

London Academy for Applied Technology (LAAT)

Student Complaints Policy

Policy title: LAAT Student Complaints Policy

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Department / Function: Academic / Student Experience

Policy Owner: Academic Dean (or Head of Student Experience)

Oversight Committee: Academic Board

Approving Body: Academic Board (recommendation) / Board of Governors (final approval)

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Supersedes: None

Regulatory Alignment with Office for Students (OfS) Conditions

This Student Complaints Policy forms a core component of the London Academy for Applied Technology's (LAAT) student protection, governance, and quality assurance framework. It ensures that students have access to clear, fair, transparent, and timely mechanisms for raising concerns and seeking redress, in line with regulatory and sector expectations.

The Policy supports compliance with OfS Condition **C1 (Consumer Protection Law Compliance)** by ensuring that LAAT operates complaints procedures that are accessible, impartial, and procedurally fair, and that students are informed of internal and external routes for resolution, including escalation to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) following completion of internal processes. It also supports Condition **F1 (Provision of Information)** by requiring LAAT to publish clear, accurate, and accessible information for students on how to raise complaints, applicable timescales, and expected outcomes, enabling informed engagement with institutional processes.

The Policy further supports **Condition E1 (Public Interest Governance)** and **Condition E2 (Management and Governance)** by establishing defined responsibilities, reporting lines, and governance oversight arrangements for monitoring complaint trends, ensuring consistency in decision-making, and embedding institutional learning and continuous improvement. Complaint data, risks, and outcomes are reviewed through LAAT's governance and academic assurance structures to provide accountability and senior-level assurance regarding fairness, effectiveness, and student protection. This ensures LAAT's complaints arrangements operate consistently with sector norms, OfS regulatory expectations, and partner academic governance standards.

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

This Policy sets out how students of the London Academy for Applied Technology (LAAT) may raise concerns and complaints regarding their academic experience, learning environment, student services, or any aspect of institutional provision delivered under LAAT's higher education programmes. It defines the processes through which complaints are received, investigated, resolved, recorded, and reviewed, ensuring that complaints are managed consistently, proportionately, and in accordance with approved institutional procedures.

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that student complaints are handled fairly, transparently, promptly, and without academic or personal detriment to the student. It establishes clear and accessible stages for complaint resolution, provides independent review mechanisms where required, and ensures that students are informed of their right to external review through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) once internal procedures are completed. The Policy also ensures that themes and lessons arising from complaints are systematically monitored and used to inform continuous enhancement of teaching, student support, and institutional practice. In doing so, this Policy supports LAAT's compliance with Office for Students (OfS) conditions relating to student protection, information transparency, governance oversight, and consumer rights, and aligns with Plymouth Marjon University validating partner requirements and the OIA Good Practice Framework.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all students enrolled on higher education programmes delivered by LAAT under franchised or validated arrangements, and to recent former students (normally within 12 months of the matter complained about). It covers complaints relating to academic delivery, services, facilities, student support, and staff or student conduct where another specific procedure is not more appropriate. The Policy applies across all LAAT campuses, online provision, and partner-approved learning environments. Where any conflict arises between this Policy and Plymouth Marjon University regulations or procedures, the University's requirements take precedence.

3. Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction by a student regarding an action, omission, or standard of service provided by LAAT which the student expects to be investigated and resolved.

Early Resolution: Informal local handling of a concern without initiating a formal complaint.

Formal Complaint: A written complaint submitted for investigation under Stage Two of this Policy.

Review Stage: The final internal stage determining whether the formal complaint was handled correctly and whether the decision was reasonable.

OIA: The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

4. Principles

LAAT manages student complaints according to the following principles:

- Accessibility and clarity
- Early and proportionate resolution
- Fairness and impartiality
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Timely communication
- Learning and continuous improvement

5. Governance and Oversight

The **Board of Governors** holds ultimate responsibility for institutional oversight of student complaint handling. The **Academic Board** provides academic and operational oversight of complaint volumes, themes, outcomes, and improvement actions.

