

Kingston University London

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

Title and purpose of policy or area being assessed

(Scope of equality impact assessment eg. Admissions process / disability & dyslexia provision / Student Complaints procedure)

Student Complaints Procedure

Aims and objectives of policy or area

Process by which students are able to submit complaints about academic and/or non-academic services provided by the University. Procedure outlines how the complaint will be investigated and includes (section 6) a section on how student complaints about staff will be investigated

Policies / strategies included in area of assessment (if different from above)

As above - staff handling, resolution and investigation of complaints

Executive member of senior manager responsible for this policy or area

Dr Glyn Jones (Head of Student Affairs Office) on behalf of Bruce Armstrong (Director of Student Services and Administration)

Faculties and Departments involved in the assessment

Student Affairs Office – Student Services and Administration
University Secretary's department

Data / Evidence used

Qualitative and Quantitative data reviewed in the equality impact assessment

Qualitative data – feedback from participants – staff and students - in the Complaints process pertaining to their experiences and areas for enhancing the procedure
Quantitative data – complainants and issues raised based on ethnicity, sex, gender – in annual Student Complaints report over last 2 years

Involvement and Consultation

- Outline of how staff and students were involved in the development of the assessment area or will be involved in the resulting actions*
- Details of consultation undertaken to develop actions*
- Meetings with students, staff and KUSU to review operation of process for investigating student complaints about staff which was introduced in a revised procedure in July 2008

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- Review with KUSU and Faculties/departments on making students aware of the procedure and making the process more accessible to them
- Provision of training to appointed Complaints Co-ordinators in Faculties/departments to enhance complaint handling and resolution especially at informal stages of the process
- Feedback from students and staff following students' complaints about staff particularly in relation to allegations of discrimination pertaining to ethnicity, sex and gender

Summary of Findings

(Result of investigation of evidence, involvement and consultation including examples of existing good practice and how proposed actions will be disseminated)

- Need identified for revision of Section 6 of Student Complaints Procedure – student complaints about staff - following feedback from students and staff involved in the process. Necessary to streamline the process to ensure more compatible with rest of procedure – i.e. removing the prima facie investigatory informal stage and replacing with a Faculty/departmental investigation at informal stage and independent/impartial investigation at the formal stage.
- Continuation of training and sharing of best practice in complaint handling and resolution for Complaints Co-ordinators through termly meetings and provision of case studies on a dedicated sharepoint site to give guidance and act as a frame of reference
- 2008/09 Student Complaints Report shows a rise in student complaints about staff conduct on the grounds of appropriateness of interaction and discrimination – this is compared to 2007/08. The cases highlight a need to raise staff awareness of diversity and equality issues particularly when confronted with challenging situations
- All written and verbal communication with students and potential students needs to be clear and accurate. Information must be disseminated at an appropriate time
- There is a need for staff to ensure they provide students with good advice and that they take responsibility for issues that students bring to them
- There is a need to ensure that students are treated as individuals and not provided with standard responses which do not acknowledge their personal circumstances
- Planning when unanticipated situations arise is vital to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by the situation. Communication of interim arrangements should be clear and timely
- There is a need to ensure that we are acting appropriately in terms of our anticipatory duty with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act, eg. ensuring that lifts are operational to avoid complaints

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Actions / Recommendation				
Issue	Action Required	Responsible Dep / Fac	Executive Lead	Target date
Section 6 Student Complaints Procedure	Revisions approved at Board of Governors in July 2009 and operational for 2009/10 academic year	Student Services and Administration (Student Affairs Office)	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration	Next review of procedure -June 2011
Advice/Support for Complaints Co-ordinators	Enhancement of dedicated sharepoint site with workshops/ meetings during 2009/10	Student Services and Administration (Student Affairs Office)	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration	Ongoing during 2009/10
Diversity and Equality training for staff – aim = to empower them to deal with challenging situations and to minimise complaint escalation	Planning of training programme for staff during 2009/10 with anticipated roll-out during 2010/11	Equality Unit	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration (working with Nona McDuff)	Ongoing during 2009/10 and 2010/11

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Raise awareness of the Student Complaints Procedure amongst staff	Dissemination of complaints report and summary learning points to appropriate committees/ Faculty Boards and via complaint co-ordinators	Student Services and Administration (Student Affairs Office)	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration	Ongoing during 2009/10
Enhance communication/ links with Academic Registry	Meeting to discuss links between Student Complaints Procedure and Academic Appeals Procedure	Student Services and Administration (Student Affairs Office)	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration	2009/10
Raise awareness amongst students of the various University procedures	Raise awareness amongst key staff (KUSU, Faculties, Complaint Co-ordinators) of appropriate procedures	Student Services and Administration (Student Affairs Office)	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration	Ongoing during 2009/10
Equality Impact Assessment information	To be incorporated into future reports	Student Services and Administration (Student Affairs Office)	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration	2009/10 Student Complaints Reports
Collation of disability information for complainants	Include statistics related to disability and dyslexia in future reports	Student Services and Administration (Student Affairs Office)	Bruce Armstrong – Director of Student Services and Administration	2009/10 Student Complaints Reports

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Date	10 March 2010
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