

Complaints Policy 2025-26

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This documents how GIS responds to complaints against the services provided in the delivery of higher education and reflects the requirements of our partner institutions in respect of the awards validated by a 3rd party institution. The activity referred to in this document relates to all students registered with GIS. Full details of the process relating to complaints by our validating partner(s) are available at their relevant websites.
- 1.2. Students will not be disadvantaged because of the making of an academic appeal in good faith under this Policy and Procedure. GIS reserves the right to reclassify a complaint as an academic appeal according to the nature of the subject matter of the complaint. The outcome of an academic appeal cannot be made the subject of a complaint except where there is a possible material error in arriving at the decision. The final decision regarding a matter raised under this Complaints Procedure or any of the associated procedures shall normally be considered to be the final decision of the Institution: there is no right to further consideration of the same matter under a different institutional policy.
- 1.3. GIS is committed to providing our students with a high-quality educational experience and to ensuring that students have a full opportunity to raise, individually or collectively, matters of concern. Where matters of concern are raised, GIS aims to respond proportionately, fairly and in a timely manner. GIS anticipate that general comments and concerns are raised and resolved at the point of issue where appropriate. Comments are also received, and responded to, via the student voice and feedback mechanisms.
- 1.4. GIS reviews complaints made to it by students to support the ongoing enhancement of the student experience. Data relating to complaints made will be reviewed annually by the Academic Board or one of its sub-committees. All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially under its Data Protection Policy and will be properly investigated. The act of making a complaint will not be held against any student in respect of their progress, studies, or their student experience.
- 1.5. GIS will work to published deadlines and where this might not be possible a student will be kept informed, and a revised deadline provided. The Procedure will normally be completed within the 90 days expected under the OIA Good Practice Framework.

2. Equality and Reasonable Adjustments.

- 2.1. This policy is neutral in terms of equality-related issues.
- 2.2. Students may raise issues which may also be covered by different GIS policies. GIS has discretion to decide how to progress matters in the best interests of all parties, including deciding which matter and procedure should take precedence or whether interlinked matters can be considered under one or more of its policies.
- 2.3. In the case of a student with additional needs, reasonable adjustments can be made in order to avoid them being treated less favourably. This may include holding meetings remotely. Any student who wishes to seek reasonable adjustments should discuss their needs with GIS and it will seek to refer the student to appropriate support or put in place appropriate adjustments.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. UEL has adopted the following definition of a student complaint from [The Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Appeals](#) (December 2022), produced by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education:

“an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something a provider has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider”.

3.2. **Definition of a complaint:**

A student complaint might be about, for example:

- poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the Institution.
- complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the Institution;
- the way a student has been treated by a member of staff (see also Dignity and Respect statement).

As the validating body, UEL has overarching responsibility for the quality and standards of the academic courses offered by these institutions. Students should submit a complaint to GIS as their Institution in the first instance, utilising this Complaints policy and procedure. Normally, complaints can then be made directly to UEL at Stage 3 Review following completion of the GIS complaints procedures.

3.3. **Definition of Harassment:**

Harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating the individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Conduct may be verbal, non-verbal or physical. This definition aligns with the Equality Act 2010.

4. Scope

- 4.1. This Policy applies to all students currently registered and studying at GIS, both at Undergraduate or Postgraduate level, and attending any GIS campus or via distance learning including those on interruption or suspension of studies or those who have been withdrawn or terminated their studies for any other reason or completed their studies as long as they have invoked this procedure within 1 month of the incident that the complaint relates.
- 4.2. This Policy reflects the detailed procedures of the [UEL Manual of General Regulations 2025-26](#) as applicable to students registered on UEL programmes. In all cases, students registered on UEL programmes are required by the University to follow the GIS Complaints policy in the first instance.
- 4.3. Students registered on other programmes may choose to address their complaint initially through either GIS or the partner organisation.
- 4.4. A student is entitled to be accompanied and supported by a member of GIS through this procedure including any attendance at meetings. Only in exceptional circumstances and by prior agreement may a student be accompanied by someone external to GIS. The role of the person supporting is to offer advice and not to formally represent the

student or act as advocate unless specifically agreed as a reasonable adjustment under section 2.