Academic Board will:

- Approve and periodically review this Policy
- Receive anonymised complaints data and trend analysis
- Monitor interface with validating partner complaint arrangements
- Provide assurance reports to the Board of Governors

6. Policy Statement – Complaints Procedure

Policy Statement – Stages of the Complaints Procedure

LAAT operates a three-stage student complaints process, plus an external review stage:

Stage One – Early Resolution

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

Stage Three – Review

External – OIA Review

Stage One – Early Resolution

Students are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as possible with the relevant staff member, [Programme Leader](#). Wherever possible, concerns should be addressed quickly and informally, through explanation, corrective action or mediation. A response should normally be provided within 7 working days of the concern being raised. Outcomes may

include an explanation, an apology, practical steps to remedy the issue, or agreement on future actions.

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

Students may submit a Formal Complaint Form (with supporting evidence) within a specified timeframe (normally within 1 month of the issue or the end of early resolution). The complaint is acknowledged and an Investigating Officer or Panel is appointed. The student is invited to a meeting (in person or online) to discuss the complaint and any desired outcomes. The Panel considers the evidence and issues a written outcome, normally within 20 working days, explaining whether the complaint is upheld (in whole or part) or not upheld, with reasons and any actions.

Stage Three – Review

A student may request a Review of the Stage Two decision only on specific grounds (procedural irregularity, unreasonable decision, new evidence, or bias). Review requests must normally be submitted within 10 working days of the Stage Two outcome. A senior member of staff not previously involved considers the grounds and may uphold, amend or refer back the original decision. The Review outcome is final internally, and the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter.

External Review – OIA

Once internal procedures are exhausted, students may ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to review their case, normally within 12 months of the CoP letter. Information about the OIA, eligibility and how to apply will be provided with the CoP letter and on the VLE.

7. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – Complaints Handling

7.1 Overview

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the detailed operational steps through which student concerns and complaints are received, managed, investigated, resolved, and recorded. It ensures that complaints are handled consistently, fairly, promptly, and transparently, in accordance with LAAT's governance framework, the OIA Good Practice Framework, Office for Students (OfS) regulatory expectations, and Plymouth Marjon University validating-partner requirements.

The SOP covers:

- Early resolution of concerns
- Formal complaint investigation
- Independent review stage
- Issuing of Completion of Procedures (CoP) letters
- Signposting to external review by the OIA

Stage One – Early Resolution

Raising a concern

Students are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as possible with an appropriate member of staff, Programme Leader, or Centre Manager. Concerns should normally be raised within one (1) month of the issue occurring.

Staff actions

Staff receiving a concern must:

- Acknowledge the concern promptly (same day where possible)
- Clarify the issue and request relevant information or evidence
- Seek informal resolution through explanation, correction, mediation, or local action
- Provide a written or emailed summary of the outcome within seven (7) working days

Recording

- All concerns must be logged on the Informal Concerns Register
- Emerging themes are reported monthly to the Student Experience Lead

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

Submitting a formal complaint

Where early resolution is unsuccessful, students may submit a Formal Complaint Form with supporting evidence. Submission should normally be made within one (1) month of the issue or conclusion of early resolution.

Complaints are submitted to: **student.experience@laat.ac.uk**

Acknowledgement

Within three (3) working days, the Student Experience Lead will:

- Acknowledge receipt
- Confirm eligibility and procedural stage
- Explain the process and expected timescales

Appointment of Investigating Officer / Panel

- An Investigating Officer or Complaints Panel is appointed
- Members must be independent of the matter under complaint

Investigation

The investigation may include:

- Review of documentation and evidence
- Requests for further information
- Interviews with relevant staff or witnesses
- A meeting with the student (online or in-person if appropriate)

Investigations are conducted confidentially and evidence-based, with reasonable adjustments applied where required.

Outcome

A written outcome will normally be issued within twenty (20) working days and will include:

- Summary of the complaint
- Evidence considered
- Decision (upheld / partially upheld / not upheld)
- Reasons for the decision
- Any remedial actions
- Information on the Review Stage

Recording

- Case files stored securely
- Anonymised summaries included in quarterly reports to SMT and Academic Board

Stage Three – Review

Grounds for review

A student may request a review only on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity
- Unreasonable or disproportionate decision
- New material evidence not previously available
- Evidence of bias or conflict of interest

Submission

Review requests must be submitted within ten (10) working days of the Stage Two outcome.

