

Heartwood Complaints Procedure



Heartwood College aims to provide the best possible experience for all students and create a safe and supportive learning environment. We value our students and their opinions and, if you have a query or problem, you are encouraged to bring this to our attention promptly.

The Complaints Procedure comprises of 4 steps, Informal Concerns, Written Complaints, Appeal and External Appeal and should be followed in conjunction with the guidance provided in the Written Complaints Form, located on the Heartwood Online Platform (HOP).

The procedures aim to be simple, clear and fair to all parties. Concerns, complaints and appeals (both informal and formal) will be handled sensitively and with confidentiality.

An advocate (not involved in the complaint) may be requested for support.

Informal Concern (Step 1)

In the first instance students should approach their tutor by email or through a tutorial about the matter of concern. The concern will be explored, and you will be contacted, usually within 28 working days, to see if a solution can be found. A mediation meeting may be arranged, if necessary.

Most concerns are due to a misunderstanding and are easily resolved at this stage. Following this, if the student still has concerns and wishes to formalise these and make a complaint, they should continue to submit a formal complaint within 28 working days.

Formal Complaint (Step 2)

Send your written complaint to us by letter or email using the [Written Complaint Form](#), located on the Heartwood Online Platform (HOP) and which includes guidance on the information we need in order to fully review your complaint.

Please include all concerns for investigation on this document, as additional points/concerns will not be accepted once submitted. These will need to be submitted as separate complaints. Additional relevant supporting evidence (i.e. journal feedback or tutorial forms) can be attached to or sent with the written complaint form. The complaint reviewer may request further information/evidence from you during the complaint review but unless requested your initial submission is the complaint 'bundle'.

Your complaint will be reviewed and a written response will be sent to you, within 28 working days, detailing any outcomes as a result of the investigation.

Appeal (Step 3)

If the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should submit a written appeal within 14 working days of receiving our response detailing your reasons for appeal.

We will investigate the complaint again, if necessary, a second management meeting will be held, and/or you will be invited to attend a meeting and express the nature of your concern.

A written response will be sent to you detailing any outcomes as a result of the appeal investigation, within 28 working days.

External Appeal (Step 4)

If you remain unsatisfied with the outcome of the previous stages, you may ask Heartwood to refer the matter to an independent complaints officer (ICO) within 14 working days of receiving the outcome of the appeal investigation.

The ICO will review the available evidence, along with your desired outcomes, with the intention of finding a fair and reasonable conclusion within 28 working days. The decision of the Independent Complaints Officer is final.

Expected timescales

For each stage of our complaints process, we will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days. It is our intention to send you a full written response within 28 working days of acknowledgement, unless there are exceptional circumstances, or the complaint was received at the beginning of or during a holiday period.

The response will describe the outcome of any investigation and the proposed course of action. We are not in a position to issue the final response within these timeframes, you will receive a communication advising you of when you will be contacted again.

Meetings

During the complaints process, we may also contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint with you further. These meetings are recorded and a copy will be provided on request. An accompanying person may be requested, this can be a peer, friend or a family member. Advanced notification is required.

All reasonable efforts will be made to support attendance.

Please be aware, if a meeting is refused by the complainant, the complaints process will cease at that point.

Please note:

Once a complaint has been formally submitted through the designated process, it will be considered final. No additional points, evidence, or amendments may be introduced after submission. Complainants are therefore advised to ensure that all relevant details and supporting information are included at the time of submission. This policy is in place to ensure a fair, consistent, and timely resolution process.