



ACADEMIC and NON-ACADEMIC STUDENT GRIEVANCE HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1.0 OVERVIEW

At **The School of Higher Education Limited (SHEL)**, we are committed to maintaining an environment that fosters fairness, equity, and transparency. This policy outlines the procedure for handling student grievances in a manner that is effective, fair, and consistent. The aim is to resolve issues promptly while protecting the rights of students and safeguarding the institution's reputation.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and accessible grievance handling procedure that:

- Ensures that students can raise concerns without fear of discrimination or victimization.
- Protects the rights of students while maintaining SHEL's integrity and reputation.
- Promotes fairness and consistency in resolving grievances.
- Prevents the recurrence of similar grievances by identifying and addressing underlying issues.

1.2 Objectives

SHEL aims to:

- Provide an exceptional service to our current and prospective students.
- Foster an inclusive, respectful, and non-discriminatory environment where grievances are addressed swiftly and appropriately.
- Ensure that all grievances are handled fairly and impartially, without discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other protected characteristic.
- Institute a system for learning from grievances to continuously improve SHEL's practices and policies.

2.0 POLICY COVERAGE

2.1 Definition of Grievance

A **grievance** refers to any school-related issue that a student believes is unfair, discriminatory, or obstructive to their educational experience. Grievances may concern both academic and non-academic matters and can include:

- **Academic Issues:** Issues related to grades, course content, teaching quality, exam procedures, etc.
- **Non-Academic Issues:** Problems with campus facilities, parking, timetabling, textbooks, fees, etc.
- **Discriminatory Practices:** Any policy, procedure, rule, or grade perceived as unfair or discriminatory based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or age.
- **Financial Matters:** Tuition payments, outstanding fees, and refund policies.

2.2 Complainant Definition

A **complainant** is any student (current or non-current) who wishes to raise a grievance. The grievance procedure is free of charge, and complaints must be submitted by the student concerned. Students cannot file grievances on behalf of other students in personal matters.

3.0 INFORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

3.1 Resolution at the Initial Level

For minor grievances or concerns, students are encouraged to resolve the issue informally by discussing the matter directly with the **Academic Director** or **Senior Programme Coordinator**. The following steps apply:

- **3.1.1:** The student must clearly present their grievance at each stage of the process.
- **3.1.2:** Each person involved must act reasonably, using common sense and judgment in addressing the grievance.
- **3.1.3:** Where necessary, the relevant authority should be consulted to ensure an effective resolution.
- **3.1.4:** The informal procedure should be completed within **seven (7) days** from the date the grievance is raised.

The informal process is encouraged as a first step to resolving issues quickly and amicably.

4.0 FORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If the grievance is not resolved through informal means, or if the student prefers a formal resolution, the following steps will be followed:

4.1 Submission of Formal Grievance

- **4.1.1:** The student must submit a **written grievance** via email to the **Programme Coordinator**, detailing the nature of the complaint along with any supporting evidence necessary for review.

- **4.1.2:** The Programme Coordinator will acknowledge the receipt of the grievance in writing and forward it to the **Academic Director** for further review.
- **4.1.3:** The Academic Director will assess the grievance's severity and submit a report to the **Appeal Committee** for further action.

4.2 Appeal Committee Review

- **4.2.1:** The **Appeal Committee** will be convened by the Academic Director, and it will consist of the following members:
 - Academic Director
 - Administrative Director
 - Relevant Lecturer(s)
 - Programme Manager
 - Staff member(s)
- **4.2.2:** The Appeal Committee must hold a hearing within **three (3) days** of receiving the grievance, unless both the complainant and respondent agree to an extension.
- **4.2.3:** The Appeal Committee will review the grievance, assess the evidence, and hear from all relevant parties. A written decision will be issued to the **Executive Chairman**.

4.3 Final Decision and Appeal

- **4.3.1:** The **Executive Chairman** will receive the Committee's findings and make a final decision.
- **4.3.2:** If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Committee's decision, they may seek a review from the Executive Chairman, whose decision will be **final**.
- **4.3.3:** During any grievance meeting or interview, the complainant has the right to be accompanied by a trusted support person.

4.4 Special Cases for UOB and ABE Programmes

- **University of Bedfordshire (UOB)** students enrolled at SHEL must follow the **UOB Student Complaint Policy and Procedure** for formal grievances. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/iwpdlta5/grievance-policy-and-procedure-march-2021.pdf>
- Students in the **ABE Programmes** must refer to the **ABE Complaints Policy**, which can be accessed through their online portal: <https://www.abeuk.com/sites/default/files/2024-02/ABE%20Appeals%20Policy%20v4.8%20CLEAN.pdf>

5.0 RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

5.1 Confidentiality of Grievance Records

All records related to grievances will be kept **confidential** and handled in accordance with SHEL's **Retention and Disposal Policy**.

