Student Complaints Policy and Procedures (DMU Registered Students)

Version 9.0

Approved by the Board of Governors

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This document sets out the School's policy and procedures for responding to students' concerns and complaints about the standard of service provided by the School.

It has been reviewed and developed in line with *England's Regulatory Framework for Higher Education* and takes on board the accompanying guidance with regard to Complaints, Concerns and Appeals; due regard is also given to:

i. *The Competition and Market Authority's UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law.*

ii. *The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)'s Good Practice Framework.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. A student may decide to make a complaint if they feel dissatisfied with a service they have received and wish for the issue to be investigated.

1.2. Where complaints concern services, processes or decisions that are directly associated with the awarding body, De Montfort University (DMU), students should raise their complaint directly using the applicable DMU Student Complaints Procedure. Where a complaint is submitted to LSST which falls within the responsibility of DMU, LSST may refer the complaint to DMU on behalf of the student where appropriate. The student will be informed if such action is taken.

1.3. Complaints relating to LSST services, resources, facilities, staff, learning opportunities, administration or processes should be raised directly with LSST and will be handled in accordance with this policy.

1.4. Should a student remain dissatisfied following completion of LSST's complaints procedure, they may be entitled to escalate the matter to DMU in accordance with the partnership arrangements and DMU's relevant procedures.

1.5. Students who are unsure which procedure applies may seek guidance from LSST Registry at registry@lsst.ac.

1.6. Former students, including students who have withdrawn, completed their studies, interrupted their studies or deferred their studies, may submit complaints under this policy. Normally, complaints should be submitted within three months of the date on which the student became aware, or reasonably ought to have become aware, of the matter giving rise to the complaint.

1.7. Where complaints are submitted outside the normal timeframe, LSST may consider acceptance where the student demonstrates reasonable justification for the delay and where a fair investigation remains possible.

1.8. LSST may determine at any point that another procedure is more appropriate than the student complaints process. Where this occurs, students will be informed of the reasons and provided with guidance regarding the alternative procedure.

1.9. Malicious Complaints

1.9.1. All complaints will be considered on their individual merits.

1.9.2. A complaint will not be considered malicious merely because it is not upheld, lacks sufficient evidence, or raises concerns that cannot ultimately be substantiated.

1.9.3. Where there is evidence that a complaint has been submitted dishonestly or with the deliberate intention of causing harm, LSST may consider whether the behaviour should be addressed under another procedure.

1.9.4. Examples may include:

- Knowingly providing false information.

- Deliberately falsifying evidence.
- Knowingly making materially false allegations intended to cause harm.

1.9.5. Any decision to reject or discontinue consideration of a complaint on the grounds of malicious conduct must be supported by evidence and accompanied by clear written reasons.

1.9.6. Making a complaint in good faith will not itself result in disciplinary action.

1.10. Third-Party and Collective Complaints

1.10.1. Students are expected to submit complaints themselves wherever possible.

1.10.2. Where a third party wishes to act on behalf of a student, written authority must be provided before LSST will communicate with the representative.

1.10.3. Students may withdraw such authority at any stage. Where this happens, the complaint will normally continue directly with the student and will not automatically be rejected.

1.10.4. LSST accepts no responsibility for the actions of third-party representatives.

1.11. Groups and Collective Complaints

1.11.1. LSST may accept collective complaints where:

- Students are affected by substantially the same issue.
- A lead representative is nominated.
- Written consent is received from all participating students.

1.11.2. The lead representative may communicate with LSST on behalf of the group.

1.11.3. A student may withdraw from a collective complaint at any point.

1.11.4. Participation in a collective complaint will not automatically prevent a student from pursuing a separate complaint concerning issues unique to their individual circumstances.

1.11.5. Students who feel pressured, coerced or bullied into joining a complaint should contact registry@lsst.ac.

1.11.6. Complaints are ordinarily considered as complaints against LSST rather than against individual members of staff.

1.11.7. Anonymous complaints will not normally be accepted unless there is compelling evidence that investigation is required.

1.11.8. For the purposes of this policy, references to the Registrar include authorised nominees from the Registry Department.

2. PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING STUDENT COMPLAINTS

2.1. The London School of Science and Technology (LSST) strives to provide a high-quality academic experience and encourages students to raise concerns with the School where they feel the standard of any aspect of their learning experience is below their expectations.

2.2. The School will consider students' concerns and complaints at three stages:

- Stage 1: Early (Informal) Resolution
- Stage 2: Formal Complaint Procedure
- Stage 3: Review of Formal Complaint Procedures

The full complaints procedure is given in Section 5.

2.3. The School will seek to resolve concerns promptly through informal dialogue wherever this is appropriate. Where informal resolution is unsuccessful, or where the nature of the complaint makes informal resolution inappropriate, the student may submit a formal complaint under Stage 2.

