



Nazarene Theological College Complaints Policy & Procedure¹

Introduction and Principles

As part of its commitment to ensuring the standard and quality of its programmes of study, services, and facilities, the College has established this Procedure to deal with complaints from students about College provision or College personnel. Complaints provide useful feedback information and, where appropriate, will be used to improve services and facilities

1. This Procedure is available for students registered for programmes of study at the College. For the purposes of this Procedure, the term “student” will include also those who have recently been registered as a student at the College.
2. The Procedure comprises a number of stages, both informal and formal. Students who have a complaint to make should, where possible, raise it directly with the staff member concerned at the earliest opportunity, as matters that are dealt with informally at an early stage have the best chance of being resolved effectively. In many cases, the most effective way to resolve an issue is through an informal complaint. In some cases, an informal approach is not an appropriate or effective, so students may proceed with a formal complaint. In such situations, the recipient of the complaint should decide at which stage in the procedure the complaint should most appropriately be considered, taking account of its particular nature and circumstances. In respect of particularly serious complaints, the student may write directly to the Principal without having followed the informal and formal stages of this procedure set out below. In such cases, the Principal will decide whether to refer the complaint for consideration by a Complaints Panel or whether it should more appropriately be referred to an earlier stage in the procedure.
3. Formal complaints should be made as soon as possible, and in any case within 40 working days of the events or actions (or lack of actions) which have prompted the complaint. The College will not normally consider complaints made after this period, unless there is a credible and compelling reason for the delay.
4. Every reasonable effort will be made to deal promptly and efficiently with all complaints, to investigate them thoroughly and objectively and to seek to resolve them satisfactorily. Complaints will be dealt with positively and constructively. If a complaint is upheld, the College will seek to provide an appropriate response and will correct any mistakes or misunderstandings and will take any other action as appropriate. If a complaint is not upheld then reasons for that decision will be given.
5. While the College treats complaints confidentially, it may be necessary to share relevant details with those involved in order to investigate properly. . Also, an individual against whom a complaint is made has the right to be supplied either a full copy of the complaint, or a redacted copy if the complainant is concerned they, or others named, may be retaliated against. The substance of the

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debate and any evidence used for it will be supplied to the individual against whom a complaint is made. If a student wishes their complaint to be given complete confidentiality, they are advised to discuss how the complaint might be addressed with an appropriate officer in the College (such as the Chaplain or the VP Academic). The College will handle personal data in accordance with data protection legislation.

6. The effectiveness of any complaints procedure depends on the College being able to collect appropriate information from the parties involved in order to investigate the matter properly. Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated under this Procedure. However, the College may choose to act on them if there is sufficient evidence of a serious issue.. It is at the discretion of the member of staff receiving an anonymous complaint to determine how the matter is to be handled. Normally, a member of staff receiving an anonymous complaint should seek advice from a senior leader of the College.

7. The College will treat all complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination. When complaints are submitted, complainants and College staff should act reasonably and fairly towards each other and respectfully adhere to this Procedure. Where a complaint is shown to be frivolous, vexatious or motivated by malice, disciplinary action may be taken against the complainant under the provisions of the Conduct and Discipline of Students policy.

(a) The College reserves the right to terminate consideration of a complaint and/or restrict access to staff or procedures for complainants who seek, by pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct:

- i. To be, or are, disruptive; and/or
- ii. Whose requests are disproportionate and/or unnecessary and/or cause disproportionate and/or repeated efforts by members of staff.

(b) Where a complaint is found to meet the above criteria, the recipient of the complaint should inform the complainant accordingly and direct them to the next appropriate stage of the Procedure.

8. The time limits set out in this Procedure will normally be followed. However, where, for good reason, this is not possible, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

9. The College reserves the right to postpone considering, dealing with and/or responding to a complaint when the student is pursuing legal proceedings against the College.

10. Students seeking help in using this procedure, or if they are uncertain as to whom their complaint should be referred, should seek advice from any of the following: (a) an appropriate College Officer as identified in their programme handbook; (b) their pastoral care group leader; (c) a Chaplain.

Definition and Scope of the Procedure

11. The College defines a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the College's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College.'²

12. The Procedure is designed for complaints in respect of the student's experience at the College related to:

- (a) the provision of programmes, or parts of programmes of study, services or facilities by the College;
- (b) the actions or lack of actions by the College or its staff.

13. The Procedure does not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist (as noted in brackets):

- (a) appeals relating to examinations or assessments or to academic progress or against expulsion or exclusion on academic grounds (Academic Appeals Procedure);
- (b) complaints involving an allegation of misconduct by a student (Student Policy on Harassment; Student Policy on Sexual Misconduct);
- (c) complaints involving an allegation of harassment, discrimination, victimisation and/or bullying by a student or member of staff (Student Policy on Harassment; Student Policy on Sexual Misconduct).

² Adapted from Paragraph 14, OIA Good Practice Framework.

