**University of Manchester (UoM) Assessment Centre Complaints Procedure**

We hope that you will find no cause to complain about UoM Assessment Centre or its services, but, if you do, we will do our best to resolve your complaint quickly, fairly and without prejudice. We undertake to keep complainants fully informed of our progress and to achieve a resolution, which is satisfactory to both the Complainant and UoM Assessment Centre.

We aim to learn from any mistakes; this Complaints Procedure is seen as very important to maintain quality and to achieve continuous improvement in our services.

1.        As part of its commitment to ensuring the standard and quality of its service delivery, UoM Assessment Centre at the University of Manchester (“UoM Assessment Centre”) has established this Policy and Procedure (the “Procedure”) to deal with complaints.  Complaints provide useful feedback information and, where appropriate, will be used to improve services and facilities.

2.          The Procedure is available to individuals (“the client”) who have undertaken an assessment with UoM Assessment Centre.  Students of the University of Manchester are not entitled to raise a complaint under this Procedure, and should instead use the University of Manchester’s Student Complaints Procedure.  Any students of the University of Manchester who remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of the University of Manchester’s Student Complaints Procedure are entitled to refer their complaint to the Disabled Students’ Allowances Quality Assurances Group under paragraph 24 of this Procedure below.

3.           For the purposes of the Procedure, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction regarding the actions or omissions of UoM Assessment Centre in relation to the services or facilities which it provides.  Complaints relating to the actions or omissions of third parties (including in respect of any recommendations made by UoM Assessment Centre) fall outside the scope of the Procedure.

4.           The Procedure comprises of an informal and a formal stage.

5.           It is recognised that there may be occasions where an informal approach is not appropriate and the client may wish to proceed directly to other stages in the Procedure, giving reasons for doing so.  In such situations, the recipient of the complaint should decide at which stage in the Procedure the complaint should most appropriately be considered, taking account of its particular nature and circumstances. In respect of particularly serious complaints, the client may write directly to the Manager of UoM Assessment Centre without having followed the informal and formal stages of this Procedure.  In such cases, the Manager of UoM Assessment Centre will decide at which stage to respond to the complaint.

6.          Every reasonable effort will be made to deal promptly and efficiently with all complaints, to investigate them thoroughly and objectively, and to seek to resolve them satisfactorily.  Complaints will be dealt with positively and constructively.  If a complaint is upheld, UoM Assessment Centre will seek to provide an appropriate response, seek to correct any mistakes or misunderstandings and/or take any other action as appropriate.  If a complaint is not upheld, reasons for that decision will be given.

7.           All complaints will be dealt with in confidence with provisos that enquiries will have to be made in order to investigate the matters that are the subject of the complaint, and any individuals against whom a complaint is made have the right to be supplied with a copy of that complaint and to comment on it.  If these provisos present a problem for a client who wishes their complaint to be given complete confidentially, the client is advised to discuss how the complaint might be addressed with the Manager of UoM Assessment Centre.

8.           The effectiveness of any complaints procedure depends on an organisation being able to collect appropriate information from the parties concerned in order to investigate the matter properly.  For this reason, anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this Procedure.  It is at the discretion of the recipient of an anonymous complaint to determine how the matter is handled.

9.           UoM Assessment Centre will treat all clients who make complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination.  When complaints are submitted, clients and UoM Assessment Centre staff should act reasonably and fairly towards each other and respectfully adhere to this Procedure.

10.        UoM Assessment Centre reserves the right to terminate consideration of a complaint and/or restrict access to staff or procedures to clients, by pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct:

(i)           who seek to be, or are, disruptive; and/or

(ii)          whose requests are disproportionate and/or unnecessary and/or cause disproportionate and/or repeated efforts by members of staff.

Where a complaint is found to meet the above criteria, the recipient of the complaint should inform the client accordingly and direct them to the next appropriate stage of the Procedure

11.        The time limits set out in the Procedure will normally be followed.  If, for good reason, this is not possible, the client will be kept informed of progress.

