



Student Complaint Policy



Purpose

Dublin City University (DCU) commits to providing students with a positive and excellent university experience and a professional standard of service. This policy aims to promote good practice that service providers within the DCU Community should adhere to when handling a complaint, describe the standards that services may be expected to adhere to when handling a complaint and provide a method for resolving complaints. The purpose of the *Student Complaint Policy* and *Student Complaint Procedures* is to support students and staff in situations where a student makes a complaint about their experience at DCU.

To achieve this, members of the community aspire to a high level of professionalism, competency, and fairness and related behaviours that include the following¹.

1. taking responsibility for actions
2. acting fairly and proportionately
3. dealing with errors effectively
4. seeking continuous improvement
5. being open and accountable.

DCU continuously seeks to improve the student experience, and students should feel comfortable raising their concerns and seeking a resolution to any complaint. We acknowledge from time to time that DCU units/staff members may not meet the University's standards, and students may want to raise concerns. The University will process the issues raised by a student under this policy in accordance with the general principles of natural justice and fair procedures.

This policy aims to provide a clear pathway to resolve complaints quickly, efficiently, and locally. Most complaints are expected to be dealt with locally to a satisfactory resolution. A student can make a formal complaint to the Director of Service/Dean where a resolution cannot be achieved (or where a student feels that they cannot raise the complaint at the local level). Beyond DCU, the [Office of The Ombudsman](#) and [Office of the Ombudsman for Children](#) are independent offices that investigate complaints. The Ombudsman, where appropriate, may make recommendations concerning the administrative actions of the University.

¹ Ombudsman.ie – Guide for Service Providers

Scope

For the purposes of this policy, the University defines a 'complaint' as follows:

"A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more DCU students about a DCU staff member or unit's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of a DCU staff member/unit"².

This Policy applies to all units of the University, including academic schools and faculties, administrative, professional and student support units, research centres and campus companies. These are all hereinafter collectively referred to as the 'University'.

This Policy is available to any registered student at the University, including students registered on full-time or part-time programmes, undergraduate programmes, taught and research postgraduate programmes, on campus and online.

Students currently registered as a DCU student, within **20 working days** of ceasing registration or receiving final transcript, are eligible to use this policy. The University will exercise discretion in the consideration of complaints beyond this time, and those seeking to submit a complaint beyond **20 working days** of ceasing registration must explain why they did not raise the complaint before their registration expired.

The *Student Complaint Policy* and accompanying *Procedures* apply to the following circumstances.

- dissatisfaction with the service provided by a DCU unit or member of staff.
- dissatisfaction with the standard of student campus facilities or learning resources (online or on site).
- the failure of the University to follow an administrative process, policy, or procedure.
- issues of perceived inappropriate or rude behaviour by a staff member.

The *Student Complaint Policy* and *Procedures* does not apply to the following:

- Complaints regarding bullying, harassment, discrimination, or sexual misconduct involving a member of staff or another DCU student. Such matters will be dealt with under the [Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Policy and Procedures](#), or the [Sexual Misconduct at Work and Study Policy and Procedures](#).
- Complaints regarding the failure of DCU to comply with its legislative obligations such as the Disability Act, 2005. For information on how to make a complaint under the Disability Act, 2005, go to [Disability Policies](#).

² adapted from The Office of the Ombudsman's Guide to Developing a Complaint Handling System

- Complaints regarding the Students' Union, Clubs, Societies, or the Office of Student Life. For further information regarding specific policies, contact the [Office of Student Life](#).
- Examination appeals, seeking an assessment review or recheck of academic grades. See the [OVPAA website](#) for further information.
- [Research appeals](#) in terms of a negative recommendation regarding progression made by the supervisory panel, a decision not to confirm or transfer a student to the PhD register or the outcome of an examination. See the [OVPAA website](#) for further information.
- Appeals against the decision of the University Disciplinary Committee. See Section 10 of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- Academic judgements relating to course content, assessments, feedback, classifications, grades, or results.
- Complaints regarding staff employed by institutions or organisations when students are working or studying off campus - examples include clinical or teaching placements, INTRA and study abroad placements. In such cases, a student should refer to the relevant policies of the institution or organisation concerned.
- Complaints made anonymously, or requests made by students for complaints to be considered anonymously. It is a principle of natural justice that a person being complained about shall have the right to know the identity of the complainant. The University will consider anonymous complaints only where there is a compelling reason, supported by evidence, to do so.
- Third party complaints will not be considered unless:
 - ❖ the original complainant is unable to follow the procedure due to hospitalisation or being incapacitated. In this case, the complainant can give consent for a third party to raise a complaint on their behalf.
 - ❖ the original complainant is under 18 years old, and they authorise their parent/guardian to pursue a complaint on their behalf.