Information about these separate procedures can be obtained from MOODLE, from the student or programme handbook, or from the appropriate College member of staff.

14. This Procedure can be used by students for both individual or collective complaints. It is expected that the student(s) concerned will pursue the complaint personally; complaints submitted by a third party will not be accepted unless accompanied by written authorisation from the student(s).

Complaints by a group of students are often of a general nature where it is usually more appropriate for the students to raise the matter with a student representative on the relevant college committee in the first instance. Complaints may then be made by the group of students if the relevant representation system has not achieved a satisfactory outcome, or if this is not thought to be an appropriate route.

Informal Stage – Local Resolution

15. Most complaints can be resolved informally and, where practicable, a complaint should be dealt with as close as possible to the point at which it arises. The complaint should therefore be made initially to the appropriate member of staff who seems best placed to deal with the matter (e.g. Academic Adviser, Personal Tutor, Programme Lead, Chaplain, VP Academic). If a student is unsure who to contact, they should contact their personal tutor or the VP (Operations). A student should normally expect to receive a written or verbal acknowledgement of receipt within five working days of making the complaint and a full written response within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.

Formal Procedure

16. If the student is not satisfied with the response at the informal stage, they may initiate a formal complaint by completing a Complaints Form and submitting it to the office of the VP (Operations). Copies of the Complaints Form may be obtained [here](#), at the College Reception, or from the VP (Operations). The information to be given on the Complaints Form is as follows:

- (a) details of the complaint, including the attachment of any relevant supporting evidence, e.g., emails and correspondence that the student wishes to have taken into account. Such evidence should normally be contemporaneous and capable of verification. All evidence should be written in English or, if not, certifiably translated;
- (b) a statement of the steps already taken to try to resolve the complaint informally and why the response has not been considered to be satisfactory;
- (c) the form of resolution or redress sought.

The VP (Operations) Office will acknowledge receipt of the Complaints Form within five working days and will determine whether the complaint should be dealt with in the VP (Operations) Office or whether the complaint should more appropriately be investigated by the head of another committee or service (e.g., Resident Assistant, Chaplain, the Librarian or the Learning Enhancement office). In the event that the complaint is referred, the student will be informed accordingly.

17. The person dealing with the formal complaint (hereafter referred to as the 'Investigator'), who must be independent of the source of the complaint, will undertake an investigation into the substance of the complaint using whatever means they feel appropriate. If a meeting with the student takes place, the student may be accompanied by a fellow student, a Students' Union officer or a member of staff. The Investigator will attempt resolution of the complaint by a means appropriate to its nature and circumstances. Such means may include:

- (a) correspondence between the parties;
- (b) negotiation with the student or with appropriate members of staff or with both;
- (c) facilitation of a conciliation meeting between the student and the staff concerned;
- (d) if both parties agree, referral for mediation.

18. Students who submit a formal complaint after 40 working days from the issue that prompted the complaint, without a credible and compelling explanation for the late submission, will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter by the Investigator (see paragraph 23).

19. It is expected that the formal procedure should normally be completed and a written response sent to the student within 30 working days of receipt of the completed Complaints Form. The possible outcomes at this stage include:

- (a) specific action to resolve the matter;
- (b) provision to the student of information in explanation of the circumstances which led to the complaint;

- (c) referral of the matter to the Complaints Panel if the complaint raises serious or complex matters which require further investigation and enquiry;
- (d) dismissal of the complaint as being without foundation, with reasons given to the student in writing.

20. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint and believes that his or her complaint has not been handled properly or fairly according to these procedures, or if the student has new evidence which they were unable (for credible and compelling reasons) to provide with the formal complaint, the student may request a Review (see paragraphs 22).

Review

21. If, once a decision on the complaint has been given, the student believes that the complaint has not been handled fairly or properly in accordance with these procedures, or if the student has new evidence which they were unable (for credible and compelling reasons) to provide with the formal complaint, the student may request a review by writing to the College's validating body, the University of Manchester (Director of Teaching and Learning Support), within ten working days of receipt of the formal response. The request should include details of why the student remains dissatisfied and what resolution the student is seeking, and should include copies of correspondence exchanged during the preceding stages, and any other relevant evidence. Thereafter, the appeal will follow the procedure outlined in the [University of Manchester Complaints Procedure](#).

Conclusion of the Student Complaints Procedure

22. At the conclusion of the Procedure, the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter. There are no other complaints procedures within the College beyond those detailed above. Students who believe that their case has not been dealt with properly by the College or by the University or that the outcome is unreasonable may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if the complaint is eligible under its rules and once all internal procedures have been concluded.

[Note: information about the role of the OIA and the procedure for submitting complaints can be obtained from the Academic Office or from the OIA website: www.oiahe.org.uk.]

Annual Report

23. The VP (Operations) reports twice a year to the Board of Governors on the number and nature of complaints, identifying any general issues that may have arisen.

Document control box	
Policy title:	Complaints Policy
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Lead contact:	VP Academic