2.4. The Registrar or nominee may ask the student to provide a brief summary of any steps taken to resolve the concern informally. Where no attempt at informal resolution has been made and it is appropriate to do so, LSST may refer the matter to Stage 1. The student will be informed of the reasons for this decision and the next steps.

2.5. A complaint may proceed directly to Stage 2 where its seriousness, complexity or circumstances make informal resolution inappropriate. This may include, for example, complaints involving alleged serious staff misconduct, discrimination, harassment, victimisation, safeguarding concerns, or circumstances in which informal resolution could compromise a fair or effective investigation. This list is not exhaustive.

2.6. Where a complaint is referred back to Stage 1, the student will be given clear information about the action required and the expected timescale. Any subsequent Stage 2 submission deadline will be applied reasonably, taking account of the circumstances and the time spent attempting early resolution.

2.7. The School will ensure that procedures for dealing with formal complaints are fair and transparent to all parties, and that complaints are resolved in a timely fashion; where possible the School will seek to resolve all formal complaints fully (including any review under Stage 3) within 90 calendar days of the receipt of a formal complaint.

2.8. Students will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the School's investigation of their formal complaints. Where a complaint takes longer than 90 calendar days to resolve, the complainant will receive an explanation for this and be given an indication of how long the issue is likely to take to fully resolve.

2.9. Complaints which possess multiple concerns relating to multiple departments, or different areas of the School may require additional time to investigate, as each area

may require their own separate investigation. While LSST will make every effort to avoid delays in the complaint outcome being achieved, should there be a delay or requirement for different timescales for different areas of the School subject to their resources and availability, the student will be notified.

2.10. Where new evidence becomes available during a complaint investigation, the Investigating Officer will determine whether it is relevant to the issues being investigated and whether it can reasonably be considered within the existing investigation. Evidence that raises an entirely new concern will not normally be considered as part of the original complaint, although LSST may advise the student to raise that concern through the appropriate procedure.

2.11. Where relevant new evidence is received after an investigation has commenced, LSST may need to extend the investigation timeframe to consider it fairly. The student and any other affected party will be given a reasonable opportunity to comment on material evidence where this is necessary for a fair investigation, subject to appropriate confidentiality and data protection requirements.

2.12. The investigation report will record material evidence considered, including relevant evidence received after the initial submission, and explain the reasons for the findings reached. Where relevant evidence cannot be obtained or considered, the report should explain this where appropriate.

2.13. All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated in the spirit of natural justice; no student will be at a disadvantage for having made a genuine complaint, even where the complaint is found to be without merit, provided it has been made in good faith. Any person about whom a complaint is made shall be supplied with a copy of the complaint and given the opportunity to make their representations.

2.14. The School will ensure that advice and guidance on making a formal complaint is clearly accessible to all students and prospective students. Where requested, Student Support staff will guide students through the process of making a formal complaint.

2.15. Anonymised information about the quantity and substance of students' complaints will be used by the School to reflect on its performance in the delivery of learning opportunities and to drive continuous enhancement of the services it provides.

2.16. The School shall maintain a record of all complaints made by students relating to the course and the outcome of each complaint.

2.17. Completion of Procedures (CoP) letters will be issued in accordance with the applicable arrangements agreed with the relevant awarding body and the requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). For De Montfort University registered students, the responsibility for issuing the CoP letter will depend on whether the matter has proceeded to DMU for Stage 3 or has been referred back to LSST under the agreed arrangements.

2.18. Students will be informed of the relevant next steps and applicable time limits. The CoP letter should explain whether the relevant internal procedures have been completed, identify the final decision and explain how to refer the complaint to the OIA where eligible.

3. SCOPE OF LSST'S COMPLAINTS POLICY

3.1. LSST provide learning opportunities under validation and franchise agreements with external awarding bodies, with whom it works to resolve students' formal complaints. The procedures for filing formal complaints may differ depending on the course in which a student is enrolled.

3.2. Prospective students who are undertaking the application stage with admissions, cannot use these procedures and should refer to the LSST Admissions Policy for guidance and procedures on raising a complaint or concern.

3.3. Students enrolled on De Montfort University courses at LSST, should use this policy and its procedures, only in the first instance, except in the instance where the complaint relates to the awarding-body's services. In the case of any misconduct, other than academic misconduct that requires disciplinary action, shall be investigated, only in the first instance through the School's Disciplinary procedures.

3.4. Complaints regarding LSST processes, resources, staff, and services, will be handled under the first and second stages of this process; Informal/Early Resolution and Formal Complaint Procedure. Should the student be dissatisfied with the outcome following conclusion of both stages, the student may wish to raise Stage 3; Request for Review with the awarding body, DMU. Student wish to raising a review of their complaint with the awarding body they should notify Registry within 10 working days of the outcome of the Formal Complaint received from LSST.

