

# **Kibogora Polytechnic**

## **Student Complaint Procedure**

### **Making a complaint**

#### **Introduction**

Kibogora Polytechnic is committed to providing high quality education and other services to its students. Our aim is to provide a supportive environment including academic, welfare and recreational services and to be responsive to concerns when they are raised.

Feedback from students is welcomed as part of the Institution's approach to the development and enhancement of the quality of its services. There are many local routes whereby concerns and issues can be raised and addressed and you are encouraged to make full use of these routes. In particular, you should ensure that you are familiar with the quality assurance procedures that exist within academic departments and are described in Moodle.

The Institution does, however, recognise that there may be occasions when you have cause for complaint about the service you have received, when this happens, the Complaints Procedure is intended to provide an accessible, fair and straightforward system which ensures an effective, prompt and appropriate response.

#### **The Institution aims to handle complaints in a way that:**

- encourages informal conciliation and facilitates early resolution;
- ensures a full and fair investigation;
- addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress;
- provides a prompt resolution within established timescales;
- positive actions can be taken to continuously improve services.

I hope that you will have a positive and rewarding experience at the Institution. If, however, concerns are brought to our attention, you can be assured that they will be treated in a serious and constructive manner and every effort will be made to ensure a satisfactory resolution.

**David Hamblin**  
**Rector**

## **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about any programme of study or related facility or any other service provided by the Institution. This Procedure does not apply where there are separate mechanisms in place:

- \* Appeals against Examination Board Decisions, contact Administration;
- Complaints about Kibogora Polytechnic Student Union (KPSU), contact KPSU;
- Staff Grievances, contact Administration;;
- Appeals or Complaints relating to the admissions process, contact Administration
- Complaints about Student Conduct, contact Administration

\*This Procedure will not be used for matters relating to assessment performance and academic judgement, except where there is a complaint about a service provided which has to be resolved before an appeal decision can be made. The Institution reserves the right to reclassify a complaint as an academic appeal or vice versa, if the submission falls properly within the remit of one procedure rather than the other.

## **Special Cases**

In the event of a complaint being made against a member of the Rectorate or the Institution Board, all complaints should be in writing and addressed to the President. Any complaint against the President should be in writing and addressed to the Rapporteur to the Institution Board, who will determine how to deal with the complaint.

## **Who can complain?**

Any student who directly seeks or receives a service from the Institution may lodge a complaint under this Procedure. Former students may complain within a reasonable time period, normally 3 calendar months from leaving the Institution.

Matters of concern may be raised individually or collectively and students should feel assured that they will not encounter any disadvantage having lodged a complaint in good faith.

Where complaints are raised collectively, the complaint should include a signed statement from all parties confirming that they have been materially affected by the alleged incident and authorising the Institution to correspond with a single named spokesperson.

Anonymous or third party complaints will not be dealt with under this Procedure. It is at the discretion of the Institution as to how these are handled.

Where there is reason to believe that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, the matter will be referred to the Director of Administration and Finance (DAF) who may decide to reject the complaint without full consideration of its merits. Reasons will be given as to why the complaint is considered to be an abuse of process. The Institution will reserve the right to invoke the Regulations for the Conduct of Students. You should also note appendix 1 which sets out the Institution's approach when dealing with unacceptable behaviour by a complainant.

### **Advice and Support**

Advice on the scope and operation of this Procedure may be obtained from the Dean of Students.

Students may seek independent advice and support from KPSU

All stages of this Procedure are internal proceedings. These proceedings are intended to be fair and to comply with the rules of natural justice, and should not be adversarial or overly legalistic. There is no need for anyone to have formal legal representation.

Anyone who lodges a complaint or against whom a complaint is made will be entitled to be accompanied by a person of their choosing at any stage in the Procedure. Students may seek representation from the KPSU or may choose to be accompanied by a friend. Students who lodge a complaint may not be represented in absentia.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be preserved during the investigation of a complaint to safeguard the interests of everyone concerned unless disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint. The Institution expects that all parties will respect the confidentiality of the process.

Any individual about whom a complaint is made will have the right to be informed of the fact and nature of the complaint by their line manager.

### **Actions**

In the case of all complaints, the Institution seeks to ensure that appropriate and reasonable action is taken. Where a complaint is found to be justified, any appropriate remedial action will be notified as part of the decision. If a complaint is found to be not justified at any stage, the reasons for the decision

will be communicated, together with details of any further recourse that is available.

Investigations will normally be conducted during semester time.

## **Time Limits**

### **Stage 1**

Complaints should be raised with the relevant member of staff immediately where possible, and normally not later than 10 working days after the incident giving rise to the complaint.

### **Stage 2**

Stage 2 complaints should be lodged within 15 working days of the Stage 1 response or within 15 working days of the incident giving rise to the complaint.

### **Stage 3**

Stage 3 complaints should be lodged within 15 working days of the Stage 2 response from the Institution or the final response from the partner college.

## **Former Students**

Former students may complain within a reasonable time period. Normally, this will be within 3 calendar months of leaving the Institution.

It is the Institution's aim that all complaints are dealt with in a timely manner. Students will be informed if there are likely to be any delays in the process. The Institution will make appropriate allowances for delays occasioned by exceptional circumstances on the part of students.

