to ensure that students' interests are protected as far as it is possible for the ICOM.Ed.Ltd to do so.

## 2 Definition and Scope

2.1. A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about matters that affect the quality of the student's learning experience, or about a standard of service provided by or on behalf of ICOM.Ed.Ltd.

2.2. These Regulations cover all students registered on programmes at ICOM.Ed.Ltd. Former students may raise issues of complaint within the timescales stated in 3. below.

2.3. The ICOM.Ed.Ltd Complaints Procedure does not cover the following circumstances as separate procedures exist: (a) appeals against Assessment Board decisions or examination decisions (covered by Academic Appeals Policy); (b) complaints relating to a case of alleged misconduct by the complainant ( covered by student conduct and discipline regulations); (c) matters relating to fitness to practice where there is an existing relevant fitness to practice procedure (fitness to practice procedures)

2.4. The ICOM reserves the right to reclassify a complaint as an academic appeal or vice versa, if the submission is deemed to have been made to the incorrect procedure, or the submission falls properly within the remit of one procedure rather than the other. The outcome of an appeal cannot be made the subject of a complaint except where there is possible material error in arriving at the decision. If the outcome is deemed unsatisfactory the complainant has the choice to go for arbitration with the Maltese Arbitration Centre .

2.5. The final decision regarding a matter raised under this Complaints Regulation or any of the associated procedures shall be considered to be the final decision of the ICOM.Ed.Ltd. There is no right to further consideration of the same matter under a different associated policy.

2.6. Each complaint will be considered on its own merits, subject to all legal and professional requirements.

2.7. A student will not be treated less favourably by the ICOM.Ed.Ltd or suffer any detriment or disadvantage if s/he makes a complaint in good faith, regardless of whether the complaint is successful. Anonymous or vexatious complaints will not normally be considered and the latter may lead to action under the Student Conduct and Discipline procedures.

2.8. Any member of staff mentioned in a complaint will not be treated less favourably by the ICOM.Ed.Ltd than if the complaint had not been brought. If, however, the complaint against a member of staff is upheld, that member may be subject to disciplinary proceedings under ICOM.Ed.Ltd policy for staff.

2.9. These internal regulations of the ICOM.Ed.Ltd and their associated policies and guidance will be operated in accordance with its Equal Opportunities Statement and Equality and Diversity Objective.

Complaints will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality. There is an expectation that students and staff members will treat both the complaints processes and each other with respect.

### 3 Timeframe for making a complaint

3.1 A student who is, or was recently a registered student, or a group of students wishing to complain should normally do so within 3 months of the event which has given rise to the complaint or, if a series of events has given rise to a complaint, within 3 months of the final event in the series. In exceptional circumstances, complaints received outside of this time frame may be considered providing the explanation for delay is outside the control of the complainant.

3.2 Management of group complaints. The principles and timescales outlined in these regulations will also apply to a group of students. The officer responsible for dealing with the complaint will ensure that all members of the group are in agreement as to the nature of the complaint. Individual issues will normally be dealt with separately. With the agreement of the group the officer will respond to and liaise with a spokesperson. In any case the outcome of the complaint will be communicated to all members of the group.

### 4 Delegation of responsibility

4.1 The Principal delegates responsibility for dealing with student complaints as follows:

- *Stage 1* (Early Resolution) student complaints are dealt with by the appropriate Heads of Year as applicable.
- *Stage 2* (Formal Stage) student complaints are dealt with by the appropriate Dean.
- *Stage 3* Investigations are managed by the Principal. The Principal normally nominates a Senior Management Team member not involved in the Stage 2 process to carry out a review.

### 5 Complaints Procedure Stages

#### 5.1 Stage

##### 1: Early Resolution

- i. Initially, a student should seek to deal with his/ her complaint at the level at which the event leading to the complaint occurred.
- ii. A student should, if at all possible, address his/ her complaint to the member of staff most directly involved in the event leading to the complaint, in order to give that person the opportunity to address his/her concerns.
- iii. If for any reason the student does not feel that this is possible, s/he should seek advice from the Head of Year in order to identify an appropriate alternative mechanism of early resolution.
- iv. Stage 1 complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. Those involved in investigating the complaint will establish appropriate timescales based on its nature and complexity. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept

informed of any changes. Where possible, the investigation should be completed within 7 working days.

- v. At the end of Stage 1, a student will be provided with a written response to his/her complaint, copied to the Dean which will either:
  - Detail the proposed resolution; OR
  - If no resolution has been proposed, explain why resolution has not been considered to be possible.

## 5.2

### Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- i. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, s/he may choose to submit a Stage 2 complaint, by completing the Complaints Form. This should be done within 21 working days of the release of the written response to Stage 1. A Stage 2 complaint will normally only be considered following the completion of the early resolution stage.
- ii. A student wishing to submit a Stage 2 complaint should do so to the Dean
- iii. If the Dean was involved in the case at Stage 1, s/he will nominate an appropriate alternative individual to consider the case. If no appropriate individual can be found within ICOM.Ed.Ltd, s/he shall refer it to the Principal, who will then assign the case to an appropriate individual.
- iv. The receipt of the complaint form will normally be acknowledged within 3 days.
- v. The Dean or his/her nominee will consider the case appropriately. This will normally involve discussions with the student and/or the subject of the complaint.
- vi. Complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. The Dean will establish appropriate timescales based on the nature and complexity of the complaint. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes. Where possible, complaints should normally take no more than 10 working days to investigate from the acknowledgement being sent.
- vii. The Dean or his/her nominee will inform the complainant, the subject of the complaint and the Director, in writing, of the outcome of the investigation.
- viii. A summary of the outcome will be reported to Academic Board and to the Management Board.