3.5. The Registry is responsible for providing students with information on the process for submitting a complaint review request to the awarding body (DMU). Students wishing to pursue a complaint review will be required to submit details of their original complaint, any relevant supporting evidence, and the formal Stage 2 outcome issued by LSST to De Montfort University in accordance with its prescribed procedures.

3.6. LSST will work with its awarding body partners to ensure that all complaints are dealt within accordance with standards as set out in the *Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)'s Good Practice Framework.*

3.7. Where a student is in doubt about how to submit a formal complaint, they should consult a member of the Student Support team, who will guide them through the correct process.

4. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

4.1. For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is defined as:

'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a provider's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by the School. This includes but not limited to embarrassment, distress, inconvenience and financial loss'.

4.2. This procedure is designed to deal with complaints arising from, but not limited to:

- Provision of academic services described in the School's publications including teaching, content of courses and support for learning.
- Incorrect or misleading information about services provided by the School.
- Provision of other services described in literature published by the School.
- Problems with the provision, condition or accessibility of School facilities or learning resources.
- The conduct of our staff or of any contractors we employ.
- Any perceived inequitable treatment of individuals or unlawful discrimination*.

  **Serious instances of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation may warrant a separate investigation under LSST's Anti-bullying and Harassment procedures.*

4.3. The student complaints procedure does not cover the following:

- Complaints about admissions procedures prior to enrolment as a student of the School, which are dealt with separately under the School's Admissions Policy.
- Any matters relating to examination and assessment procedures or academic appeals, which are dealt with through the Appeals Policy.

4.4. Complaints received about the behaviour of other students will normally be considered under the School's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. However, where such complaints indicate a potential failure by the School to provide a safe, inclusive, and respectful study environment in accordance with its own policies (for example, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Safeguarding; or Health and Safety), they may instead be considered under the relevant institutional complaints procedure. The Registrar (or nominee) shall exercise discretion in determining the most appropriate procedure under which such complaints will be addressed.

4.5. Where a complaint relates to a separate request, such as a change of class or an adjustment to a student's learning arrangements, LSST will consider whether the request can be processed while the complaint is ongoing. A complaint will not automatically prevent the request from being considered. Where necessary, LSST may put appropriate interim arrangements in place while the complaint is investigated, particularly where this is required to protect the student's safety, wellbeing or access to learning. Any decision to defer a related request will be based on the circumstances of the case and communicated to the student with reasons.

5. THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

5.1. Stage 1: Early (Informal) Resolution

5.1.1. Where a student wishes to discuss a concern before making a formal complaint, they should consult their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), a Student Union Representative or a member of the Student Support or Registry department.

5.1.2. A concern may be raised verbally, in writing or by email. Students are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as reasonably possible, ideally within 10 working days of the incident or action giving rise to the concern. This is an indicative timeframe intended to support prompt resolution and is not an absolute deadline for raising a concern.

5.1.3. LSST may consider concerns raised later, taking account of the explanation for the delay, the nature of the issue and whether an effective resolution remains possible. Where a concern is more appropriately addressed through Stage 2 or another institutional procedure, the student will be advised accordingly.

5.1.4. The member of staff receiving an informal complaint will reasonably attempt to resolve the matter informally or refer the matter on to someone who can assist. The staff member in receipt of a students' complaint raised informally at stage 1, must address informal complaints within 10 working days, providing a summary of the decision and the rationale for that decision. In cases where the investigation is expected to extend over a longer duration, it is essential for staff to maintain communication with students regarding the progress and anticipated timelines for a resolution.

5.1.5. LSST staff will work with the complainant to resolve concerns promptly and decisively without resorting to the formal complaints process. Where a formal complaint is received and it is unclear whether informal resolution has been attempted, LSST will determine whether referral to Stage 1 is appropriate. A student will not normally be referred back to Stage 1 if the complaint is serious in nature, unsuitable for informal resolution, or where such referral would result in unreasonable delay or compromise the fairness of the investigation.

5.1.6. If resolution of a concern cannot for any reason be reached informally between the affected parties, the student should then submit a formal complaint.

5.2. Stage 2: Formal Complaints Procedure

5.2.1. To ensure fairness and impartiality, complaints will be considered by individuals who have had no previous involvement in the complaint or the issues raised. This approach helps maintain objectivity and avoids actual or perceived bias. The Registrar will normally act as the Complaints Manager; however, where this is not possible, a suitably qualified substitute will be appointed.

5.2.2. Formal complaints should be submitted in writing to the LSST Registry Department, normally within three months of the date on which the student became aware, or reasonably ought to have become aware, of the matter giving rise to the complaint.

5.2.3. Students are encouraged to submit complaints as soon as reasonably possible so that the matter can be investigated effectively. Where a student has attempted Stage 1, they should submit their formal complaint promptly following the conclusion of early resolution, within 10 working days of the Stage 1 outcome.

