

STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

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1. POLICY PURPOSE

This policy promotes a culture of mutual respect and fair treatment within iQ Academy's academic community, which includes students, staff, and administrative officers. It aims to provide a structured framework for resolving concerns or grievances that prioritises informal resolution where possible.

When informal resolution cannot be achieved, this policy ensures a fair, consistent, and transparent formal grievance process to address issues related to training requirements, delivery, assessment, quality of materials, discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or other concerns. iQ Academy is committed to guiding all members through this process in a manner that upholds equity and integrity, fostering a positive and supportive academic environment. For detailed procedures, reference should be made to the Student Grievance Procedure (IQ-HET/196).

This policy is distinct from the Student Appeals Policy. Grievances relate to alleged unfair treatment, procedural irregularities, administrative errors, or misconduct that may impact a student's academic experience. Appeals against assessment outcomes, academic results, or academic exclusion are governed separately by the Student Appeals Policy.

2. POLICY SCOPE

Although this document provides avenues for addressing most grievances, alternative measures may be explored in exceptional circumstances. The Faculty Management Committee of the Institution has oversight responsibility for academic and related grievances in accordance with this policy.

iQ Academy will attempt to resolve all matters through discussion and conciliation. However, iQ Academy acknowledges that an appropriate external and independent agent may be needed to mediate between the parties involved.

Any formal grievance must be made to the Student Support: Team Leader of IQ Academy within fourteen (14) days of the incident occurring.

This policy covers:

- All registered students who participate in training programmes or sessions.
- All participants who have access to the Student Grievance Policy and Student Grievance Procedure.
- Professional and confidential handling of disputes to ensure satisfactory resolution;
- Clear understanding by all parties of the steps involved in the Student Grievance Procedure.
- Fair, equitable and efficient handling of all grievances lodged; and
- All grievances lodged will be handled within reasonable and defined timeframes as set out in this policy.

3. TERMINOLOGY

The following terminology is defined:

- Grievance: A formal complaint lodged by a student regarding an issue they believe to be unfair, harmful, or in violation of iQ Academy's policies, procedures, or rules.
- Claimant: The student who files a grievance and is the alleged victim of unfair treatment or harm.
- Respondent: The person(s) against whom a grievance is filed, and who is alleged to have caused harm or acted unfairly.
- Victimization: Adverse treatment of a student who has lodged a grievance, participated in a grievance process, or raised concerns about unfair treatment.

4. INFORMAL RESOLUTION

Where possible, the claimant should discuss the issue with the person(s) responsible for the action or decision on which the grievance is based, together with that person's supervisor (or higher administrative authority). However, this is not required in cases where the claimant believes that efforts at informal resolution may result in retaliation or other unfair treatment.

On those occasions where contact between the Head: Faculty (or designated to the Chief Operating Officer) and the student is inevitable or deemed potentially useful, the Head of faculty should clarify for the student the difference between his/her role at the informal grievance resolution stage and what this would be at the formal resolution stage.

5. FORMAL RESOLUTION

If the informal resolution is unsuccessful, the claimant may file a grievance by requesting a hearing along with the following information to the Head: Faculty with supervisory authority over the person(s) named in the grievance as having caused harm to the claimant.

The grievance must:

- Be in writing;
- State how the decision or action is unfair and harmful to the claimant and list those iQ Academy policies that have been violated, if these are known; and
- Name the respondent parties (the person(s) against whom the grievance is being filed).

The Faculty Management Committee will respond to the claimant within seven (7) days of receiving the written complaint.

Role of the Faculty Management Committee

The Faculty Management Committee serves as the institutional decision-making body for formal student grievances and appeals escalated in terms of this policy. The Faculty Management Committee of the Institution makes provision for handling all academic and related grievances. The terms of reference are clear with regard to the purpose and function of this Committee. These terms of reference are as follows:

- Evaluate all matters that arise without bias or subjectivity;
- Grievance and disciplinary matters are considered for their impact on policy and procedure, and the relevant sub-committees of the Academic Board are informed to act as and when required;
- Evaluate policy and procedure in line with the requirements of iQ Academy, as amended from time to time; and
- The Faculty Management Committee will respond to the Claimant, in terms of this policy, within fourteen (14) days of receiving the written complaint.

6. WHO MAY LODGE A GRIEVANCE

Any aggrieved student enrolled at iQ Academy may lodge a grievance. The person filing the grievance must be the alleged victim of unfair treatment; a grievance cannot be filed on behalf of another person.

7. GROUNDS FOR LODGING A GRIEVANCE

A grievance may be lodged under the following circumstances:

- An assessment was conducted in a manner that involved a procedural irregularity, administrative error, or unfair practice, excluding dissatisfaction with marks or academic judgement, which must be addressed through the Student Appeals Policy;
- There was an administrative or procedural error in the learning material, assessment administration, or institutional processes that resulted in an unfavourable outcome
- Sexual harassment by another student or staff member; and
- Defamatory remarks by another student or staff member.

If a grievance is lodged, the claimant will be given a fair opportunity to state his/her case.

An action or decision may be considered a grievance only if it involves a misapplication or misinterpretation of iQ Academy policies, procedures or rules. Grievances may not be used to challenge policies or procedures of general applicability.

In addition, this policy may not be used to deal with:

- Claims against an employee on matters unrelated to the employee's job or role at iQ Academy; or
- Disciplinary decisions since there is a separate policy for these.

Where a grievance relates directly to an assessment result or academic decision, the matter will be redirected and managed in accordance with the Student Appeals Policy.

8. PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING A LODGED GRIEVANCE

All grievances will be:

- Treated fairly and seriously;
- Accurately documented and recorded. Records will be maintained for a minimum of three (3) years;
- All documentation relating to the grievance will be treated as confidential;
- Dealt with speedily and as accurately as possible;
- Treated consistently;
- Subject to the principles of iQ Academy; and
- Dealt with and resolved wherever possible and without prejudice to the claimant's right to pursue legal action.

All claimants will:

- Have the right to have a representative present during the grievance process;
- Not be required to incur any costs associated with lodging a grievance. The only time the claimant may incur costs is if he/she decides to take the grievance outside the ambit of the Academy; and
- Not be subjected to discrimination, victimisation or any other form of harassment due to lodging the grievance.

9. TIME LIMITS

The formal resolution process must be initiated within fourteen (14) working days of the decision, action, or event that gave rise to the grievance. The Head: Faculty or any person with jurisdiction over the grievance may extend this time limit if the claimant requests an extension within this seven (7) working day period for good cause (for example, an effort at informal resolution is being made at the departmental level).

These time limits apply to the initiation of the formal grievance process and must be read together with the broader timelines outlined in the Student Grievance Procedure.