

Student Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Reel Scene defines a complaint as the expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student's learning opportunities. This policy applies to all current students, up to and including a period of three months following the end of a student's period of registration.

1. The Students Complaints Policy is overseen at the highest level of the Reel Scene: the CEO has overall authority in the application of the policy; the CEO's authority is delegated as detailed below.
2. The emphasis of this policy is on handling complaints in a timely and effective manner. The Reel Scene seeks to resolve complaints at an early stage where possible; many problems can be solved informally, without the need for a formal complaint. Where informal resolution is not possible, there are three stages which represent a formal complaint under this policy.
3. The Reel Scene undertakes that any student who wishes to pursue a complaint under this procedure will not suffer detriment in his/her subsequent studies as a result of action taken under this policy. However, The Reel Scene may consider taking disciplinary action under the Code of Student Discipline if a complaint is brought in bad faith, or is considered to be vexatious.
4. The Complaints Policy covers all concerns or complaints about both academic and non-academic services provided by The Reel Scene. In the event that a formal concern about the conduct of another student is the subject of your complaint (for example bullying, harassment and discrimination) then the matter will be investigated under the Code of Student Discipline.
5. Complaints about financial services offered by us are eligible for consideration under the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) scheme (www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk) once students have completed stages 1-3 of the complaints procedure.
6. All formal complaints will be recorded in the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Register, including a note of the substance of the complaint and how the matter was resolved.
7. Complaint outcomes can lead to improvements in our service delivery, and provide helpful feedback for enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. A report on the number of complaints received and the

outcomes will be considered by the Independent Adjudicator on an annual basis.

8. The Reel Scene will seek to maintain confidentiality during a complaint investigation, however if a student names another member of The Reel Scene in their complaint then the person(s) named will normally be informed of the nature of the complaint in order for them to provide a response. If a student is unable to disclose the name of an individual who is key to their complaint then it will not be possible to investigate the complaint.
9. If the outcome of a complaint leads to action under a separate procedure of The Reel Scene, including staff policies operated by Human Resources, the complainant will receive a full response to the concern that they have raised.
10. The outcome following any subsequent procedure (eg. the Code of Practice on Discipline) will remain confidential although the investigation report may be used as evidence in any further proceedings.

Complaint Stages

11. Complaints must normally be made within 3 months of the incident being complained about. A complaint made after 3 months will not normally be accepted. A student must submit a complaint within 3 months of the end of their period of registration at The Reel Scene or the complaint will not normally be considered.
12. The Reel Scene supports and encourages an informal approach to complaint resolution where appropriate. The Complaints Policy has the following stages:

Informal Resolution

- Stage 1 - Formal Complaint to Academic Registrar
- Stage 2 - Formal Complaint to Director of the School
- Stage 3 - Appeal to the Visiting Adjudicator

Informal Resolution

13. A student should seek to resolve a concern informally as soon as possible. The Reel Scene is committed to resolving problems informally where possible and encourages students to engage in this approach as many issues can be resolved without recourse to a formal complaint. Complaints resolved in this way avoid a protracted investigation, and are to the benefit of all parties.
14. Matters relating to a programme of study are often best dealt with by approaching the relevant member of staff. The member of staff will seek

to resolve the matter through informal discussion. Students may also raise concerns with a student representative.

15. If the most appropriate contact is closely related to the complaint, for example a tutor or a guest professional, then it may be appropriate to proceed directly to Stage 2 of this policy.
16. Mediation is a useful way of resolving some matters and The Reel Scene encourages students to use mediation where it may help resolve concerns. Please see Appendix 2 for more information about mediation.
17. If it is not possible to resolve a concern informally, then a student may submit a formal complaint under Stage 1 of this policy. If the student does not wish to submit a formal complaint then this is the end of the matter as far as this complaints policy is concerned and a formal complaint will not be recorded.

Formal Complaints

Stage 1 - Formal Complaint

18. If a concern cannot be resolved via informal means, or if the matter is relatively serious, then a Stage 1 formal complaint should be made.
19. To submit a complaint at Stage 1 you will need to complete the Stage 1 complaint form and send this to the Academic Registrar.
20. The Academic Registrar, will investigate your complaint, or appoint an investigating officer to investigate the complaint. The investigator may meet with you to discuss your complaint; he/she will also contact others involved in the complaint as appropriate.
21. You will receive a formal written outcome to your complaint, normally within 15 working days. The outcome letter will inform you of the outcome in response to your complaint including what action, if any, is to be taken to address your complaint.
22. If it is not possible to complete your complaint within 15 working days then you will be written to with an explanation as to the status of your complaint and when it is likely to be concluded.
23. Please note that while The Reel Scene makes every effort to conclude complaints as quickly as possible, it may not always be possible to provide an outcome for a Stage 1 complaint within 15 working days. Some complaints may take longer than 15 working days to conclude at Stage 1; however the ReelScene endeavours to ensure that no complaint will take longer than three months to resolve.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

24. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint then you may submit Stage 2.
25. A Stage 2 complaint must be submitted within two weeks of the formal notification of a Stage 1 outcome. Complaints submitted after this time will only be considered at the discretion of the Director of the School (or their nominee) where the complainant is able to demonstrate good reason for the delay.
26. Complaints will not normally be considered at Stage 2 unless they have first been considered at Stage 1, unless the problem is particularly severe and/or urgent, or there is a good reason why the complaint cannot be considered at Stage 1.
27. To submit a Stage 2 complaint you should complete the complaint form and submit this to the Director of the School by email. You will also need to submit your Stage 1 complaint form and outcome letter.
28. A Stage 2 complaint will be investigated by the Director of the School or his or her nominee; The Director will investigate the substance of your complaint, and may obtain written reports from relevant people regarding the circumstances of your complaint.
29. You will be sent a summary report of your complaint so that you have an opportunity to comment upon the facts of your case, particularly any points that you feel do not fairly reflect the circumstances. In order to ensure a timely response to a complaint a student is asked to provide any comments within 7 calendar days.
30. Once the investigation into your complaint is complete the Director of the School will consider all the facts of the case and confirm their decision which will be based on an outcome which is both fair and equitable.
31. You will receive a formal written outcome to your Stage 2 complaint, normally within 1 month. The outcome letter will inform you if your complaint is upheld or not upheld and of any subsequent action The Reel Scene is taking following your complaint.
32. If it is not possible to complete your complaint within 1 month then you will be written to with an explanation as to the status of your complaint and when it is likely to be concluded.
33. Please note that while The Reel Scene makes every effort to conclude complaints as quickly as possible, it may not always be possible to provide an outcome for a Stage 2 complaint within 1 month. Some complaints may take longer to resolve at Stage 2 for a variety of reasons; we endeavour to ensure that no complaint will take longer than two months to resolve.

Stage 3 – Appeal to the Visiting Adjudicator

34. The School appoints a suitably qualified person to post of Visiting Adjudicator. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint, you may submit a Stage 3 appeal in writing to the Visiting Adjudicator.
35. A Stage 3 complaint must be submitted within 1 month of the formal notification of a Stage 2 outcome. Complaints submitted after this time will only be considered at the discretion of the Visiting Adjudicator where the complainant is able to demonstrate good reason for the delay.
36. Whereas in each of the preceding stages of the Policy a full investigation of the matter is undertaken, the nominee will only be concerned with two issues:
 - (a) was the complaint considered in accordance with this Policy
 - (b) was the final decision one which rests within the band of possible reasonable responses, based on the facts of the case.
37. Therefore the visiting adjudicator will only take action if one of the grounds above is met. The nominee will provide a decision in writing via the CEO, normally within 1 month. This will be a Completion of Procedures letter and represents the end of The Reel Scene's internal procedures.
38. The Visiting Adjudicator shall have discretion to strike out part or the entire appeal (refuse to consider an appeal) where he reasonably believes that the appeal is an abuse of policy and/or procedure.
 - (a) The following are examples of complaints which are likely to be regarded as an abuse of policy and/or procedure:

Jurisdiction

- The matter complained about concerns an issue outside of the visiting Adjudicator's jurisdiction; and/or

Frivolous or vexatious

- The matter complained about is being dealt with (or has been dealt with) under these or any previous Rules, and there is no good reason to reopen the Review
- The matter complained of relates to an issue or event which a fair-minded observer would consider to be trivial
- The complaint is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, or repetitious

- The student insists on pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- The student insists on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- The complaint is designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- The complaint seeks redress which lacks any serious purpose or value

The list is not exhaustive.

39. All staff and students are required comply with the directions of the Adjudicator ie attend before the Adjudicator if formally summoned to do so, and/or disclose such information/data within their possession or control when requested and required to do so. Failure to comply may result in:

- (b) The Student's Appeal being struck out;
- (c) The Respondent's defence being struck out;
- (d) Disciplinary action commenced by the School against the defaulting student/s or staff member.
- (e) Any such remedial action which at the time of the failure the policies/procedures/rules/general laws of England and Wales permit.

Appendix 1 – Principles

(f) This Policy seeks to embody the following principles:

- Students have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage. Anonymous complaints are not usually required or accepted; however, if you feel that there are exceptional circumstances relating to your case you should submit a request for anonymity together with supporting evidence. It is important to note that raising a concern anonymously could impede the investigation of your case and the communication of the outcome.
- Positive engagement and the opportunity for early resolution.
- Complaints are handled in a timely, fair and reasonable manner.
- Natural justice – no person who has any direct interest in a complaint will be involved in deciding the outcome, and you will be guaranteed a fair consideration.
- Confidentiality – your complaint will be dealt with confidentially, and only the person(s) responsible for dealing with the complaint, and those who are parties to it, will be informed.
- Representation by a student representative or union representative – you have the right to be represented when you make a complaint, or at any subsequent meeting to deal with the complaint.

· Group complaints – a number of students may bring a group complaint about the same concern if they have all been affected by the issue. Students wishing to bring a group complaint should nominate one person as the representative for the complaint who will act as the main point of contact during the process.

Appendix 2 – Mediation

- (g) Mediation can be a helpful tool in resolving complaints at an early stage.
- (h) Mediation is a confidential and non-prejudicial. It involves discussion between the parties and the mediator. Only the fact that mediation took place and the outcome, successful or otherwise, will be formally recorded.
- (i) Mediation allows both parties to abide by the terms agreed and recourse to formal procedures will not be permitted.
- (j) If an agreement is not reached, this will not inhibit the capacity of either party to take up or resume formal procedures. Information that is disclosed within the mediation process cannot be directly used in any subsequent formal procedures.

Appendix 3 –
Current Mediation, Complaints and Appeal Officers and Contact details

(1)

Mediator

A choice of 2 mediators to be appointed by the Reel Scene

(2)

FAO - Academic Registrar

info@reelscene.co.uk

(3)

Director of the School

Alex Fidelski

alex@reelscene.co.uk for Stage 2 complaints

(4)

Visiting Adjudicator

The School appoints a suitably qualified person