5.2.4. Complaints should normally be submitted within three months of the event or issue giving rise to the complaint. Complaints received after this deadline may be considered at the discretion of the Registrar or their nominee. When deciding whether to accept a late complaint, LSST will take into account the reasons for the delay, the seriousness and nature of the complaint, the availability of relevant evidence, and whether a fair

investigation can still be conducted. If a late complaint is not accepted, the student will be informed in writing of the decision and the reasons for it.

5.2.5. The normal submission timeframe does not prevent a complaint from proceeding directly to Stage 2 where informal resolution is inappropriate. Where a complaint is not accepted for formal investigation, LSST will explain the reasons and advise the student of any appropriate alternative process or available next steps.

5.2.6. It is preferred that students use the LSST Complaint Form available on the VLE or from Student Support. If providing the School with a physical copy of the complaint, the following address should be used:

5.2.7. F.A.O. Head of Registry
The London School of Science and Technology,
First Floor, Memo House,
Kendal Avenue,
Park Royal,
W3 0XA

Or the complaint can be submitted electronically to: registry@lsst.ac or using e-forms on the student portal.

5.2.8. The following details must be provided by the complainant when making a formal complaint:

- The complainant ’s name and student ID number (if a Student).
- A full statement of the substance and circumstances of the complaint and all persons involved (if known).
- Brief details of the steps already taken to resolve the complaint (early resolution); including those involved (if known) and the date stage 1 completed.
- Reasons for the complainant’s dissatisfaction with the attempts to resolve the complaint informally.
- The desired outcome of the complaint (i.e., what resolution does the complainant seek).
- Copies of any documentary evidence the complainant wishes to submit (original copies should not be provided).
- A preferred means of contacting the complainant on the issue; this will be on their LSST email account for Students unless otherwise stated. If alternative details are provided by the complaint, these must be those of the complainant and not details for another person.

5.2.9. The initial review of the complaint by the Registrar or nominated Complaint Manager will consider the following:

- Does this complaint or concern, need to be managed under another procedure/process?

- Has early resolution been attempted already, or can this complaint be referred back for early resolution?

- Has the complainant provided clear explanation of the reason for complaint, and the area/department of the School involved?

- Has the complainant provided relevant, clear supporting evidence to accompany their complaint?

- Has the complainant stated the resolution they wish to achieved and is this manageable/reasonable?

- Does this complaint involve any concerning content which may need to be addressed following another process either instead of/or in conjunction with this procedure e.g., safeguarding?

- Is the complainant aware of, or have they accessed any additional support services available to them while their complaint is under investigation e.g., Student Union Centre?

5.2.10. The Registrar or nominated Complaints Manager will determine whether all the necessary information has been provided and may contact the student requesting additional details and evidence where required. In all cases the Registrar/Complaints Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint by letter/email.

5.2.11. If early resolution is applicable and has not been attempted, the Registrar or nominated Complaints Manager will forward the complaint to the appropriate person or department within the School, to carry out early resolution stage.

5.2.12. Complaints submitted to the Registry will be accepted for formal consideration under Stage 2 where evidence of an attempt at early resolution (if applicable) has been provided and all other requirements of this procedure have been met. Upon acceptance, the Registrar or Complaints Manager will appoint an Investigating Officer to consider the complaint based on the information and evidence submitted by the complainant. The Investigating Officer will have had no prior involvement in the complaint or in the incident, decision, or action to which the complaint relates.

5.2.13. Following an initial review of the complaint and the appointment of an Investigating Officer, the Registrar or Complaints Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and notify the complainant in writing of the name and contact details of the Investigating Officer assigned to the case.

5.2.14. The complainant will have three working days from notification of the appointed Investigating Officer to raise any concerns regarding the officer's independence, impartiality or potential conflict of interest. Any concern should explain the reasons for the objection. The Registrar or nominee, or another suitably independent decision-maker where necessary, will consider the concern and decide whether an alternative Investigating Officer should be appointed.

5.2.15. The complainant is not entitled to select their preferred Investigating Officer, and a request for a change will not automatically result in reassignment. Where a concern about impartiality arises later in the process, the student may raise it as soon as reasonably practicable, and LSST will consider it in light of the circumstances.

5.2.16. If no concern is raised within the initial three-working-day period, the investigation will normally proceed with the appointed officer. This does not prevent LSST from addressing a subsequently identified conflict of interest or other substantive concern about the fairness of the investigation. Any reassignment may affect the investigation timescale, and the student will be informed of any resulting delay.

5.2.17. LSST will normally aim to issue the formal Stage 2 outcome within 20 working days of accepting the formal complaint for investigation. This target includes the investigation and preparation of the outcome, subject to the circumstances of the case. Where the target cannot be met, the student will be notified of the reason for the delay, the revised expected date and any further progress updates that will be provided.