Review process

- A Senior Reviewer independent of earlier stages is appointed
- The review considers whether procedures were correctly applied
- A written outcome is issued normally within twenty (20) working days

Completion of Procedures (CoP)

- Issued with the review outcome
- Enables escalation to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

External Review – OIA

Following completion of LAAT's internal procedures, students may submit their case to the OIA within twelve (12) months of the CoP letter. LAAT will cooperate fully with OIA investigations and implement any recommendations.

Record Keeping and Reporting

The Student Experience Lead is responsible for:

- Maintaining complaints registers
- Storing case files securely

- Preparing quarterly anonymised reports
- Ensuring compliance with UK GDPR, OIA, OfS, and validating-partner requirements

Monitoring and Quality Enhancement

- Academic Board receives anonymised reports on complaint volumes, categories, outcomes, and timescale compliance
- Recurring themes inform quality enhancement actions
- Board of Governors receives an annual assurance report

8. Monitoring, Compliance and Review

8.1 Monitoring

Student complaint activity, including complaint volumes, categories, outcomes, timescale compliance, and recurring themes, is monitored through LAAT's academic quality assurance and governance reporting arrangements. Anonymised reports are submitted to the Academic Board on a scheduled basis to provide oversight, identify emerging risks, and inform continuous enhancement of the student experience. An annual assurance summary is provided to the Board of Governors.

8.2 Compliance

Failure to comply with this Policy or its associated procedures may result in appropriate management, academic, or governance action, applied fairly and proportionately. Serious, repeated, or systemic issues are escalated to the Board of Governors through established risk and assurance reporting routes.

8.3 Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where required, in response to:

- Updates to OfS regulatory requirements
- Revisions to OIA guidance or Good Practice Framework
- Changes to Plymouth Marjon University validating-partner regulations
- Findings from internal quality assurance or audit activity

The Policy Owner is responsible for initiating review and presenting any amendments through Academic Board and Board of Governors approval routes.

9. Responsible People / Roles include

- **Academic Dean (Policy Owner):** Dr Manoj Ponugubati
Overall accountability for implementation of this Policy, alignment with OfS, OIA, and validating partner expectations, and escalation of systemic issues.
- **Academic Quality Lead:** Dr Vishwanath Kokkonda
Administration, guidance and procedural oversight
- **Programme Lead:** Mr Amarjeet Singh

Support early resolution, cooperate with investigations, and implement local improvements.

- **Student Experience Lead:** Dr Ruchi Singla
Manages day-to-day complaint handling, staff training, process administration, and reporting.

List of Responsible People & Contacts

Role	Name	Contact Email
Academic Dean (Policy Owner)	Dr Manoj Ponugubati	manoj@laat.ac.uk
Academic Quality Lead	Dr Vishwanath Kokkonda	vishwanath.kokkonda@laat.ac.uk
Programme Lead	Mr Amarjeet Singh	Amarjeet.singh@laat.ac.uk
Student Experience Lead	Dr Ruchi Singla	Ruchi.singla6@laat.ac.uk

10. List of Document (LoD)

- **Formal Student Complaint Form**
(Controlled forms enabling consistent complaint processing and OIA escalation)
- **Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter**
(Controlled forms enabling consistent complaint processing and OIA escalation)
- **Student Complaints Register (Anonymised Log)**
(Institutional record of complaints, outcomes, and trend monitoring)

This policy should be read in conjunction with

- **Academic Appeals / Results Review Policy**
- **Safeguarding and Prevent Policy**
- **Plymouth Marjon University – Student Regulations Framework**

14. Evidence

The following evidence items demonstrate implementation, oversight, and effectiveness of this Student Complaints Policy and provide assurance of compliance with Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration.

