



# Complaint Handling and Resolution Policy

## Ethos:

The English Academy address student complaints and grievances promptly in a transparent and consistent manner. These procedures are confidential (unless legally permitted otherwise) and should the complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome proposed by the decision-maker, the complainant is entitled to appeal the decision to a higher internal body or an appropriate external organisation.

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) This policy explains how the English Academy deals with all types of complaints from students and the public. It covers complaints about Academic decisions, administrative decisions, unfair and/or disrespectful actions or decisions, as well as complaints about bullying, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, vilification and victimization amongst others.

*Discrimination is defined by statute in the Equal Status Act 2000, the following acts may also apply: Equality Act 2004, Equal Status Act 2000 & Disability Act 2005.*

(2) Where they exist, all School policies and/or procedures relevant to the circumstances surrounding a complaint (including appeals procedures) must be pursued to conclusion before submitting a complaint under this policy.

(3) There are separate School policies and/or procedures for complaints about privacy, admission, grading, staff performance, promotion, industrial matters, staff and student misconduct and the making of protected disclosures.

(4) Except where the complaint relates to an entity, this policy applies to all persons, whether or not they are a student or member of the public:

- a. in attendance at an English Academy premises be it owned or leased;
- b. using School equipment, be it owned or leased (e.g. communications technologies, vehicles, facilities);
- c. in attendance at a School event, function or activity;
- d. participating in any activity as a representative or student of the School (e.g. day trips, inter-School events, conferences, sports etc).

(5) The policy also applies to any form of contact or communication relevant to School business or activities that is initiated in person, by telephone, mobile phone, fax, e-mail, through another person, agent or by any other means.

(6) Complaints about external entities, including those fully or partially owned by the School, must use the complaints procedure of the relevant entity. Similarly, matters that arise away from the School and/or have no association with the School would not normally be covered by this policy except where there is a clear impact on the School's ability to fulfil its aims in terms of this policy.

(7) Complaints can be lodged with external organisations at any time, subject to the procedures of that particular organisation. With the exception of reporting findings, the process at each organisation will be separate from the process under this policy and procedure. For more information regarding the various external organisations and the types of

complaints they handle refer to Part B in the guidelines section of this document.

(8) Where a complaint is referred to an external organisation, the School will normally suspend any internal investigation until the external investigation is completed and all reports are submitted.

## **Section 2 - Definitions**

(9) For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

a. adverse behaviour - refers to behaviour that a reasonable person would not consider appropriate and includes, but is not limited to, bullying, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation and vilification.

b. bias - refers to a pre-existing favourable or unfavourable attitude to an issue when impartial consideration of the merits of the case is required.

c. bullying - means exhibiting a pattern of behaviour that intimidates, degrades or humiliates a person or persons, or that causes a risk or injury to the persons targeted.

d. confidential - means that information will only be released to those who have a legitimate 'need to know' and not for general consumption.

e. Case Manager - refers to an objective employee who has been appointed to coordinate/manage any complaint lodged through the Formal Internal Avenue and who may therefore take decisions in relation to the complaint in accordance with this policy/procedure.

f. Complaint/Grievance Officer - refers to those employees chosen by the School to be the first point of contact for receiving complaint related enquiries, providing general advice in regard to the School's Complaint Handling Processes and referring complaints to Case Managers for handling and resolution purposes.

g. Complainant - refers to the person/persons who have lodged a complaint.

h. complaint - refers to an expression of dissatisfaction drawn to the attention of an officer of the The English Academy that requires review, investigation or action.

i. discrimination - means treating a person/persons less favourably based on the actual, past, presumed or future identity or status, or some other associated characteristic or personal attribute of the person/persons, or their associates (whether the association is real or perceived).

j. frivolous - refers to an issue that is determined to be so minor, trifling or unimportant that no further action is required.

k. grievance - another word for complaint.

l. harassment - refers to any form of behaviour that is unwanted and offends, humiliates or intimidates a person, whether intended or not.