5.2.18. If an investigation concludes that a complaint is unfounded, the complainant will be informed of the outcome and the reasons for the decision. Where a complaint is partially upheld, LSST may, at its discretion and where appropriate, offer a conciliatory measure or goodwill gesture as part of the resolution.

5.2.19. If the substance of the complaint is concerning, then the Registrar or nominated Complaint Manager may refer the formal complaint with other relevant departments or staff members to seek guidance and to determine the most appropriate person to handle the complaint. For example, complaints which contain evidence, or statement of safeguarding or prevent concern.

5.2.20. The formal outcome letter will be issued by the Registry Department following the required review and approval of the investigation findings. The outcome letter and investigation report should be issued together wherever practicable. Any additional time required for approval or issue of the outcome will be communicated to the student.

5.2.21. Where appropriate, the outcome will identify remedial actions, the person or department responsible for carrying them out, and the expected completion date. Outstanding remedial actions will not prevent the student from exercising their right to request a Stage 3 review within the applicable deadline.

5.3. The Investigation Procedure

5.3.1. The investigation will be carried out by the appointed investigating officer who will review the complaint documents and determine the best method to proceed with investigation based on the information available.

5.3.2. The Investigating Officer will seek to contact the complainant within 5-working days of their appointment to confirm the main issues outlined in the complaint and to provide an expected outcome date.

5.3.3. The Investigating Officer is required to provide regular updates to the complainant on the progress of the investigation, particularly if there are any delays.

5.3.4. In certain cases, to assist with the investigation, the Investigating Officer may choose to hold meetings with relevant parties, including, the complainant and/or any employee or student involved in the case.

5.3.5. The Investigating Officer will normally aim to complete the investigation within 20 working days of receiving the complaint and the information required to commence the investigation. The timescale may need to be extended where the complaint is

complex, involves multiple departments or parties, requires additional evidence, or is affected by the availability of relevant individuals.

5.3.6. Where an extension is necessary, the student will be informed of the reason for the delay, the action being taken to progress the investigation and the revised expected date for the outcome. The Investigating Officer will provide further updates where there is a material change to the expected timeframe.

5.3.7. LSST will aim to resolve the complaint promptly and, where possible, complete the overall complaints process within 90 calendar days of the formal complaint being accepted. This is an overall target rather than a guarantee that every case will be concluded within that period. Any delay will be explained to the student, and the student's right to request a Stage 3 review will not be made conditional on the completion of unrelated or outstanding remedial actions.

5.4. The Investigation Meeting

5.4.1. The meeting provides an opportunity for all parties to present their views and any relevant evidence. If either party does not attend, the investigation will continue and findings will be based on the evidence available.

5.4.2. The Investigating Officer may ask questions to clarify the issues and evidence presented. Meetings will normally be attended by the complainant or respondent, the Investigating Officer, and a note-taker where required. Participants may be accompanied by a friend, colleague, Students' Union representative, or other supporter. A summary of the key points discussed will be recorded and shared with attendees to confirm the accuracy of the record.

5.4.3. No legal representation can be present at this stage for either party.

5.4.4. Any recording of an in-person meeting requires the consent of all attendees. Virtual meetings may be recorded, provided attendees are informed in advance. Attendees may request access to meeting notes or recordings. All records will be retained in accordance with the School's Data Protection and Records Management policies.

5.5. The Investigation Report

5.5.1. The official investigation reporting documents will be issued to the investigatory officer on appointment of the role. The reporting documents must be filled out comprehensively and clearly by the investigatory officer and provided to the registry department on completion of the investigation. The Registry department will be responsible for issuing the complainant with these reports with the accompanying the outcome letter.

5.5.2. An investigation into the issues mentioned in the complaint will be carried out by the investigating offer who will produce a comprehensive written report on the findings. This report will be given a general timescale of 20 working days for completion; however, this may not be possible to achieve due to availability of resources or staff and/or nature of the complaint. In this case, additional time may be granted to the investigating officer and the complainant will be notified of this update.

5.5.3. The Investigating Officer's report will identify the issues investigated, summarise the relevant evidence considered, set out the findings on each issue, and explain the

reasons for those findings. Where relevant, the report will also identify any limitations in the evidence or aspects that could not be fully investigated.

5.5.4. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the investigation officer will submit the full report, support documentation/evidence and meeting minutes to the LSST Registry department. The outcome will be stated in the report which will provide clear and detailed reasons for the decision made. Where appropriate the report should also include details of remedial actions to be taken/offered and recommendations to improve current practice or regulations highlighted by the findings of the investigation.

5.5.5. The investigation report should address each concern raised by the complainant and address them individually providing a detailed response to each within the report and linking to any evidence considered. The report must confirm whether the complaint is Upheld (fully or partially), or is Not Upheld, with detailed reasons supporting this decision.

5.5.6. The completed investigation report, along with all accompanying documentation must be provided to the Registry Department for the Registrar/Complaint Manager's final review and approval.