- Grievance records will be stored securely at SHEL's **main campus** in **Rushworth Street, San Fernando**.
- **5.1.1:** The retention period for grievance records is **five (5) years**.
- **5.1.2:** Access to grievance records will be granted only with approval from the **Administrative Director**.
- **5.1.3:** The records will be used solely for the purpose of resolving grievances and improving institutional policies and practices.

6.0 POLICY REVIEW AND MONITORING

6.1 Continuous Improvement

SHEL will regularly review and monitor this grievance procedure to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with best practices. Feedback from students and staff will be sought periodically to improve the grievance resolution process.

6.2 Monitoring of Outcomes

The outcomes of all grievances will be analyzed to identify recurring issues or trends, with the aim of improving the institution's policies, procedures, and services.

7.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Student Handbook:** A copy of the **Student Handbook**, which includes information on the grievance handling process, is available to all students at the beginning of their course.
- **Student Support:** Students are encouraged to contact the **Student Support Services** for assistance at any stage of the grievance process. These services include academic advice, emotional support, and guidance throughout the complaint procedure.

8.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The Student Grievance Handling Policy ensures that SHEL provides a fair, equitable, and transparent process for resolving student grievances. By maintaining a systematic approach to addressing concerns, SHEL upholds its commitment to fostering a supportive educational environment where students' voices are heard and respected.

These roles collectively ensure that grievances are handled with fairness, impartiality, and efficiency, protecting both the students' rights and SHEL's reputation.

8.1. Executive Chairman

- **Overall Responsibility:** The Executive Chairman holds the final authority in the grievance resolution process. This individual ensures that the procedure is adhered to properly and is responsible for making final decisions after the Appeal Committee has reviewed the case.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Ensures the grievance process aligns with SHEL's values, policies, and legal obligations.
 - Reviews and makes the final decision on appeals or unresolved grievances.
 - Provides oversight of the grievance handling system to ensure it remains effective and transparent.

8.2. Academic Director

- **Primary Responsibility:** The Academic Director is primarily responsible for managing the grievance handling procedure once a formal grievance has been submitted. This individual also chairs the Appeal Committee.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Receives the formal grievance and reviews its seriousness.
 - Reports the grievance to the Appeal Committee for a detailed review.
 - Ensures the grievance procedure is carried out fairly and in line with SHEL's policies.
 - Chairs the Appeal Committee and ensures that findings are appropriately reported to the Executive Chairman.

8.3. Senior Programme Coordinator / Programme Coordinator

- **Initial Point of Contact:** The Programme Coordinator is responsible for receiving and acknowledging the formal grievance submissions. They act as the point of contact for students wishing to file a grievance.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Acts as the first point of contact for students filing grievances.
 - Ensures that grievances are documented, acknowledged, and passed on to the Academic Director.
 - Assists in resolving informal grievances at the early stages of the procedure.
 - Helps facilitate communication between students and other members of staff during the grievance process.

8.4. Appeal Committee

- **Responsible for Review and Resolution:** The Appeal Committee is tasked with reviewing formal grievances once they have been escalated to the formal stage. This group makes findings based on the grievance details, and their recommendations are submitted to the Executive Chairman.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Reviews the grievance and related evidence.
 - Holds hearings or interviews with the complainant, respondent, and any other relevant parties.
 - Makes a decision or recommendation based on the findings of the hearing.
 - Submits findings to the Executive Chairman for final resolution.
 - Ensures that all grievance matters are handled in a fair, impartial, and timely manner.

8.5. Administrative Director

- **Overseeing Documentation and Compliance:** The Administrative Director has a supervisory role in ensuring that grievance records are handled and stored in line with SHEL's Retention and Disposal Policy.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Ensures that grievance records are kept confidential, properly stored, and disposed of according to SHEL's retention policy.
 - Approves access to grievance records when necessary.
 - Monitors the overall effectiveness of the grievance handling system.
 - Coordinates the review and update of the grievance handling policy as needed.

8.6. Student Support Services

- **Support for Complainants:** The Student Support Services team provides students with guidance and support throughout the grievance process.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Offers emotional, academic, and procedural support to students filing grievances.
 - Provides information about the grievance process, and assists students in understanding their rights and options.
 - Supports students during hearings, meetings, and interviews as they may choose to be accompanied by a trusted support person.

8.7. Complainants (Students)

- **Engagement in the Process:** Students who wish to file a grievance are responsible for submitting the grievance in a timely manner and providing relevant details and evidence to support their claims.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Submit grievances in writing with sufficient detail and evidence.
 - Participate in the grievance process by attending meetings and hearings if necessary.
 - Work cooperatively with staff during the resolution process.

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