## SPIR Student Complaints Policy

This Policy complements the revised College policy on Student Complaints approved by Council and implemented from September 2005. The emphasis is on informality, with the object of solving your problems quickly and simply. The majority of problems should be able to be solved at the first stage, with relatively few progressing to the third stage.

The Policy seeks to embody the following principles:

**Transparency** it spells out who is responsible for dealing with your complaint at each stage of the process, and indicates what action you should take if you feel dissatisfied with the outcome

**Speed** there are target timescales set for each stage of the process. If for any reason it is not possible to meet the timescale, you will be informed of the reason for the delay

**Natural justice** the Policy follows the principles of natural justice, in that no person who has any direct interest in a complaint will be involved in deciding the outcome and you will be guaranteed a fair hearing

**Confidentiality** your complaint will be dealt with confidentially, and only the person(s) responsible for dealing with the complaint, and those who are parties to it, will be informed

**Non-detriment** you will not be disadvantaged if you make a complaint in good faith

**Group action** if several of you have a problem, you can make a joint complaint

**A friend** you have the right to be accompanied by a friend when you make a complaint, or at any subsequent meeting to deal with the complaint

This Policy covers student concerns or complaints about the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service. There is a separate policy covering ‘appeals’ – i.e. requests for the review of an examination board decision relating to assessment, progression or the classification of a degree: these requests are considered under the provisions of the Regulations covering the Review of Examination Board Decisions. A copy of these Regulations can be found on the Student Enquiry Centre pages of the Intranet concerning [Student Complaints](http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/students/student-appeals/complaints/index.html)

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The school aims to provide effective teaching and assistance with academic matters, with the resources it has at its disposal. If you feel that what is provided falls short of this, there are various avenues open to you to express your feelings on the matter. Which you choose will depend on the type of problem you have encountered.

If you find some aspect of the *teaching or organisation* of a module unsatisfactory, the obvious person to talk to in the first place is **the tutor concerned**. If there are many teachers involved in a module, you may wish to consult the **Module Convenor**, whose name can be found on the QMPLUS site for the module. If neither the teacher nor the Module Convenor can satisfy you, you may take the matter to the **Head of School**.

If the problem affects not only yourself but a whole group of students, it may be sensible to refer it to the **Student Staff Liaison Committee**. From there it will be drawn to the attention of the **Head of School**.

If the problem is of an *administrative* nature, the first person to speak to is the **Administrative Director**. If you wish to take the matter further, you may take it to the **Head of School**.

In most cases, you will find it advantageous to consult your **Personal Adviser** before making any complaint. S/he may well be able, either to solve the problem there and then, or to indicate whom you can best approach. If the problem is for some reason difficult to discuss with your Adviser, you may instead talk to **the Senior Tutor** and/or **the Head of School.**

Outside the school, there are other sources of help and advice:

The Students’ Union, particularly the Vice-President (Education & Representation) The Advice & Counselling Service of Queen Mary.

## Types of Complaint

Complaints are of two kinds: **informal** and **formal**. The school policy consists of three stages:

*Informal complaint*

*Formal complaint at school level Formal complaint at institutional level*

## Stage 1: Informal complaint

If the problem is relatively straightforward, it can probably be settled informally. A brief talk with the member of staff in question may be sufficient to solve your problem. Even if it has to be referred upwards, to the Head of School, it may still be possible to deal with the matter by a face- to-face conversation. No record will normally be kept of such a complaint.

The object of this informal first stage is to resolve problems quickly and easily with a minimum of formality. You should receive a response within a week.

## Stage 2: Formal complaint at school level

If you cannot get the problem solved quickly through the informal policy, or if the matter is relatively serious, you should make a formal complaint in writing to the Head of School. Your complaint will be investigated, and you will receive a written response, normally within two weeks. The school keeps a record of all formal complaints, including a note of the substance of the complaint, and how the matter was resolved, and makes an annual report to the Academic Board.

## Stage 3: Formal complaint at institutional level

If you do not feel that the problem has been solved at the school level, you may bring a complaint at institutional level by writing to the Academic Registrar, spelling out the details of your complaint, and the steps you have already taken to get the matter resolved. The Academic Registrar will not normally consider complaints that have not first been raised at the school level unless the problems are particularly severe and/or urgent. S/he will then investigate the complaint according to the procedures set out in Queen Mary Policy.