4.5. The GIS Resolutions Team can advise on the application and processing of any complaints at: resolutions@gis.sport

4.6. **GIS Student Complaints Pathways**

A GIS student who wishes to complain should follow one of the following courses of action, depending on the nature of their complaint:

- Complaints associated with non-academic matters, except those which relate to one of the UEL's services, must be pursued in accordance with this complaints policy and procedures.
- Complaints associated with one of UELs services should be pursued in accordance with the [UEL Complaints Procedure 2025-26](#).
- Complaints on matters related to the academic course should first be pursued in accordance with this GIS Complaints policy and procedures. If, following completion of those procedures, a student considers the outcome to be unsatisfactory, they can request a Stage 3 Review of that outcome by UEL pursuant to this Complaints Procedure (subject to establishing the necessary grounds for such a Review). The student is expected to submit the request within one calendar month of the student receiving written confirmation from the partner institution of the final outcome of the complaint in accordance with its own procedures.

4.7. **Exclusions**

This Complaints Procedure does not cover the following, with separate procedures existing for these, as noted:

- Appeals relating to decisions made by an Assessment Board regarding assessment, progression or award. ([Manual of General Regulations Part 6](#));
- Complaints relating to a case of Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct ([GIS Student Policies](#));
- Matters relating to Fitness to Practise ([Student Policies](#));
- Complaints made by students against students (see [Dignity and Respect](#) statement) where these relate to allegations of bullying or harassment;
- Complaints made by staff against students (see [Dignity and Respect](#) statement) where these relate to allegations of bullying or harassment. Matters which relate to a breach of University Regulations should be reported to the relevant Dean or Head of Professional Service for appropriate action pursuant to the student disciplinary regulations and procedures (incorporating the Student Code of Conduct and Manual of General Regulations); and
- Complaints based on or related to matters of academic judgement.

5. **Group Complaints**

- 5.1. If several students wish to submit a group complaint, they will be required to nominate one student to act as a spokesperson and to lead any communication with GIS under this Policy. The student complaint form must be completed and signed by that nominated student and a document attached containing the names, details, and signatures of the other students who are seeking to support the complaint. The evidence submitted to support the complaint must be agreed upon by the group of students and provided with the complaint form. No additional evidence will be accepted after submission of the complaint form unless there are exceptional grounds.
- 5.2. In circumstances where GIS receives multiple complaints from students affected by the same issue(s) and where there are common characteristics or similarities in the subject matter of the complaints then it has the discretion to combine those complaints and deal with them as a group complaint.
- 5.3. GIS will not accept an individual Complaint from a student about any matter where they are already a party to a group complaint.

6. Complaints against staff

- 6.1. Complaints by students about staff must be handled by an individual independent of the staff member involved, to avoid a conflict of interest.
- 6.2. GIS have a duty to ensure all staff are treated fairly throughout this Procedure. Therefore, any staff member has the right to be supported through this policy, and to be advised of any complaint made against them at the outset and to have access to any evidence presented in support of any complaint as well as the right to reply to that complaint at any stage of this policy.
- 6.3. If a complaint made against a staff member under this policy is disciplinary or raises allegations that are better suited to a disciplinary investigation, then GIS may decide that this policy is suspended until the disciplinary matter has been concluded. If a case is considered sufficiently serious or is proven against a member of staff this will be referred to GIS' Human Resources team to decide whether further investigation should take place under its human resources policy. The member of staff may be accompanied at any such meetings by a colleague or trade union representative. If appropriate, the member(s) of staff can be referred in confidence at any stage in the process to their HR manager and/or the University's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), who can arrange counselling and support.
- 6.4. Where a complaint refers to a member of staff, the outcome of the complaint and its reasoning will be shared with all parties concerned and the line managers of the member of staff.