12.        UoM Assessment Centre reserves the right to postpone considering, dealing with and/or responding to a complaint when the client is pursuing legal proceedings against UoM Assessment Centre or The University of Manchester.

**Informal stage**

13.        Most complaints can be resolved informally and, where practicable, a complaint should be dealt with as close as possible to the point at which it arises.  The client should therefore make their complaint initially to the member of staff who seems best placed to deal with the matter (usually the member of staff concerned), and provide a copy to the UoM Assessment Centre Senior Assessment Service Coordinator.  The client should normally expect to receive a written acknowledgement of receipt within five working days, and a full written response within twenty working days, of making a complaint.

**Formal stage**

14.        Only where the informal stage has been completed and the client remains dissatisfied should the formal stage be instituted. The client should write directly to the Head of the UoM Assessment Centre.  Formal complaints should be made as soon as possible, and in any case within 40 working days of the events or actions (or lack of actions) which have prompted the complaint. UoM Assessment Centre will not normally consider complaints made after this period, unless there is a credible and compelling reason for the delay.

15.        A formal complaint should include details of:

(a)          the complaint and any evidence relied upon in support of it;

(b)        why the response received at the informal stage is not considered to be satisfactory; and

(c)          what the client believes UoM Assessment Centre should do to put things right.

 16.        UoM Assessment Centre will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days.

17.        UoM Assessment Centre will appoint an Investigator to undertake an investigation into the substance of the complaint using whatever means they feel necessary.  The Investigator must independent of the source of the complaint.  If a meeting with the client takes place the client may be accompanied by a fellow client of UoM Assessment Centre, a Students’ Union officer or a member of staff. It is expected that the formal procedure should normally be completed and a written response sent to the client within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.

18.        The possible outcomes at this stage include:-
(a)          a resolution, reached in co-operation;

(b)          provision to the client of information by way of an explanation of the circumstances which led to the complaint;
(c)          dismissal of the complaint as being without foundation, with reasons given to the client in writing

**Review Stage**

 19.        If, once a decision on the complaint has been given, the client believes that the complaint has not been handled fairly or properly in accordance with this Procedure, or if the client has new evidence which they were unable (for credible and compelling reasons) to provide with the formal complaint, the client may request a review by writing to the Director of Campus Life within ten working days of receipt of the formal response.  The review request must include details of why the client remains dissatisfied and what resolution the client is seeking, and should also include copies of correspondence exchanged during the preceding stages, and any other relevant evidence.

20.        Receipt of a request for a review will be acknowledged in writing within five working days.  The Director of Campus Life or their nominee will review the documents relating to the case in order to determine whether the case has been handled properly and that the decision is reasonable in light of the available evidence or if any new evidence should be accepted.  During the review further evidence may be sought from the client and/or from others concerned.  It is expected that the review should be completed and a written response sent to the client within 20 working days of receipt of the request for a Review.

21.        Taking account of the substance of the complaint and the previous attempts at resolution, the Director of Campus Life or nominee will then decide on an appropriate course of action, which may include:

(a)          specific action to resolve the matter; or

(b)          dismissal of the complaint as being without foundation, with reasons given to the client in writing.

22.    If the Director of Campus Life or nominee dismisses the complaint as being without foundation, there will be no further opportunity for the complaint to be pursued within UoM Assessment Centre.

**Conclusion of the Complaints Procedure**

23.        At the conclusion of the Procedure, the client will be issued with a decision letter.  There are no other complaints procedures within UoM Assessment Centre other than those detailed above.

**References to Disabled Students Allowances Quality Assurances Group (“DSA-QAG”)**

24.        If the client is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, they may refer their complaint to the DSA-QAG (<https://dsa-qag.org.uk/>).  DSA-QAG is an independent organisation tasked with the accreditation of assessment centres such as UoM Assessment Centre and is responsible for setting standards of provision and monitoring delivery against those standards.