m. Independent Investigation - refers to an investigation conducted outside the Unit or the normal reporting lines of the Unit to which the complaint relates.

n. Local Investigation - refers to an investigation conducted within the School or the normal reporting lines to which the complaint relates.

o. misconduct - refers to actions that are serious enough to be regarded as requiring referral to a formal disciplinary process constituted in accordance with a relevant School policy.

p. serious matter/nature - refers to matters such as those that:

i. involve an offence under law (e.g. assault); and/or

ii. incur on the School an obligation to act (e.g. sexual harassment, harassment, vilification, bullying, victimisation); and/or  
iii. are otherwise considered to present a significant risk to the School or members of its community.

q. sexual harassment - refers to any form of sexually related behaviour that is unwanted and that in the circumstances, a reasonable person would expect a person to be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

r. stalking - refers to persistently pursuing a person or persons without any valid justification for doing so.

s. vexatious - refers to an action, such as the lodgement of a complaint, that lacks substance and on consideration of the available evidence is deemed to have been intentionally fabricated.

t. victimisation - refers to any form of detriment directed at a person/persons for their participation in making, supporting or resolving a complaint, whether that participation actual, intended or presumed or any form of detriment applied selectively and without justification.

u. Vilification - refers to a public act that incites hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or persons on the grounds of their identity or status.

## **Section 3 - Policy Statement**

(10) The School considers effective and efficient complaint management essential to the provision of quality service and to establishing and maintaining a harmonious and productive environment. Legitimate complaints enable the School to identify inconsistencies between the standard of service promised and/or provided, and client/student expectations.

This information can then be used to instigate preventative strategies to limit the possibility of recurrence and to initiate continuous improvement targeted toward established areas of need.

(11) The School's aim is to identify, investigate and resolve legitimate complaints using a fair, objective and confidential process that achieves resolution in a timely manner at the lowest possible level. In doing so, the School aims not only to reduce future recurrence of complaints, but also to take appropriate action to redress situations where a complaint is upheld.

(12) These aims underpin the School's Complaint Handling and Resolution Process which is explained in detail in Section 4 of this document. The process is further supported by various training modules, documentation, expert sources of advice/guidance and other resources.

(13) The Complaint Handling and Resolution Process is a mechanism through which relevant complaints (as explained in Section 1) can be lodged, investigated and resolved. The process is to be used to investigate matters where no other procedure is in place or where other processes, including appeals, have been exhausted.

(14) The School will endeavour to investigate all relevant complaints, accept generally those lodged anonymously.

Complaints must be lodged in accordance with the relevant provisions of the procedures contained in Section 4 of this document. While the School will accept anonymous complaints it does not guarantee the anonymity of complainants.

This is partially because the identity of a complainant can often be deduced from the nature of the complaint.

(15) The School may reach a finding and initiate appropriate remedial action in regard to a complaint even if unable to establish the identity of the perpetrator. For example, the School may find that there is sufficient evidence to uphold that an activity has taken place without

identifying the person or persons responsible for the activity. Such a finding will not prevent the School revisiting the case in the event that further evidence comes to hand.

(16) Where a complaint lacks sufficient information, it may be impossible for the School to pursue the matter. Under such circumstances the Manager responsible may terminate proceedings in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 4 of this document. This will not prevent the Manager reopening the case in the event that further evidence comes to hand. Under such circumstances, the case will be investigated in accordance with the normal procedures.

(17) Regardless of the outcome, all complaints lodged through the Formal Internal Avenue or Formal External Avenue (see Section 4 for detailed explanation of each) will be recorded in the School's Complaint Handling System, a database created for the recording, tracking and management of complaints. Further to this, normal record management practices continue to apply. With respect to students, their Student number will be recorded in the Complaint Handling System for reference purposes and all correspondence will be recorded in an appropriate case file.