7. Complaints made by a third party on behalf of a student

- 7.1. GIS would always encourage a student who wishes to make a complaint to do so directly with GIS. GIS cannot accept complaints made by a third party on behalf of a student unless a signed statement/consent is provided by the student along with the complaint. This includes complaints made by a parent, spouse, guardian, or partner of a student.
- 7.2. GIS will not accept a complaint made by a third party on behalf of a student where the student has already made a complaint on the same subject matter.

8. GIS approach

- 8.1. GIS is committed to providing our students with a high-quality educational experience and to ensuring that students have a full opportunity to raise, individually or collectively, matters of concern. Where matters of concern are raised, GIS aims to respond proportionately, fairly and in a timely manner.
- 8.2. GIS anticipate that general comments and concerns are raised and resolved at the point of issue where appropriate. Comments are also received, and responded to, via the student voice and feedback mechanisms.
- 8.3. GIS reviews complaints made to it by students to support the ongoing enhancement of the student experience. Data relating to complaints made will be reviewed annually by the Academic Board or one of its sub-committees. All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially under its Data Protection Policy and will be properly investigated. The act of making a complaint will not be held against any student in respect of their progress, studies, or their student experience.
- 8.4. This Procedure is intended to be clear, transparent, accessible and fair to all parties. GIS will ensure any students who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are not treated less favourably when accessing this Procedure.
- 8.5. Information regarding a complaint will only be released to those who need it for the purpose of investigating or responding to a complaint. To ensure fairness, individuals named in a complaint will be made aware of the allegations to ensure they have a proper opportunity to respond.
- 8.6. In the event that the confidentiality of any claimant is breached by any member of staff or student GIS reserves the right to initiate disciplinary action under its Codes of Conduct and Disciplinary Policies.
- 8.7. GIS will work to published deadlines and where this might not be possible a student will be kept informed, and a revised deadline provided. The Procedure will normally be completed within the 90 days expected under the OIA Good Practice Framework.

9. Procedure

Before making a complaint, a student is expected to take all reasonable steps to address their concerns informally before submitting a complaint. Where problems arise, all parties are encouraged to seek a resolution as soon as possible, for example, directly raising any dissatisfaction with the relevant staff member or course representative.

In the event that their concerns cannot be resolved all UEL registered students are able to engage with the *Stage One – Local Resolution process*.

9.1. Stage One – Local Resolution

- 9.1.1. Complaints should normally be raised within one calendar month of the event (or final event) which has given rise to the complaint. The first stage in raising a complaint is an informal discussion of the matter. The complainant should discuss the issue with the person(s) concerned as soon as possible. Alternatively, they should seek to speak to the Resolutions Officer to support them with early resolution. The Resolutions Officer can be contacted via: resolutions@gis.sport. In both instances, GIS staff will keep a record of all communications. If the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, then

the matter can be raised with the relevant Heads of Service by the complainant, keeping the Resolutions Officer informed. An informal mediation meeting may be convened by the Resolutions Officer to resolve the matter.

- 9.1.2. When raising a complaint, a student should be specific about the issue or concern, describe the issue or concern sufficiently, provide supporting documentary evidence where available, and state the preferred outcome sought. The outcome sought should be clear and realistic.
- 9.1.3. Potential outcomes at Stage One may include: a solution to the student's issue or concern, an explanation why the desired outcome cannot be achieved, an apology where appropriate, a notification that GIS do not consider the matter appropriate for informal resolution and a recommendation that the student submit their complaint to Stage Two applicable to that student.
- 9.1.4. In certain cases, a complaint may be deemed unsuitable for Stage One, for example, where it is a complaint of a sufficiently serious nature, and will instead be considered under Stage 2 proceedings.
- 9.1.5. If there is no early resolution, or the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the early resolution stage, or if the matters raised are particularly complex, the case may be progressed to Stage Two of the Formal Complaint process.
- 9.1.6. Informal complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. Where possible, immediate action should be taken to resolve, but the informal stage should be completed within one calendar month, in any event. The University may need to extend the timescales for response if, for example, it becomes difficult to schedule meetings with the relevant individuals or if matters are complex and require additional time to fully investigate. In these circumstances, the relevant school or service will inform the student of any delays. These examples are not exhaustive, and the University will inform students should it become necessary to extend.