What is not considered a complaint:

- A request for information formally or informally, e.g., regarding policies, procedures, practices or under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and Data Protection Act 2018.
- The provision of feedback formally or informally, e.g., surveys, quality reviews, focus groups.



Policy Statement

The University respects all students' human rights and dignity within the DCU community. The University is committed to ensuring that every student can have an excellent university experience. To achieve this, DCU staff members aspire to high levels of competency, fairness, and professionalism. The University is committed to an inclusive, respectful environment where staff and students interact professionally and where each student can participate freely and fully in the life of the University. Creating such an environment requires commitment from each member of the University community. However, our university will treat seriously any complaint that is found to be malicious. The person responsible for such complaints, or any parties involved in the support of any such complaints may be subject to disciplinary proceedings taken by the University within the [Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

DCU staff engaging with this policy will:

- Listen and seek to understand the parties concerned, as they have the right to a fair and impartial determination of the issues, considering any relevant or appropriate evidence, factors, or circumstances.
- Act with integrity and transparency by providing any individual/unit named in a complaint with the details of the complaint, therefore allowing them to respond.
- Not penalise a student for lodging a complaint in good faith, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.
- Address all complaints in a fair and timely manner, aiming to adhere to the time limits prescribed in the *Student Complaint Procedures*. The time limits laid down under the policy may be extended only by mutual agreement of the parties concerned.
- Treat all complaints with confidentiality to protect those involved in the process, provided this does not compromise the resolution process. Access to information about individual investigations will only be shared with those with a legitimate access requirement and in line with the requirements of GDPR.
- Treat all parties with dignity and respect. No member of the university community named in a complaint procedure should suffer any unnecessary penalty for being involved in a complaint procedure. Staff named in a complaint can seek support from HR via the relevant business partner or through the [DCU Employee Assistance Programme](#).

The role of Student Support & Development Staff:

- A student support professional can provide information on how to make a complaint, provide a copy of the policy, procedures, and relevant administrative forms. Create an awareness in the student population of the content of this policy and its associated procedures.
- Provide appropriate support for students if they wish to make a complaint.

- Help identify if a complaint can be made within the scope of the Student Complaint Policy and/or another relevant student policy. Additionally, they can identify the correct DCU staff member to address the complaint.

The role of the complainant:

- Any complaint should be raised informally in the first instance with the intention of securing a resolution prior to invoking formal procedures.
- Make themselves available to attend meetings as required.
- Treat all DCU staff members with dignity and respect.
- Be respectful of the process and allow staff to deal with complaints within the timeframe of the procedures. Persistent, aggressive, or inappropriate behaviour may result in the [Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#) being invoked.

The role of Heads of Units and Services

- Address all complaints in a fair and timely manner, aiming to adhere to the time limits prescribed in the *Student Complaint Procedures*. The time limits laid down under the policy may be extended only by mutual agreement of the parties concerned.
- Retain records of the number of complaints and action taken in line with the requirements of GDPR.
- Report on the number of complaints to Senior Management annually.

Stage 1 - 3 Roles and Responsibilities

Unit or Service	Roles and Responsibilities		
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All aspects of academic programme delivery ● All aspects of Postgraduate Research Programmes ● All aspects of Postgraduate Taught Programmes ● Faculty Offices ● School Offices 	Lecturer, Chair of Programme, Research Supervisor or Manager	Head of School	Executive Dean of Faculty or School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access Service ● Counselling Service ● Careers Service ● Chaplaincy Service ● Counselling and Personal Development Service ● Disability and Learning Support 	Member of Staff within Service or Unit	Head of Unit or Service	Dean of Students

Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student Finance ● Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre ● Student Health Centre 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Helix ● DCU Restaurants and Cafes ● DCU Rooms and Campus Residence ● Health and Safety Unit ● Physical Infrastructure (Estates) ● Information Systems and Services 	Member of Staff within Unit	Director or Head of Unit	Chief Operations Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Registry and Student Fees Services ● DCU Placement 	Manager or Member of Staff within Unit	Director of Unit or Service	Vice-President Academic Affairs/Registrar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● DCU Library ● Sport and DCU Sport Facilities 	Manager or Member of Staff within Service	Director of Service	Deputy President