(18) Staff and students are expected to comply with the requirements of this policy and procedure and to cooperate with employees who are delegated responsibility for the management and resolution of complaints. The School reserves the right to address matters related to its affairs and to remove any individual or group from its premises for failure to comply with its policies or the reasonable directions of its employees.

## **Victimisation**

(19) It is a breach of this policy to victimise anyone for their use of the School's complaint resolution process. The School will take necessary precautions in an endeavour to prevent victimisation from occurring, including educating staff and managers of their obligations to prevent victimisation. Appropriate remedial action will be taken where victimisation occurs.

(20) In the event that a party to a complaint is victimised, appropriate assistance should be sought immediately. This may mean:

- a. notifying the person who is dealing with their original complaint (i.e. their Case Manager), or
- b. in the absence of notifying the Manager, Director, or
- c. in the case of an emergency, (e.g. threat to health and safety), seeking immediate assistance from Building Security or, if necessary, the Gardai.

(21) Any student or staff member who participates in victimisation may be considered to have committed misconduct or serious misconduct and may, where it is not appropriate to reach resolution by other means, find themselves subject to disciplinary proceedings.

(22) Enactment of disciplinary proceedings against any person/persons who breach School policy is not of itself evidence of victimisation. Victimisation, where it does occur in these circumstances, would relate to unfair or unreasonable disciplinary action or inconsistent application of disciplinary proceedings.

## **Misuse of the Complaints Resolution Process**

(23) Making a complaint under this policy and procedure is a serious matter with potentially serious consequences for those involved. Staff or students who use this policy and procedure to make frivolous or vexatious complaints (for example, to harass someone), or who lie or deliberately mislead in connection with a complaint, may find themselves subject to disciplinary proceedings.

(24) In addition to the possibility of internal disciplinary proceedings, those who misuse the School's Complaints Resolution Process should be aware that external remedies might also come in to play (e.g. civil liability/defamation claims).

## Section 4 - Procedures

### Part A - Complaint Resolution Avenues

(25) There are three [complaint resolution avenues](#) available:

- a. the Direct Informal Avenue (where the complainant takes their complaint up directly with the respondent);
- b. the Formal Internal Avenue (where the complaint is lodged with and investigated by the School); and
- c. the Formal External Avenue (where the complaint is lodged with and investigated by an external organisation).

(26) With the exception of serious matters, all three avenues are suitable for use in the handling and resolution of most complaints. Serious matters must be reported and handled using either the Formal Internal Avenue or the Formal External Avenue.

(27) With the exception of serious matters, the complainant has the right to choose which avenue to pursue. The School strongly recommends complainants focus on selecting the avenue that is most likely to succeed in resolving the issue at the lowest practical level. The complainant should seek advice from one of the School's designated Complaint/Grievance Officer prior to initiating action under any avenue if they:

- a. are uncertain which avenue to use;
- b. do not understand any aspect of the process; or
- c. are not sure if their complaint would be considered a serious matter.

(28) Where a Complaint/Grievance Officer becomes aware of a serious matter they must record the complaint in the Complaint Handling System and refer the complaint for Independent Internal Investigation in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Formal Internal Avenue.

(29) A detailed procedure for each avenue is provided below along with links to support documentation including checklists and flowcharts.

#### Direct Informal Avenue

(30) The Direct Informal Avenue is the avenue via which the School would like to see most concerns resolved. In this avenue the concerns are raised directly with the person or persons responsible for the relevant procedure, action or behaviour that generated the concerns.

(31) With the exception of serious matters, the Direct Informal Avenue is suitable for use in resolving most concerns so long as all parties are comfortable using it. Accordingly, before using this avenue, the complainant must:

- a. ensure that their concerns would not be considered a serious matter;
- b. advise the respondent/s that they have a concern/concerns they would like to raise using this avenue and obtain the respondents agreement to proceed; and
- c. establish whether anyone wishes to have a support person or neutral third party present during discussions noting that:
  - i. some participants may feel more comfortable using the Direct Informal Avenue if they are able to have a support person or neutral third party present (Particularly if language level is a potential barrier) and this is acceptable where all parties are in agreement; and
  - ii. a support person may provide advice but may not intercede on behalf of the complainant or respondent while a neutral third party may provide advice or guidance to facilitate resolution, but may not undertake the role of a mediator, nor intercede on behalf of the complainant or respondent.