9.2. Stage Two – Formal Complaint

- 9.2.1. This stage of the process will be dealt with at GIS through the following steps:
 - Stage Two of the Complaint process must commence within one month of the written response following the local resolution stage.
 - The complainant must make a formal submission to the GIS Resolutions Officer (resolutions@gis.sport) by completing the Complaints form. The Form, when completed, should include:
 - The grounds for complaint.
 - A statement of what has been done by the student to attempt resolution within the School / Service.
 - Why the resolution/ action taken by the School / Service following notification of the complaint has been inadequate.
 - If resolution at Stage 1 has not been sought, the reasons for seeking to progress the complaint at Stage 2 directly.
- 9.2.2. Upon receipt, the Resolutions team will commence the following actions:
 - Acknowledge receipt of the complaint and undertake an evaluation of the

complaint within seven calendar days to ensure the following:

- Whether the complaint has been submitted under the correct procedure;
- That the form has been correctly and adequately completed;
- That the complaint has been submitted in time; and
- The resolution sought is achievable, reasonable and proportionate.

9.2.3. Having considered the above, the Resolutions team will determine whether the Complaint Form can be accepted. They may request that the complainant provide additional or further information before determining whether a Complaint Form is accepted.

9.2.4. Once a Complaint Form has been accepted, the Resolutions team will allocate the complaint to a member of staff who has not previously been involved in the matter (the “Investigating Officer”). The principle is to avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest. Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be appropriate for the investigating officer to be independent of the School/Service.

9.2.5. The allocated member of staff (the Investigating Officer) may meet with the student to discuss the complaint and any potential resolution. The Resolutions team will issue the student an investigation report (by the Investigating Officer), accompanied by an outcome letter (by the relevant Deputy Dean of School or Head of Service) and an evidence pack to demonstrate what has been considered during the review of the complaint. The investigation report may recommend the following:

- Uphold, Partly Uphold or Not Uphold concerns raised and propose resolutions to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend conciliation meeting(s) (if appropriate) between the student concerned (who may be accompanied by a friend or Student Union) and the School / Service; and/or
- Recommend that the matter proceed to a Complaint Hearing Panel if the investigating officer is unable to determine an outcome based on the available evidence.

9.2.6. The investigating officer, with support from the Dean of the School or Director of Service, will determine the most appropriate course of action.

9.2.7. The Resolutions Team will aim to formally respond to the complainant on behalf of GIS with a decision on the complaint within **20** working days. However, this may take longer during busier periods, and/or depending on staff availability.

9.3 Complaint Hearing Panel

9.3.1 Should a Complaint Hearing be appropriate, it will be chaired by a Deputy Dean of School from outside the School in which the student is enrolled (in the case of a complaint about an academic matter, or a Head of Service from another service area in relation to non-academic matters).

9.3.2 A Panel, consisting of the Chair, two other members of academic or support staff drawn from schools or service departments unrelated to the complaint.

9.3.3 The school or service department that is the subject of the complaint will support the arrangements for the panel and provide a minute taker. The Resolutions Officer will

act as technical adviser to the panel. The student may be accompanied by a friend or representative at this meeting and the School / Service may be represented by up to two members. If the complaint relates to the actions of an individual member of staff, rather than the School / Service, that individual has the right to attend and be represented.