5.5.7. The Registry department will be responsible for issuing the formal response to the complainant. The Registry will issue the complaint outcome, investigation report and outcome letter to the complainant by email and post where a postal address is available. This formal response will be issued to the complainant within 5-working days of receipt of Registrar/Complaint Manager confirmation of decision and outcome. Each issue will be recorded as upheld, partly upheld or not upheld, with reasons supporting the decision. Where the complaint is upheld or partly upheld, the report should identify appropriate remedies, corrective actions or recommendations, including the responsible person or department and a proposed completion date where practicable.

5.5.8. The report and accompanying outcome letter must provide sufficient information for the student to understand the decision and, where they remain dissatisfied, to explain the basis on which they may request a Stage 3 review from awarding body or OIA. Relevant information and evidence will be provided subject to appropriate redaction and confidentiality requirements. The report should not disclose confidential employment or disciplinary information beyond what can appropriately be shared with the student.

5.5.9. The complainant will be permitted 10 working days to respond to the given outcome, stating whether they wish to decline or accept the outcome, and proposed recommendations and/or or actions for resolution. Should the complainant wish to pursue the matter further, they should communicate their wish for Request for Review to the Registry. The formal outcome issued must contain clear information on the next steps in the complaints process with signposting to relevant sources for further guidance and information where applicable. This may include direct contacts and forms for requesting review with the awarding body where available.

5.5.10. Once the 10-working-day response window has elapsed, and where the complainant has not responded, the Registry will conclude the case as closed and issue written confirmation of this outcome to the complainant. A Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be issued only upon request following the expiry of the 10-working-day response period. The CoP will confirm that the case has been closed and that the School's internal procedures have not been completed in full by the complainant.

5.6. Stage 3: Review of Formal Complaints Outcomes

5.6.1. Following completion of the formal complaints procedure at Stage 2, a complainant who remains dissatisfied with the outcome, may request a Stage 3 review. The institution responsible for conducting the review will depend on the nature of the complaint and the applicable arrangements agreed between LSST and De Montfort University (DMU).

5.6.2. Stage 3 reviews may be conducted either by LSST under its own review procedure or by DMU under its Student Complaints Procedure. The appropriate route will be determined by reference to the nature of the complaint and the applicable arrangements between LSST and DMU.

5.6.3. Where the complaint is to be reviewed by LSST, the complainant must submit a written request for a Stage 3 review to the LSST Registry Department within 10 working days of receiving notification of the Stage 2 outcome. The request must clearly explain the grounds for seeking a review and include the relevant supporting information. LSST will acknowledge the request and explain the next steps.

5.6.4. Where a complaint is to be reviewed by DMU, the complainant must submit a review request in accordance with DMU's Complaints Procedure within the timeframe specified by DMU. The complainant should provide the original complaint, LSST's Stage 2 outcome letter, the investigation report, and any supporting evidence required by DMU. Students should refer to the DMU website for the relevant guidance and forms.

5.6.5. LSST will inform the complainant of the applicable review route and provide guidance on submitting a review request. Where DMU is conducting the review, LSST will provide relevant complaint records and supporting documentation and will cooperate with the review process as required.

5.7. Grounds for Complaint Review

5.7.1. Where a Stage 3 review is conducted by LSST or DMU, the complainant must demonstrate one or more of the following grounds:

- The procedures followed during the formal stage were not applied correctly.
- The outcome was unreasonable in the circumstances of the complaint.
- New evidence has become available which, for valid reasons, could not have been provided earlier and which may have had a material impact on the outcome.

5.7.2. The complainant must clearly identify the grounds for review and provide supporting evidence where appropriate. Disagreement with the outcome alone will not normally constitute sufficient grounds for a review.

5.7.3. A Stage 3 review will not normally involve a full reinvestigation of the complaint or consideration of new matters that were not raised as part of the original complaint. The review will be limited to the grounds submitted and the requirements of the applicable procedure.

5.7.4. Where a review is conducted by DMU, the complainant should refer to DMU's Complaints Procedure for the applicable grounds for review and the requirements for submitting a review request.

5.8. Review Conducted by DMU

5.8.1. Where DMU is responsible for conducting the Stage 3 review, it will consider the request in accordance with DMU's Complaints Procedure and communicate the outcome to the complainant in line with its published timescales and requirements.

5.8.2. A review conducted by DMU will not normally constitute a fresh investigation of the complaint. Where concerns are identified regarding the Stage 2 process or outcome, DMU may take such action as is available under its procedures, including referring the matter back to LSST for further consideration or recommending amendments to the findings, outcome, or remedy, where appropriate.

5.8.3. Where DMU requests further information or action from LSST, the School will respond within a reasonable timeframe, taking account of the nature and complexity of the matter and any relevant circumstances. Where LSST is unable to meet a requested deadline, it will notify DMU of the reasons and, where appropriate, agree a revised timeframe. LSST will keep the complainant informed of any relevant next steps and anticipated timescales, as appropriate.

