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## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY**

<b>Date Completed:</b>	August 2017
<b>Last Review:</b>	November 2021
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	November 2022
<b>Approved By:</b>	Academic Council
<b>First version date:</b>	August 2019
<b>Version:</b>	V4.0

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Optimi College (Pty) Ltd is committed to providing its students with education of the highest quality, which will prepare the student for a productive and well-rounded work-life experience.

Optimi College acknowledges that students are individuals, each with unique expectations and experiences of their studies. Therefore, they need a channel to transform their problems, concerns, and challenges as part of a constructive and effective procedure addressing their grievances.

Optimi College, therefore, commits itself to procedures to ensure the effective communication of grievances by students.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve Optimi College's relationship with their students and co-creation of a communal set of values
- To articulate a grievance handling process which focuses on the continuous improvement of our services and expectations
- To promote a culture in which grievances are resolved promptly, objectively as well as with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality
- To provide a fair and equitable platform in which both parties (our students and the college) are respected, not discriminated against or victimised
- To respects the privacy of all parties involved

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students and prospective students at Optimi College.

All employees of *Optimi College* must familiarise themselves with the policy, but it is of particular importance to **Educational Planners, Support Staff and the Academic Department** as these departments interact with students on a daily basis.

**The Manager: Learning Delivery**, ensures that the resolution of student grievances follows consistent procedures across Optimi College and provides an independent, impartial review of academic and administrative grievances.

It is the responsibility of the learner to ensure that they are familiar with the regulations and policies relating to conduct, grievances, and discipline.

Each learner admitted to a programme of study offered by *Optimi College* must familiarise themselves with ***Optimi College's Terms and Conditions***.



## 4. PRINCIPLES

- Grievances are raised and dealt with properly to ensure that students and staff can perform at their best
- Complaints and grievances focus on perceived issues, system challenges, or behaviours, but are not personalised
- Evidence is provided to support the grievance and is discussed openly and respectfully
- Where possible, informal resolution is preferable, but Optimi College recognises that, in some cases, differences and disagreement can be of such a nature that a formal process needs to be initiated.
- Clear expectations regarding the outcome of the grievance are identified

## 5. PROCESS FOR COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

The resolution process for academic and administrative complaints and grievances is conducted in two phases:

### 5.1 Phase 01: Informal Resolution

#### 5.1.1 Complaint

The complaint is defined as a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction from a student with either a decision, for example, a decision or the outcome of an assessment, or the level of service delivery from Optimi College.

A complaint is handled through a well documented informal resolution process. Optimi College regards complaints in a very serious light.

When a student raises a complaint, the designated staff member who receives the verbal or written feedback from the student takes responsibility for navigating the concerns raised by the student.

This could include but is not restricted to, a complaint raised on social media, a call or email made directly to students support, an email received through the QBIT (Optimi College's learning management system) ticket thread.

Optimi College's learning management system (QBIT) and ticketing system make provision for the recordkeeping of the student complaints. It remains the responsibility of the designated staff member either to resolve or direct the student complaint to the correct department for resolution.

The following time targets ensure the seamless acknowledgement of the student complaints from the time received:

**5.1.1.1 Acknowledgement of the complaint: 03 to 04 hours**

**5.1.1.2 Describing to the student the procedure to follow: 04 to 05 hours**

**5.1.1.3 Resolving the student's complaint: 24 to 48 hours**



The designated staff member must follow the process and procedure to ensure that the cycle of service delivery towards resolution is completed.

## **5.2 Phase 02: Formal Resolution**

### **5.2.1 Stage 01: Grievance**

#### **5.2.1.1 Initiating a grievance**

A student raises a grievance if the informal approach does not resolve the complaint.

A grievance should be submitted in writing, addressed to the **Accreditation & QA Specialist**, clearly indicating the details of the complaint and the expected outcome of the process. Grievances must be sent to the following email address: [grievances@collegesa.co.za](mailto:grievances@collegesa.co.za)

Thereafter, the **QA and Accreditation Specialist** will contact the student to discuss and mediate a possible resolution.

#### **5.2.1.2 Initiating a grievance investigation**

If the efforts to mediate the complaint are not successful, the **Head of Academic Services and Accreditation & QA Specialist** will initiate a full investigation into the student's records. This will include interviews with the designated staff member involved.

Working with the **Head of Academic Services**, the **Accreditation & QA Specialist** identifies an appropriate independent manager to chair the grievance meeting.

The **Accreditation & QA Specialist** sends a written invitation to the student to attend the grievance meeting which can take the form of a face-to-face meeting, a video call or a conference call. This meeting must be scheduled within ten working days of the original grievance letter submitted by the student.

The meeting allows the student to explain the background to their grievance and the resolution they are seeking. Minutes of the meeting include all relevant information raised as well as any other additional information.

#### **5.2.1.3 Feedback on the outcome**

After the student has left the grievance meeting the Chairperson, **Head of Academic Services**, and **Accreditation & QA Specialist** will evaluate the evidence presented. Once they have concluded, the chairperson prepares a formal response in writing to the student. The formal response summarises the conclusions, and the resolution recommended is presented to the student via written response and delivered by registered post.

The **Chairperson** and **The Manager: Learning Delivery** should arrange a follow-up meeting with the designated staff member involved to discuss the outcome with a particular focus on any recommendation(s) and/or further action(s) required to support a resolution.

### **5.2.2 Stage 02: Appeal**

#### **5.2.2.1 Logging an appeal**

A student must raise an appeal within ten days of the grievance meeting if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance procedure.



The appeal will not reconsider the original complaint but will consider perceived irregularities in the protocol according to the policy.

#### **5.2.2.2 The appeal outcome**

An appeals meeting will be set up by the **The Manager: Learning Delivery** and an appropriate independent manager to chair the appeals meeting.

All the relative information will be reviewed and the decision by the Chairperson will be final.

The outcome of the appeal is confirmed in writing and is also communicated formally to the student within ten days of the formal appeal received. The decision of the chairperson is the final phase in the process, and no further action is considered.

### **5.3 Responsibilities**

#### **5.3.1 Student Responsibility**

The student must:

- Co-operate with all parties involved
- Openly and honestly communicate all relevant information
- Behave in a manner that portrays courtesy and respect

#### **5.3.2 Staff Responsibility**

All Optimi College staff are responsible for giving serious consideration to student complaints:

- Responding to student complaints in a timely manner
- Respect the privacy of students making a complaint
- Mediate a fair investigation and negotiating a resolution

