

The Hull York Medical School

# Code of Practice on Investigation and Determination of Student Complaints

**Updated:** 10.12.03

**Frequency of Update:** As required

**Responsibility to Update:** The Secretary of HYMS (Head of Administration)

## 1. Definition and Scope

- 1.1. HYMS wishes to develop in a spirit of mutual respect and collaborative participation between staff and students, and to welcome comments and suggestions from students about how services provided might be improved. Students wishing to make a **suggestion** or **comment** about services, either academic or non-academic, can do so informally at the point of service delivery, by contacting the relevant HYMS Senior Advisor or HYMS Clinical Placement Student Liaison Officer (see Appendix 1 for contact details).
- 1.2. Further, HYMS encourages all students to participate in HYMS affairs within the student body, and through student representatives on HYMS academic committees. In respect of HYMS programmes, student involvement is an intrinsic component of curriculum development and monitoring.
- 1.3. Occasionally, however, students may wish to make a complaint about the services they receive, should the normal collaborative processes fail to produce the necessary improvement. Complaints, like suggestions and comments, afford an opportunity for improving the quality of systems, processes and behaviours. This document sets out the procedure for HYMS students who wish to make a complaint to HYMS or to either University.
- 1.4. In this document, therefore, a **complaint** is a specific concern on the part of a student or students after the failure of normal collaborative processes to bring about timely improvements in the provision of education or other service by HYMS, the University of Hull, the University of York, the Students Union of the University of Hull, the Students Union of the University of York, or any organisation (NHS or other) providing clinical placements under contract. Examples include persisting inaccurate or misleading information about programmes of study, inadequate teaching or supervision, insufficient academic facilities, or a service not provided to the standard advertised.
- 1.5. This document relates in detail only to complaints concerning programme provision within HYMS (including complaints made concerning clinical attachments).
- 1.6. Complaints relating to other service provision by the Universities of Hull or York, including the Students' Unions, should be pursued through the Complaints Procedure of the respective University (see also section 2.3)
- 1.7. Allegations of personal harassment by staff or other students are not covered by this Code of Practice, but are subject to *HYMS Code of Practice on Harassment*.

- 1.8. Appeals against decisions or recommendations on academic progress or Fitness to Practise Medicine are not covered by this Code of Practice, but are subject to *HYMS Code of Practice on Academic and Fitness to Practise Appeals*.
- 1.9. No student will be disadvantaged by having raised a complaint, but HYMS expects that students will not make frivolous, vexatious or malicious complaints.

## **2. Informal complaints procedure**

- 2.1. As a general principle, HYMS anticipates that complaints will normally be dealt with informally in the first instance. Students with a complaint should seek to bring it to attention using the procedure outlined here *as soon as possible* following the occurrence of a problem and ideally within one calendar month. Many complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively in this manner, without recourse to formal procedure.
- 2.2. Students who experience a problem with, and wish to make a complaint about, any matter relating to programme provision, staff or students within HYMS on a University campus should first contact the person delivering the service. If informal discussion at a first contact does not resolve the situation satisfactorily, or if the complaint involves actions of the person delivering the service, the complaint should be taken, remaining informal, in person or in writing, to the HYMS Senior Advisor on that University campus.
- 2.3. If a complaint relates to any other matter on a University campus, students should follow the informal elements of the Complaints procedure of the relevant University. For details see: (<http://student.hull.ac.uk/handbook/rights/complaints.html> or <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/ss/comproc/>
- 2.4. If a complaint relates to a matter on a clinical attachment, the point of first contact should be the HYMS Student Liaison Officer for that NHS locality (Appendix 1). If informal discussion at a first contact does not resolve the situation satisfactorily, or if the complaint involves actions of the nominated first contact, the complaint should be taken, in person or in writing, to the HYMS Clinical Placement Manager.

## **3. Formal complaints procedure**

- 3.1. The formal complaints procedure should only be used where a student feels that the nature of the complaint is too serious to be dealt with informally, or where, after having already approached the HYMS Associate Dean for Students, or the HYMS Clinical Placement Manager, satisfactory progress has not been made towards resolution within 20 working days.

- 3.2. A formal complaint should be made in writing to the HYMS Curriculum and Assessment Manager, who will acknowledge receipt and arrange for an ad hoc Complaints sub-committee of the HYMS Programme Evaluation and Quality Committee to investigate, and bring to that committee for action. The investigation should be begun within 10 working days and a report submitted to the HYMS Programme Evaluation and Quality Committee within 20 working days.
- 3.3. The HYMS Programme Evaluation and Quality Committee may ask the complainant to attend in person as part of the investigation into a complaint. S/he is entitled, for support, to bring with her/him a member of the University, who could be a member of staff or a student, who may speak at the discretion of the chair of the Complaints sub-committee.
- 3.4. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of his or her complaint, he or she shall inform the University of Hull Complaints Investigation Officer (if a University of Hull registered student) or the Registrar (if a University of York registered student) in writing within 21 days of receiving the decision from HYMS. This shall state the reasons why he or she finds the outcome unsatisfactory, and explain the outcome desired.
- 3.5. If a complaint relates to any other matter on a University campus, students should follow the formal elements of the Complaints procedure of the relevant University. For details see: (<http://student.hull.ac.uk/handbook/rights/complaints.html> or <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/ss/comproc/>)

#### **4. Confidentiality**

- 4.1. Complaints involving the actions of individual staff, or other students, brought forward under this code of practice, may if requested be considered confidential in the first instance.
- 4.2. However, as natural justice requires that where a complaint is of a personal nature against an individual, it is likely that the complainant's identity will require to be revealed at some stage in all but the most exceptional cases in order for there to be a fair investigation.
- 4.3. HYMS will endeavour to inform an individual complainant of the extent to which her/his identity is likely to be revealed at each stage of the procedure.
- 4.4. To assist in the process of auditing the quality of its services and responsiveness to student comments, suggestions and complaints, HYMS will monitor complaints and report them to

the HYMS Programme Evaluation and Quality Committee. HYMS undertakes to respect the confidentiality of complainants in this exercise.

5. HYMS provides a support network of personal and senior advisors, under the guidance of the HYMS Associate Dean for Students. The names and contact details of members of the support network are on the HYMS website at [www.hyms.ac.uk](http://www.hyms.ac.uk).