5.9. Review Conducted by LSST

5.9.1. Where the nature of the complaint requires Stage 3 to be conducted by LSST under its own procedure, the Registry Department will appoint an appropriately independent Review Officer who has had no previous involvement in the complaint, its investigation, or the original decision.

5.9.2. The appointed Review Officer will consider the Stage 2 outcome, investigation report, relevant supporting evidence, and the grounds raised by the complainant. The review will assess whether the procedure was followed correctly, whether the outcome was reasonable in the circumstances, and whether any relevant new evidence could materially affect the decision.

5.9.3. The Review Officer will prepare a written report setting out the review findings, reasons, and any recommendations or proposed actions. The report will normally be completed within 10 working days of the review request being accepted, where practicable. Where a delay is unavoidable, the complainant will be notified of the reason and the revised expected completion date.

5.9.4. Where required under the applicable LSST procedure or agreed arrangements with DMU, a Complaints Panel may be convened to consider the review findings. Panel membership will ensure that individuals involved in the original decision do not influence the review outcome.

5.9.5. The review may be upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. Where a material procedural error or other issue requiring further consideration is identified, the case may be referred for reconsideration by an appropriately independent decision-maker. The complainant will be notified in writing of the review outcome, the reasons for the decision, any remedial actions, and the expected timeframe for completion.

5.9.6. Where DMU has expressly referred a matter back to LSST following its own review, LSST will undertake the further consideration or reconsideration required by DMU. The nature and extent of that work, including whether a further LSST review or Complaints Panel is required, will be determined by the terms of the referral and the applicable arrangements between LSST and DMU.

5.10. Completion of Procedures Letters and Further Recourse

5.10.1. Where DMU conducts the final review of a complaint, DMU will be responsible for issuing any Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter in accordance with its Complaints Procedure and the requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

5.10.2. Where LSST conducts the final review under its own procedure, LSST will issue a CoP letter only where authorised and required under the applicable arrangements agreed with DMU and in accordance with relevant OIA guidance.

5.10.3. Where DMU refers a matter back to LSST following its review, responsibility for issuing a CoP letter will be determined in accordance with DMU's instructions and the arrangements agreed between LSST and DMU. LSST will not issue a CoP letter unless authorised or required to do so under those arrangements.

5.10.4. The CoP letter will set out the final decision, the reasons for that decision, and details of the complainant's right to refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), where applicable. The letter will also include the relevant timescales and signposting to further guidance.

5.10.5. The institution responsible for issuing the CoP letter must ensure that it is issued in accordance with the applicable procedure and that the complainant is informed of the correct timescales for any further action.

6. REFERRALS TO THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR (OIA)

6.1. The School subscribes to the scheme for the independent review of complaints and appeals by Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Students who believe their complaint has not been properly or fairly handled by the School or the awarding body can request for an independent review to be conducted by the OIA; where such requests are eligible for review, the OIA will investigate in accordance with its rules.

6.2. Referral to the OIA must be made within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter, and should be submitted using the OIA's complaints form, which can be found here: http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/oia-complaint-form.aspx

6.3. Further information on the OIA' procedures and eligibility for review of a complaint can be found on the OIA's website; www.oiahe.org.uk, or alternatively students can contact the OIA directly on:

- Tel: 0118 959 9813
- Email: enquiries@oiahe.org
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator

PO Box 3362,
Reading,
RG1 9UF

7. COMPLAINANTS' CONDUCT

7.1. While it is anticipated that a complainant may feel anxious because of the circumstances surrounding their complaint, they are expected to behave reasonably and in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

7.2. Students are required to refrain from filing frivolous, vexatious, petty, or harassing complaints, or from making excessive demands of those handling their complaint. Unacceptable requests on the part of the complainant may include asking responses in an unreasonable timescale; insisting on seeing or speaking with a specific member of staff; making repeated phone calls, emails, or letters; changing the topic of the complaint repeatedly or presenting irrelevant concerns.

7.3. Where a complainant is found to be acting unreasonably, LSST will explain why the behaviour is considered unacceptable and provide the complainant with an opportunity to modify their conduct. Where the unreasonable behaviour continues, LSST may take appropriate action, which may include referring the matter to the relevant disciplinary procedure and, where appropriate, discontinuing consideration of the complaint.

8. FORMAL INVESTIGATIONS CONDUCT

8.1. During Stages 2 and 3 of the complaints procedures, the School may open a formal investigation into the issue.

8.2. The member of staff handling the investigation of a complaint may request the complainant to attend an interview as part of the investigative procedure. The member of staff will agree to a date, time and location with the complainant and confirm this in writing. The complainant has the right to be accompanied by a friend or student representative as an observer.