## **Monitoring the Process**

In order that the Institution can improve services to students, the receipt of formal [stage 2 and 3] complaints and responses will be monitored. A report on the outcome of the monitoring process will be made annually to the Senate.. This will enable the Institution to continuously improve its services and ensure an inclusive, consistent and constructive approach to complaints. The effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure will also be kept under review and, where appropriate, changes will be made.

## **P R O C E D U R E**

### **Stage 1 – Informal Stage**

It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis and close to their point of origin. However, the Institution recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where this is not appropriate and the Dean of Students can give advice.

Initial contact should normally, therefore, be made with the relevant member of staff who is responsible for dealing on a day-to-day basis with the matter being complained about. For example, if the complaint refers to an academic matter, the first point of contact should normally be module tutor or program leader. A complaint may also be informally raised with another senior member of staff. Initial contact can also be by a spokesperson on behalf of a group including by the KPSU (and at this stage of the procedure would not require a signed statement from the individuals concerned).

In order that a complaint can be dealt with effectively and efficiently, it must be drawn to the attention of the relevant member of staff immediately where possible and normally not later than 10 working days after the incident giving rise to the complaint.

At this stage, the relevant member of staff will discuss the complaint with you and other persons involved, to determine whether it can be resolved without recourse to more formal procedures.

A written record of the outcome will normally be sent to you. This will be notified to the Dean of Faculty or DAF where the effectiveness of the Department/Service could be improved, and may also be referred to in the event that the complaint is progressed to stage 2.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Stage**

If, having pursued the matter informally, you have reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction, you may pursue the matter through the formal stage within 15 working days of the informal response being given.

Where it is not appropriate for a complaint to be submitted for informal resolution, a formal complaint should be made within 15 working days of the alleged incident or concern.

Your complaint should be submitted in writing to the Vice Rector (Academic). Where complaints are raised collectively at this stage, the complaint should include a signed statement from all parties confirming that they have been materially affected by the alleged incident and authorising the Institution to correspond with a single named spokesperson.

The Complaint must detail the nature of the complaint; the informal steps taken to resolve it (or the reasons why informal steps have not been taken) and a statement as to why you remain dissatisfied; and the reasonable steps that you would wish to see taken to resolve the matter. Appropriate evidence should be appended e.g. copies of relevant letters, e-mails, signed witness statements and any other supporting documentation.

The Vice Rector (Academic) will acknowledge your complaint and pass it to the relevant Dean or the DAF to deal with. If the complaint is about a Dean or the DAF, the Vice Rector will determine who reviews the complaint.

The Dean or the DAF will investigate the complaint and may request a meeting with you to discuss the matter. The Dean or the DAF will notify you in writing of his or her conclusions and of any action the Department or Service intends to take.

It is the Institution's aim that most complaints dealt with under this stage will be resolved within 15 working days. You will be informed if there is likely to be any delay in the process.

All formal complaints and responses will be monitored by the Dean of Students.

### **Stage 3 – Final Stage**

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2, you may submit a request for a review of the decision of the Dean or the DAF under stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

Stage 3 may only be invoked where the preceding stage 2 has been completed (or when the procedures at the partner college have been exhausted). No new complaints may be introduced at stage 3. Students are strongly advised to seek advice from KPSU before progressing to stage 3.

A request for a review should be submitted to the Rector within 15 working days of the date of the stage 2 response and must be based on one (or more) of the following grounds:

- a. that new evidence or circumstances have become known, which the student could not have reasonably made known at the time of the stage 2 complaint;
- b. that the stage 2 investigation was not conducted fairly and/or in accordance with due process, and this materially affected the outcome;
- c. that the decision and outcome of the stage 2 complaint were manifestly unreasonable in the light of the evidence provided.

The request requires details of: the nature of the complaint; the steps already taken to resolve it and a statement as to why you remain dissatisfied; and the reasonable steps that you would wish to see taken to resolve the matter. Appropriate evidence should be appended e.g. copies of relevant letters, e-mails, signed witness statements and any other supporting documentation.

The Rector will appoint a Complaint Review Panel (the Panel) comprising three members as follows: the Rector or nominee who shall act as Chair; a

member of staff who is a Dean /DAF (or nominee) and who is not associated with the Department/Service concerned; and a student who shall normally be an elected member of the KPSU. No member of the Panel shall have been previously associated with the complaint.

The Panel will review the case and may request further information from the student and/or the Department/Service, and will decide on the appropriate action of:

- i. dismissing the request for a review, in which case the reasons for the decision will be communicated
- ii. convening a hearing to hear the case by the student and the response by the Dean or the DAF.

The Panel will aim to communicate this decision in writing within 15 working days of the receipt of the request for review.

If the Panel decides to proceed with a hearing, it will aim to convene the hearing within a further 15 working days. At the Hearing, each party will present their case and respond to questions from the Panel and the other party.

Stage 3 is a review of the complaint to determine whether it is justified in full or in part and whether the Department/Service has conducted a fair investigation and provided a reasonable response or resolution at stage 2.

The decision and outcome of the stage 3 complaint will be communicated by the Chair of the Panel to the student and the Dean /DAF in writing, normally within 5 working days of the hearing.

## **Conclusion**

A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued within 5 working days of the decision and outcome of the stage 3 complaint, or the decision of the Complaint Review Panel to dismiss the stage 3 complaint.

**In the event of any uncertainty about the scope of this Procedure or who to contact in the first instance, the Dean of Students will be pleased to assist.**

**This Complaints Procedure has been approved by the Senate and the Institution Board and forms part of the Institution's overall quality assurance framework.**