(32) Where agreement is reached the complainant should proceed accordingly and raise their concerns directly with the respondent/s. The parties then attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution to the concerns.

(33) If this avenue is successful and identified remedies have been enacted, no further action is required. Concerns resolved using this avenue are not recorded as complaints in the Complaint Handling System.

(34) Where this avenue is not suitable (e.g. serious matters, the necessary agreement can't be reached) or where it has been unsuccessful in resolving the concerns a formal complaint may be lodged. Where this occurs, the outcome of the initial attempt at resolving the matter may be recorded in the Complaint Handling System as part of the history of the complaint.

(35) A [checklist](#) is available to assist in navigating the Direct Informal Avenue process.

## **Formal Internal Avenue**

(36) In this avenue, a complaint is lodged with, and investigated by, the School. Its primary aim is to handle issues that are unable to be resolved using the Direct Informal Avenue. This would include serious matters, which must be reported using either this or the Formal External Avenue, and instances where there has been a failed attempt at resolution by way of the Direct Informal Avenue.

(37) Notwithstanding clause (36), complainants can choose this avenue from the outset where they feel it is the avenue most like to result in resolution. They are not required to use the Direct Informal Avenue first.

(38) The Formal Internal Avenue is two tiered; incorporating a Local Investigation and an Independent Internal Investigation. While both methods apply the same procedural approach to complaint handling and resolution, there are four distinct differences between the two:

a. With the exception of serious matters, complaints lodged through the Formal Internal Avenue are normally referred for Local Investigation in the first instance. Serious matters must be referred for Independent Internal Investigation.

b. Local Investigations are conducted by a Manager from within the normal reporting lines to which the complaint relates. Independent Internal Investigations are conducted a Manager from a neutral Department, but normally the School Directors or beneficial Shareholders.

c. The School's complaint resolution structure is hierarchical, with Independent Internal Investigation being the top internal tier to the structure. Accordingly, determinations reached during Local Investigation may be subject to review using the Independent Internal Investigation.

d. Additional restrictions apply in regard to appealing determinations reached via an Independent Internal Investigation, as explained later in this document.

## **Lodging a Complaint via the Formal Internal Avenue**

(39) Complaints must be lodged with one of the School's designated Complaint/Grievance Officers:

a. as soon as possible after the complainant first becomes aware of the conduct or matter the subject of the complaint; and

b. no later than 21 days after the last incident occurred; unless

c. there is justification for late lodgement as prescribed in clause (46).

(40) Complaints may be lodged in person but in writing (including email) and must provide the School with sufficient information (e.g. specific detail) as is reasonably necessary to enable the complaint to be investigated.

(41) The receiving Complaint/Grievance Officer will undertake a preliminary assessment to ascertain specific details and determine whether the matter should be handled as a complaint or further explored using another procedure (e.g. Review of Grade).

(42) Where the complainant is known and the Complaint/Grievance Officer determines it appropriate to pursue the matter through another process, they will:

- a. advise the complainant and direct them to the area responsible for the relevant procedure;
- b. record the enquiry and advice provided in the Complaint Handling System;
- c. provide the complainant with a written copy of the enquiry and advice provided, as recorded in the Complaint Handling System.

(43) Where the complaint was lodged anonymously and the Complaint/Grievance Officer determines it appropriate to pursue the matter through another process, they will refer the complaint to a Director of the School, responsible for the relevant procedure, who will then be responsible for investigating the complaint and implementing any necessary corrective action.