8.3. Any person about whom a complaint is made (the 'respondent') shall be provided with a copy of the complaint with sufficient time for them to prepare their representations ahead of any formal meeting concerning the complaint; the respondent shall have the same right of representation as the complainant.

8.4. Where either the complainant or respondent are accompanied in a formal meeting, details of their companion must be provided to the investigating officer in advance of the meeting; the School does not permit representation by an external organisation or professional legal representation during such investigations.

9. COMPLAINTS ABOUT STAFF MEMBERS OR OTHER STUDENTS

9.1. If a student files a complaint alleging that staff or students violated School policies, the matter will be investigated using the appropriate investigative procedure, which may be the School's:

- Student or Staff Disciplinary Procedures
- Assessments Regulations and Procedures
- Academic Misconduct Regulations

9.2. This includes, but is not limited to, abusive or threatening behaviour, victimisation, bullying or harassing behaviour, actions likely to cause injury or threaten safety and unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.

Note: Where the issue is referred to be dealt with under a different School policy, then the 90-day timeframe given for resolving complaints may no longer apply.

9.3. If a complaint results in a hearing under another procedure or policy, the complainant may be asked to give evidence at a hearing. In instances where the complainant is not cooperative to share evidence, the School reserves the right to close the case without further investigation.

9.4. Where the complaint results in a hearing under another procedure or policy, the School will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act. This means that the School may not be able to disclose full details of this procedure and any outcomes to the complainant. Legally, there is a recognised expectation that internal disciplinary matters of an individual will be private. If the School is unable to disclose the details of the outcome to the student, the student will be informed of the reasons for any such non-disclosure.

10. RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

10.1. As part of the School's monitoring and quality assurance activities, the Registrar will keep a record of student complaints and the means of settlement and submit it to the Academic Board.

10.2. School officials dealing with complaints may receive potentially sensitive information about students' personal situations; all such information supplied by the student when making a complaint will be maintained securely inside the Registry Office and shared only with those who need to know in order to carry out these processes.

10.3. It is expected that those in receipt of concerns and complaints will respect confidentiality and retain anonymity for students raising concerns where this is appropriate. However, complainants should never be promised confidentiality as there may be instances where information disclosed must be passed on to fulfil a public function (such as reporting a crime).

10.4. Anyone dealing with a concern or complaint who is unsure whether information is confidential should clarify with the source of the information and speak to the School's Data Protection Officer:

it@lsst.ac

11. TRAINING AND AWARENESS OF THE COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

11.1. The School will organise events on a regular basis to enhance awareness of the Complaints Procedure and how it should be utilised; students will have access to information about this policy and the proper process of making a complaint in their Student Handbooks and during induction.

11.2. The School will also give continuous support and direction to LSST Staff on how to appropriately address informal complaints and respond to formal complaints.

12. REVIEW AND UPDATE

12.1. This policy and procedure will be reviewed and updated annually by the Head of Registry and the School's Quality Office; changes to it will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and ratified by the School's Board of Governors.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	**1.0 – 4.1**	
Original author(s):	Head of Registry Principal	
Reviewed by:	Executive Committee	September 2015 September 2016 September 2017 September 2018 September 2019
Version	**5.0 – 5.5**	
Revised by:	Quality Audit Manager Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	*Clarifies alternative university processes to UWL and BNU-validate courses. Revisions to general structure of document and guiding principles; clarification of procedural elements; references to other school policies added with information on when to use these; section on expected complainant conduct added. Provisions for secure record keeping and data protection; revised document formatting, numbering and version control added.* *Reviewed by Publications Committee; amendments recommended by the Executive Committee for ratification by the Board of Governors.*	
Approved by:	Board of Governors	August 2020
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Revised by:	Quality Manager Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	*Annual review; partnerships amended. Document reformatted and version control added.*	
Approved by:	Board of Governors	December 2021
Version	**5.7**	
Revised by:	Quality Manager Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	*Annual review; procedures and processes amended in accordance with DMUs Student Complaints Policy; Document formatting and versions control applied; Data Protection Officer details changed.*	
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Version	**6**	
Revised by:	Quality Manager Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	*Annual review and update; Minor grammatical changes and version control applied.*	
Approved by:	Board of Governors	October 2023
Version	7	
Revised by:	Assistant Registrar	

	Quality Unit	
Revision summary:	*Annual review and update, par. 1.8 and 1.9 added on malicious complaints, title change from 'Awarding Body – DMU, to 'DMU Registered Student', minor grammatical corrections, document format applied, version control applied*.	
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Revised by:	Quality Unit	
Revision summary:	***Annual review and update –*** *Policy rewritten to align with partner university processes. Strengthen procedural fairness, improve transparency and consistency in complaint handling, provide clearer responsibilities for LSST and DMU, enhance student protections, and further align the complaints framework with good practice expectations of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and awarding-body partnership requirements. Minor grammatical corrections, document format applied, version control applied.*	
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