- Formal Student Complaint Form
- Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter
- Student Complaints Register (Anonymised Log)

- Academic Appeal Policy
- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
- Plymouth Marjon University – Student Regulations Framework

Evidence Item	Purpose / What it Demonstrates	Relevant OfS Condition(s)
Formal Student Complaint Form	Provides clear, accessible, and standardised mechanisms for students to submit complaints and receive final internal outcomes with correct OIA escalation information. Demonstrates fair, transparent, and procedurally compliant complaint handling.	C1 (Consumer Protection – fair and transparent processes), C2 (Student Complaints Scheme)
Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter Template	Confirms that LAAT’s internal complaints procedures have been fully exhausted and provides accurate signposting to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for external review, ensuring students understand their rights and next steps.	C1 (Consumer Protection – fair processes), C2 (Student Complaints Scheme), E3 (Accountability)
Student Complaints Register (Anonymised Log)	Maintains institutional records of complaints, timescales, outcomes, and trends. Demonstrates monitoring, consistency of decision-making, and governance oversight of complaint handling.	E2 (Management and Governance), E3 (Accountability and Oversight)
Academic Appeal Policy	Provides a defined and separate process for challenges to academic judgement, ensuring fair treatment and appropriate routes for redress distinct from complaints.	C1 (Consumer Protection), B4 (Fairness and Transparency in Assessment Processes)
Safeguarding and Prevent Policy	Demonstrates statutory safeguarding arrangements and escalation routes for serious concerns arising through complaints, ensuring student protection and welfare.	C3 (Student Protection), E2 (Risk Management and Internal Control)
Plymouth Marjon University – Student	Confirms alignment with validating partner regulations on complaint escalation, academic governance, procedural fairness, and external	B5 (Sector-Recognised Standards), E1 (Public Interest Governance),

Regulations Framework	oversight. Ensures sector-recognised academic and governance standards.	E2 (Institutional Control)
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Appendix A – Formal Student Complaint For Formal Student Complaint Form

Section 1: Student Details

Full Name:

Student ID (if applicable):

Programme / Course:

Year / Level of Study:

LAAT Email Address:

Alternative Contact Number:

Section 2: Complaint Details

Date(s) of issue / incident:

Brief description of the concern or complaint: (Please explain what happened, where, and who was involved)

Section 3: Steps Already Taken

Have you attempted Early Resolution (Stage One)?

Yes No

If yes, please state:

- Name of staff member contacted:
- Date of contact:
- Outcome of early resolution attempt:

Section 4: Desired Outcome

Please explain what outcome or resolution you are seeking:

Section 5: Supporting Evidence

Please list and attach any relevant evidence (emails, screenshots, letters, etc.):

Section 6: Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that this complaint is submitted in good faith under the LAAT Student Complaints Policy.

Student Signature:

Date:

Submission Instructions:

Send completed form and supporting evidence to:

student.experience@laat.ac.uk

Note: You will receive written acknowledgement within **3 working days**.

Appendix B – Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter Template
Completion of Procedures Letter

Date: [Insert Date]

Student Name: [Insert Name]

Student ID: [Insert ID]

Programme: [Insert Programme]

Dear [Student Name],

Completion of Procedures – Student Complaint

This letter confirms that LAAT has now completed all internal procedures in relation to your formal complaint submitted on [insert date].

Following full consideration of your complaint through:

- Stage Two – Formal Complaint Investigation
- Stage Three – Review Stage

the final institutional decision is as follows:

Outcome:

- Complaint Upheld
- Complaint Partially Upheld
- Complaint Not Upheld

Summary of Decision:

[Insert brief summary of findings and rationale]

Actions Taken by LAAT:

[Insert any remedies, actions, or improvements agreed]

Right to External Review

As LAAT's internal procedures are now complete, you have the right to refer your complaint to the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)** for external review.

OIA Contact Details:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

www.oiahe.org.uk

Tel: 0118 959 9813

You must submit your complaint to the OIA **within 12 months** of the date of this letter.

Appendix C – Student Complaints Register (Anonymised Log Template)

LAAT Student Complaints Register – Anonymised Record

Case Ref	Date Received	Complaint Category	Stage Reached	Outcome	Timescale Met (Y/N)	Actions Taken	External Escalation (Y/N)
SC-001	DD/MM/YYYY	Academic / Service / Welfare	Stage 2	Upheld / Not Upheld	Y	Staff training issued	N
SC-002	DD/MM/YYYY	Assessment / Feedback	Stage 3	Partially Upheld	Y	Moderation review	N