(44) Where the Complaint/Grievance Officer believes the matter should be handled as a complaint they will, having due regard for clause (38a), refer the complaint and the complainant (where known) to an appropriate Case Manager for investigation. Where the complainant is known, the Complaint/Grievance Officer will provide them with a written copy of their complaint as recorded in the Complaint Handling System.

(45) All subsequent actions taken in relation to the complaint will be recorded in the Complaint Handling System by the relevant Manager as the action occurs or as soon as practicable thereafter.

### **Late Lodgement via the Formal Internal Avenue**

(46) The School will only investigate complaints lodged after the 21 day deadline where:

- a. the complaint relates to a serious matter; and
- b. the complainant can demonstrate that circumstances beyond their control prevented them from lodging the complaint within the 21 day deadline; and
- c. it is still practical for the School to conduct an investigation of the complaint.

(47) All complaints lodged outside the 21 day deadline are to be referred to the Directors in the first instance. The Directors will determine whether the complaint will be considered in accordance with clause.

On reaching a determination, the Director will:

- a. notify relevant parties (including the complainant, where known) of their decision; and
- b. where they determine an investigation should proceed, refer the matter for Independent Internal Investigation in accordance with procedures detailed below.

### **Investigation Procedures**

(48) The receiving Case Manager is responsible for investigating the matter as quickly as possible and may seek whatever information, advice or assistance they deem necessary to enable them to reach a preliminary or final determination.

(49) The Case Manager may, at any point during the investigation where they deem it necessary:

- a. determine that the matter should be handled using another procedure and refer the complainant to the appropriate area as per clauses (42 and 43), or
- b. determine that the complaint relates to a serious matter and refer it for Independent Internal Investigation via the Schools Directors/Shareholders, or
- c. refer the complaint to another Manager for investigation for any justifiable reason (e.g. conflict of interest, efficiency, authority to act), or
- d. determine that there is insufficient information to allow them to investigate the complaint any further and notify the appropriate persons as per clause (52).

(50) The Case Manager may determine that the complaint consists of a number of distinct and separate issues that require a different course of action. The complaint may be split accordingly and an appropriate course of action determined for each issue as per clause (49).

(51) Where the Case Manager decides to refer all or part of a complaint to another Manager for Investigation, as per clause (49)b or c, they will do so via the School Directors. The Directors will facilitate referral to an appropriate Manager, keeping the complainant informed.

The Complaint Handling System will be updated to reflect referral of the matter and access to the complaint will be restricted accordingly. The new Case Manager will then proceed with the investigation in accordance with these procedures.

(52) Where the Case Manager decides that there is insufficient information to enable investigation of the complaint and legitimate attempts to obtain that information have failed, they must refer the matter to the Director requesting termination of the investigation. Their submission must clearly indicate the basis for termination and the actions they have undertaken to attempt to remedy the situation. The Director will then review the available evidence and:

- a. where these do not place an unreasonable burden on resources, provide advice to the Case Manager as to other mechanisms for pursuing the complaint, or
- b. terminate proceedings, in which case the Director or Beneficial Owners will notify the relevant parties of their decision.

(53) Where the Case Manager decides to investigate the complaint themselves they must decide whether to conduct an investigation on 'process' or an investigation on 'merit' and advise the complainant/s, respondent/s and other relevant parties accordingly. The Case Manager must conduct an investigation on process where the complaint relates to another procedure. In all other instances they must conduct an investigation on merit.

(54) An investigation on process will only consider the procedural elements which led to the original action/decision, evaluating those elements to determine whether that action/decision was justified. The elements considered are procedural fairness, compliance and authority to act.

(55) In terms of procedural fairness the Case Manager will consider the issues of bias, fair hearing and evidence to determine whether the person responsible for taking the action/decision:

- a. had a pre-existing attitude (bias) in favour of or against a particular outcome;
- b. provided each person with an opportunity to present their case (fair hearing); and
- c. based their action/decision on actual evidence.

