

Complaints and Appeals

Studying often requires a complicated juggling act. You may be dealing with a number of issues at the same time: getting to grips with student funding, learning new subject matter, familiarising yourself with student assessment and coping with life outside the University. You will probably be in contact with a number of organisations, University departments and individuals where you will need and expect a high level of service.

Organisations want to provide a good service but sometimes things go wrong or mistakes are made. This leaflet is a brief guide to what you should do if you are dissatisfied and want to complain or appeal. It cannot give a detailed breakdown, but will give general information about how to make your complaint/appeal and who to approach. It should be used as a starting point and act as a sign-post to more detailed information about successfully resolving problems while studying at Middlesex. Staff at the UniHelp Desk are also there to assist, so seek advice as soon as you can.

What is the difference between a complaint and an appeal?

Usually complaints arise when you are unhappy about something. You may feel you have not been dealt with properly, that information given to you was incorrect or that there has been an unacceptable delay. With an appeal, you may be perfectly happy with the way that you have been treated but feel that the wrong decision has been made and would like it re-examined.

Which areas does this leaflet cover?

We cannot cover everything, but give a brief overview of what to do if you have a complaint and/or appeal about any of the following:

- Assessment
- Library and Student Support Services
- Accommodation
- Academic Programmes
- Students' Union
- Student Finance England (SFE)
- The Student Loans Co (SLC)

Assessment

Generally, if you are unhappy about an assessment issue it is likely to relate to an awarded grade. You may be considering making an appeal because you believe an injustice has occurred and that with further information, a decision may be revised in your favour. First, it may be beneficial to discuss your concerns with the course tutor or an Assessment Officer so they can explain the reasons behind a decision. If you remain dissatisfied and you have grounds, then you should make a formal appeal.

To? The Assessment Board

How? A comprehensive guide to making this appeal can be found in the University Regulations. Current regulations are available in libraries and via: www.mdx.ac.uk/regulations

PLEASE NOTE: There are deadlines.

Student Support / UniHelp Desk

There are a number of departments designed to advise and support students on various issues. At Middlesex this will include Counselling, Learning Enhancement Team and Disability & Dyslexia Support, to name a few. All aim to give a speedy and professional service, but at times you may become unhappy about the way a service has been delivered. To facilitate the resolution of grievances, the University has a Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure. Use this to highlight your dissatisfaction and make your complaint.

To? As specified in the policy

How? The procedure encourages complaints to be resolved informally, as far as possible but does allow for the complaint to progress to a formal stage if necessary.

For more information about this policy see your Guide and Regulations 2018/19 or go to: unihub.mdx.ac.uk/your-middlesex/student-feedback/formal-complaints-procedure

Academic Programmes

Middlesex prides itself on 'providing challenging academic programmes underpinned by innovative research, scholarship and professional practice.' If you have serious concerns about academic practice, then a complaint regarding the delivery of your course or other issues can

be dealt with under the Student Complaints and Grievance Procedures, as previously outlined.

The Students' Union

MDXSU provides independent services which support and enhance the student experience here at Middlesex. These services include events, societies and Student Advice Advocates giving advice and assistance with such things as academic appeals and complaints against the University. See: www.mdxsu.com/advice

MDXSU is governed by a constitution outlining the rules and procedures by which it operates. If you have a complaint about the Union it might be useful to look at the constitution on: www.mdxsu.com/top-navigation/about-us/mdxsu-constitution-by-laws

Thereafter, you should make a formal complaint direct to MDXSU. Ask for details at the Students' Union office.

To? The President or General Manager.

How? In writing to MDXSU at Hendon

Student Finance England (SFE) or Student Loan Company (SLC)

SFE has an important role in both determining eligibility for Student Support and assessing how much money you receive each year. The SLC will process the assessment and facilitate the payment to you. Consequently, they are extremely important in helping to determine your success as a student, especially at the beginning of a course when you are just familiarising yourself with your new student status.

If you are unhappy with these organisations you may need to appeal or complain. In these circumstances it is advisable to visit the Student Welfare Advice Team (SWAT), to look at your grounds so they can help you determine whether you should go ahead. You may also find useful information on their website. See: www.slc.co.uk/students-and-customers/contact-information-for-customers/making-a-complaint.aspx

What if I am still not satisfied? Can I take matters further?

If you have exhausted the internal complaints procedures, there are independent reviewers available. These include:

- For complaints about the University: The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education - www.oiahe.org.uk
- The Student Loans Company Independent Assessor http://media.slc.co.uk/sfe/nysf/SLC_how_to_make_a_complaint.pdf

Be confident about taking justified complaints through these stages. Often you can only effect change by highlighting issues to those who must oversee the fairness and appropriateness of policies and practices.

If you want to take an appeal even further, you may have to consider using the legal system to seek redress. To do this, apply to the High Court for a judicial review, but beforehand always seek independent legal advice. This might be from a solicitor, a Student Advisor, the Students' Union or the Citizens Advice Bureau. They will be able to put you in touch with a suitable specialist and/or give you some idea about the likely success of your appeal.

Note: Before proceeding with any complaint or appeal, check all that is expected of you i.e. check you have supplied all the required information and completed things on time.

Any questions?

Contact the Middlesex University Student Welfare Advice Team on 020 8411 3008 or email: welfare@mdx.ac.uk

You can access some of our other Welfare Advice Guide information leaflets at: unihub.mdx.ac.uk/welfare-guides

Middlesex University Student Welfare Advice Team have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this leaflet is accurate. Middlesex University however, cannot be held responsible for any omissions or errors. This publication can only be a guide and is not intended to replace the complex and diverse legislation covered. Statutes and regulations may change during the year without notice. If in doubt seek independent advice.

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