Related Documentation

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies / procedures / guidelines:

- [Student Complaint Procedures](#)
- [Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Policy](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Student Procedures](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct at Work or Study Policy](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct Student Procedures](#)
- [Student Gender Identity Policy](#)
- [Social Media Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#)
- [Guidance for Research Students and Supervisors in Respect of Resolving Difficulties Informally](#)

Contact

Any queries regarding this Policy should be directed to Deirdre Moloney, Student Policy Officer, Student Support & Development. Email Deirdre.moloney@dcu.ie

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as and when changes are required. If no reviews are requested, the policy will be reviewed in 2026.



Version Control

Policy Name	Student Complaint Policy		
Unit Owner	Student Support & Development		
Version Reference	Original Version 1.0	Reviewed Version	
Approved by	University Executive	N/a	
Effective Date	28 th November 2023	N/a	

End.

Appendix 1

Contact Points for Complaints dealt with under the Student Complaints Policy

Nature of Complaint	Stage 1 – Informal Procedure	Stage 2 Escalation Point 1	Stage 3 Escalation Point 2
All aspects of academic programme delivery	Discuss with lecturer and / or Chairperson of Programme	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of relevant School	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Executive Dean of Faculty / School
All aspects of Postgraduate Research Programmes	Discuss with lecturer, Supervisor or Chairperson of Programme	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of relevant School	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Executive Dean of Faculty / Dean
All aspects of Postgraduate Taught Programmes	Discuss with lecturer, Supervisor or Chairperson of Programme	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of relevant School	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Executive Dean of Faculty
Careers Service	Discuss with relevant member of Careers Service staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of Careers	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Students
Counselling Service	Discuss with relevant member of Counselling Service staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of Counselling & Personal Development	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Students
Student Health Centre	Discuss with relevant member of Student Health Centre staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of the Student Health Centre	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Students
Chaplaincy	Discuss with relevant member of Chaplaincy staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of Chaplaincy	Written complaint - completing the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> to the Dean of Students
DCU Placement Office	Discuss with relevant member of Placement Office staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Director of the DCU Placement Office	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Vice-President Academic Affairs/Registrar

Sport /DCU Sport Facilities	Discuss with relevant member of Sport or DCU Sport staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Director of Sports	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Deputy President
Registry and Student Fees Services	Discuss with relevant member of Student Fees or Registry staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Director of Registry	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Vice-President Academic Affairs/Registrar
DCU Library	Discuss with relevant member of Library staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Director of Library Services	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Deputy President
Information Systems & Services	Discuss with relevant member of Information Systems & Services staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Director of Information Systems & Services	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Chief Operations Officer
Physical Infrastructure	Discuss with relevant member of Estates Office staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Director of Estates	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Chief Operations Officer
Access Office	Discuss with relevant member of Access Office	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of Access	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Students
Disability & Learning Support	Discuss with relevant member of Disability & Learning Support staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of Disability & Learning Support	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Students
Health & Safety Unit	Discuss with relevant member of Health & Safety staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Head of Health & Safety	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Chief Operations Officer
Faculty Offices	Discuss with relevant member of Faculty Office staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the relevant Faculty Manager	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Faculty

School Offices	Discuss with relevant member of School Office staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the relevant Head of School	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Faculty
Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre	Discuss with relevant member of Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre Manager	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Dean of Students
DCU Rooms / Campus Residences	Discuss with relevant member of Campus Residence staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the DCU Rooms General Manager or Operations Manager	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Chief Operations Officer
DCU Restaurants / Cafes	Discuss with relevant member of hospitality staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the DCU Restaurant/Cafe General Manager or Operations Manager	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> and submit to the Chief Operations Officer
The Helix	Discuss with relevant member of hospitality staff	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> to The General Manager or Operations Manager	Written complaint - complete the <i>Student Complaints Form</i> to Chief Operations Officer

If you wish to complain about an area which is not listed above, please contact the DCU [Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre](#) and a staff member will be able to help identify the correct DCU staff member to address the complaint. Additionally if you are unsure if this is the correct policy to use in relation to your complaint, a Student Adviser in the [Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre](#) or the Student Policy Officer at deirdre.moloney@dcu.ie will be able to provide guidance.