(56) In terms of compliance, the Case Manager will determine:

- a. whether the relevant procedure was followed (compliance); and
- b. where a failure is identified, whether it placed any affected party at an unreasonable disadvantage.

(57) In terms of authority to act, the Case Manager will determine whether the person taking the action/decision had the authority to do so.

(58) An investigation on merit will consider the issues of procedural fairness and authority to act as well as the probative value of the available evidence.

(59) Having conducted their investigation, the Case Manager may determine that:

- a. the relevant procedure was followed and no further action is required;
- b. there was a procedural flaw with respect to procedural fairness, compliance and/or authority to act and further action is required as per clause (61);
- c. the matter needs to be handled in accordance with another procedure and refer the matter for consideration by the appropriate area or officer of the School as per clauses (42 and 43);
- d. there is insufficient evidence to reach a determination one way or the other;

- e. there is evidence to suggest that the complaint is frivolous or lacking substance;
- f. there is evidence to suggest that the complaint may be vexatious.

(60) Where the Case Manager determines that relevant procedures were followed, they will advise the complainant/s, respondent/s and other relevant parties of their findings.

(61) In the case of a procedural flaw, the Case Manager will notify the complainant and refer the matter to the relevant area or officer of the School for determination in accordance with the appropriate procedure. Where the appropriate procedure was used in the first instance the matter only needs to be reconsidered from the point in the procedure at which the flaw occurred. In all other instances, procedures should be followed from start to finish.

(62) Where there is insufficient evidence to reach a determination the Case Manager will notify the complainant/s, respondent/s and other relevant parties of their findings.

(63) Where the Case Manager determines a complaint to be frivolous or lacking substance, the Case Manager will notify the relevant parties (including complainants and respondents) of their findings in writing and provide each with an opportunity to comment prior to finalising their findings and making formal recommendations. Recommendations may include referral for disciplinary action in accordance with clause (23).

(64) Where the Case Manager determines a complaint may be vexatious, the Case Manager will refer the matter to the Director in charge of the relevant area or process (e.g. relevant misconduct or disciplinary process) for consideration. The Case Manager will, as part of the referral process, notify relevant parties (including complainants and respondents) where the matter has been referred for further consideration.

(65) Once a determination has been made and the relevant parties notified, the Case Manager will record the outcome, including any recommendations, in the Complaint Handling System and initiate any further action as required.

## **Appeals**

(66) Where the investigation of a complaint has been terminated due to insufficient evidence, the complaint may be reopened as per clause (16). No appeal is required in this instance.

## **Right of Appeal Regarding Determinations Arising from Local Investigation**

(67) An appeal against a determination arising from a Local Investigation under clause (59) may be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. There is evidence that there has been a breach of procedural fairness (see clauses 54 and 55).
- b. There is evidence that there has been a breach of compliance (see clauses 54 and 56a).
- c. There is evidence that there has been a breach in regard to authority to act (see clauses 54 and 57).
- d. There is substantial new evidence now available relating to the original complaint that was not available to the Case Manager at the time the disputed determination was reached.

(68) Appeals regarding determinations arising from Local Investigation will normally be dealt with by the next most senior officer within the relevant area. For example, where the initial investigation was undertaken by the Academic Manager, the appeal would be dealt with by the Academic Director. Any subsequent appeal must then be handled via an Independent Internal Investigation.

(69) In exceptional circumstances, where the appellant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Manager or Director that there is a pressing time constraint, the appellant may be granted approval to have their appeal escalated for consideration via an Independent Internal Investigation to expedite resolution.

(70) Once an appeal has been heard via an Independent Internal Investigation any subsequent appeal must be lodged and considered in accordance with the following procedures concerning 'Right of Appeal Regarding Determinations Arising from Independent Internal Investigation'. The same applies where the initial investigation was conducted as an Independent Internal Investigation.