- 9.3.4 The Complaints Hearing Panel shall meet, normally within one calendar month (excluding University closures) of the referral from Stage 1 and communicate its conclusions to the student and the School / Service within one calendar month of the date of the hearing. The Resolutions Officer will keep all parties informed of progress and will explain reasons for any necessary extension of the timescale for response, for example, if an adjournment in the proceedings is necessary.
- 9.3.5 The Complaint Hearing Panel will also review, on behalf of Academic Board, complaints (upheld and not upheld) from complainants to ensure consistency of approach. This exercise will take place annually.
- 9.3.6 Following the decision of the Stage 2 Complaint and if a response is not received from the student within **10 days**, it will be assumed that the student has accepted the outcome and no further action is required.

9.4 Stage Three – Review for students studying for an award of University of East London (UEL):

- 9.4.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage Two outcome, they may request a review of the complaint by UEL within fourteen calendar days of the Stage Two outcome. Full details of the procedure can be found at [Manual of General Regulations 2025-26: Part 10 – Complaints](#).
- 9.4.2 A request for a review can only be considered in the following circumstances:
- There has been a procedural irregularity (at Stage 2 Formal Complaint investigation) which has demonstrably affected the outcome of the claim to the detriment of the student; or
 - There is new evidence that would have significantly affected the outcome and could not reasonably have been made available when the complaint was made; or
 - that the decision is unreasonable and/or the outcome was not proportionate in all of the circumstances; or
 - that the complaint was upheld, but the proposed remedy was inappropriate.
- 9.4.3 The request for a review should be submitted via the online Stage 3 Review form via the UEL [Student Complaint Procedure](#).
- 9.4.4 The UEL Complaints and Appeals team will determine if there is a valid ground for a review within seven calendar days, and if so, the University Secretary (or nominee) shall review the case. Following a review, the University Secretary (or nominee) may either determine:
- The Stage 2 complaint outcome is to be overturned, with the proposal of new recommendations, or
 - The complaint is to be rejected, and the Stage 2 Formal Complaint outcome decision is upheld.

- 9.4.5 The UEL Complaints and Appeals team will notify the complainant of the outcome of the final stage of the complaint in writing within one calendar month, and a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter will be issued.
- 9.4.6 Should a complaint be upheld, any actions identified to resolve the complaint at any stage of this Procedure should be implemented as soon as possible once accepted by the student at the relevant stage and within the timeframe. This will be overseen by the UEL Complaints and Appeals team. In addition, the University Secretary or their nominee (or the Chair of the Complaints Panel in cases where a panel has been convened) may make recommendations to GIS, the Dean of the School, Head of Service and relevant members of the management team. Recommendations may also be made to University or GIS governance committees in respect of quality assurance procedures or policies.

10 Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

- 10.1 In the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the final outcome after the University's internal procedures have been completed, they may lodge an external review directly with the *Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)*.
- 10.2 Any request for review to the OIA must be submitted within **12 months** of the Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter being received by the student. The OIA will not usually review complaints that have not been considered by the University.
- 10.3 Information and eligibility rules are available at: www.oiahe.org.uk

11 Behaviour during the complaints process

GIS has zero tolerance towards those whose behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and inconsistent with its Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policies and will take action in this respect.

Unacceptable behaviour includes communicating with GIS in an unreasonably demanding, malicious, vexatious or aggressive manner for example:

- Making frivolous claims, or multiple claims regarding the same subject.
- Acting with unreasonable persistence or in a harassing or threatening manner either verbally, through an e-mail or by letter.
- Making claims that are knowingly false, malicious or unfounded or unreasonable.

12 Associated Documents

12.1 [GIS Policies](#)

- Academic Integrity & Academic Misconduct Policy 2025-26
- Mitigating Circumstances Policy 2025-26

12.2 [UEL Policies](#)

- [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

- [UEL Manual of General Regulations 2025-26](#)