Complaints Handling Procedure

Part 1: Introduction and overview

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Contents

Structure of the Complaints Handling Procedure

Our Complaints Handling Procedure reflects Queen Margaret University's commitment to valuing complaints. It seeks to resolve dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery, and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of complaints, so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.

The procedure was first developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), in collaboration with representatives of the Higher Education sector. The Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHPs) were revised in 2019 by the SPSO in consultation with all sectors. This new edition of the Higher Education procedure includes a core text, which is consistent across all public services in Scotland, with some additional text and examples specific to Higher Education. As far as is possible, the SPSO has produced a standard approach to handling complaints across Scotland's public services, which complies with its guidance on a MCHP. This procedure aims to help the Higher Education sector 'get it right first time'. The SPSO wants quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early responses by capable, well-trained staff.

All staff across Queen Margaret University will be made aware of this procedure as part of their induction, and refresher training provided as required, to ensure they are confident in identifying complaints, empowered to resolve simple complaints on the spot, and familiar with how to apply this procedure (including recording complaints).

Complaints give us valuable information that we can use to improve. Our Complaints Handling Procedure will enable us to address a complainant's dissatisfaction and may help us prevent the same problem from happening again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the complainants' views and experience, and can highlight problems we may miss otherwise. Handled well, complaints can give our students and other members of the public a form of redress when things go wrong, and can also help us continuously improve our services.

Handling complaints early creates better relations with students and other members of the public. Handling complaints close to the point of service delivery means we can deal with them locally and quickly, so they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure. Complaints that we do not handle swiftly can greatly add to our workload and are more costly to administer.

The Complaints Handling Procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships and enhance public perception of Queen Margaret University. It will help us keep the user at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.

1. This Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) explains to staff how to handle complaints. The CHP consists of:

     Overview and structure (part 1) – this document
     When to use the procedure (part 2) – guidance on identifying what is and what is not a complaint, handling complex or unusual complaint circumstances, the interaction of complaints and other processes, and what to do if the CHP does not apply.
     The complaints handling process (part 3) – guidance on handling a complaint through stages 1 and 2, and dealing with post-closure contact.
     Governance of the procedure (part 4) – staff roles and responsibilities and guidance on recording, reporting, publicising and learning from complaints.
     The guide for students (part 5) – information for students and members of the public on how we handle complaints.

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15. We must always bear in mind legal requirements, for example data protection legislation, as well as internal policies on confidentiality and the use of individuals' information.

    Further Information can be found on the University's [Data Protection](#) and [Privacy Statement](#) webpages.

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