## **Right of Appeal Regarding Determinations Arising from Independent Internal Investigation**

(71) An appeal against a determination arising from an Independent Internal Investigation made under clause (59) may only be made on the grounds that there is substantial new evidence now available relating to the original complaint that was not available to the Case Manager at the time the disputed determination was reached.

(72) If an appellant wishes to lodge an appeal in relation to procedural fairness, compliance or authority to act, they will need to refer the matter to the appropriate external organisation in accordance with the Formal External Avenue procedures provided below.

## **Lodging an Appeal**

(73) Appeals must be lodged with the Schools Directors/Beneficial Owners within 21 days of formal notification of a determination and must specify the basis for the appeal as per:

- a. clause (67) where the appeal relates to a determination arising out of a Local Investigation; or
- b. clause (71) where the appeals relates to a determination arising out of an Independent Internal Investigation.

(74) Appeals will be investigated in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Investigation Procedures detailed in clauses (48) through (65). The Case Manager hearing the appeal must conduct the investigation on process only as explained in clauses (53) through (57).

(75) A [Checklist](#) and [flowchart](#) are available to assist in navigating the Appeal process.

## **Formal External Avenue**

(76) In this avenue, a complaint is lodged with and investigated by an external organisation. Complaints can be lodged with external organisations at any time, subject to the procedures of the particular organisation. Complainants are not required to use the Direct Informal Avenue or the Formal Internal Avenue first, notwithstanding that norms of practice would be that they should be.

(77) Notwithstanding the above, where suitable and considered likely to achieve resolution, the School strongly recommends using the Direct Informal Avenue or the Formal Internal Avenue in the first instance.

## **Lodging Complaints via the Formal External Avenue**

(78) The complaint must be lodged with the appropriate external organisation, in accordance with that organisations procedures and deadlines. Deadlines may differ from one organisation to the next.

(79) There are a number of external organisations that deal with complaints. The details of some of the key organisations are provided in Section 5, Part B of this document. If a complainant does not know which external organisation to contact they may seek advice from:

- a. the School's designated Complaint/Grievance Officer; or
- b. the School's Directors.

(80) Complaint investigations undertaken by external organisations will be conducted in accordance with the procedures of the external organisation.

(81) Once a complaint has been lodged with an external organisation the School will normally suspend any internal investigation until such time as the external organisation has completed its investigation and submitted all reports related to its findings.

(82) Complainants should be aware that external organisations need to notify the School in writing when they receive a complaint. When the School becomes aware that a complaint has been lodged with an external organisation it will record the complaint in the Complaint Handling System.

(83) Refer to Section 5 for more information about external organisations, or to the [Formal](#)

[External Avenue Flowchart](#)  
or [Checklist](#) for an overview of the process.

## Section 5 - Guidelines

### Part B - External Organisations for Formal External Avenue

(84) There are a number of external organisations that can provide advice in relation to and/or investigate complaints. Some of the key organizations (not exhaustive) are the:

- a. Citizens Advice Bureau . O'Connell Street Dublin 1 [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)
- b. National Consumer Agency [www.nca.ie](http://www.nca.ie)
- c. Consumers Association of Ireland
- d. ICOS . Irish Council for International Students [www.icosirl.ie](http://www.icosirl.ie)
- e; Independent Solicitors
- f. Small Claims Court
- g. Garda National Immigration Bureau . Burgh Quay, Dublin 2
- h; INIS or Department of Foreign Affairs [www.inis.ie](http://www.inis.ie) [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie)
- i. ACELS . NQAI . Jervis Street, Dublin 1 [www.acels.ie](http://www.acels.ie)
- j. Department of Social Protection [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)
- k. Equality Authority [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

### Part C - Associated Information

(85) There are a number of attachments provided with this document to assist and guide individuals through the process. These include a list of the School's designated Complaint/Grievance Officers (maintained by the Complaints Resolution Unit ), flowcharts that map out the process, checklists that can be used to step through each of the complaint resolution avenues and the like. These attachments can be accessed via the Associated Information page for this document.