

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



**HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL
P.O.BOX 6311 KIGALI**

MODEL STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

July 2007

Student Complaints Procedure

Aims

The Student Complaints Procedure aims to provide an accessible, quick, straightforward and informal method of resolving student complaints, with the option of a more formal, written, procedure in serious cases after all efforts for local resolution have been tried.

All students of the institution, undergraduate, postgraduate or part-time, are entitled to use it without concern that they will be disadvantaged by complaining. It is anticipated that no costs will be incurred by students in raising complaints. Due regard to privacy, confidentiality and the interests of any third parties will be borne in mind as appropriate.

Complaint or appeal?

A complaint is a specific concern about the *provision* of a programme of study or related academic service, including teaching and academic facilities. An appeal is a request for a review of the *decision of an academic body* charged with making decisions on student progression, assessment and awards etc. Complaints will be considered under the procedure in this Code. If a complaint is deemed to be an appeal, the University/Institution may then deal with it under the appropriate appeal procedures, or other appropriate mechanism.

Please note that *matters of academic judgment are in general not open to review* either by complaint or by appeal, and that the *General Academic Regulations Procedures* deal with appeals.

Complaints procedure

Please note that other, separate procedures or arrangements exist for Harassment and Bullying, Racial and Sexual Discrimination, Public Interest Disclosure, Disability Complaints Procedure and academic matters, including for example class, and other timetabling, matters. There are also Staff/Student Liaison Committees. Details of these procedures are published elsewhere. You will be advised if it is more appropriate for you to deal with the matter which you raise through such channels. Generally, you may be accompanied by someone of your choosing under the complaints procedure, and details of representation in relation to other procedures may be set out in the appropriate regulations. The Director of Students Services can provide advice

If you have a complaint, please:

1. Speak first to your lecturer, academic adviser, tutor, or other person who is immediately responsible for the situation. Most complaints should be resolved by this method. Explain your complaint to that person and ask for a specific resolution to it.

If you still feel dissatisfied after this,

2. Raise the matter with your personal tutor/academic adviser or ask your student representative to raise the matter with the staff concerned.

If you still feel dissatisfied after this,

3. Raise the matter with the Head of Department or the person in charge of the activity in question. That person will make enquiries with those concerned, and report back to you on the outcome. If you still feel dissatisfied after this,

4. Raise the matter with the Dean of your Faculty or equivalent person in charge, such as the Director etc. You should do so in writing, explaining your complaint and everything which has happened thus far. After investigating, that person will report back to you the outcome. If you still feel dissatisfied after this,

5. Make a formal complaint to the Registry/Department of Academic Affairs. You must do so in writing, within two weeks of the most recent decision on the matter, explaining fully your complaint, the remedy you seek, and also everything which has happened so far.

- Investigations will be made, and any necessary evidence sought and considered.
- It is likely that those who have been involved in the earlier stages of the complaint will be asked to indicate their involvement in it.
- The person who is dealing with the complaint may decide to hold a formal or informal meeting as appropriate, or to deal with it on paper only.
- If there is a meeting you will be given the opportunity to attend. Should you choose not to do so, then the matter will be decided in your absence.
- A written conclusion will be sent to you following investigation and consideration.
- Recommendations regarding remedies may be issued by the Registry/Department of Academic Affairs, or by the Dean of Students' Office, either to member(s) of staff or to the appropriate University Committee, depending upon the outcome.
- A form for making a formal complaint is available from the Department of Academic Affairs/Academic Registrar and Dean of students.
- A complaint may be declared by the Registry/Department of Academic Affairs to be vexatious, without substance or malicious, and may therefore be discontinued.

In the event that any issue involving disability, race or other equal opportunities issue arises, any Committee or University officer has a discretion to adjourn proceedings to seek a report from any University or external adviser and/or to consider such a report or any related submission by any person. This may be at any stage, but is at the sole discretion of the Committee or member(s) of staff involved.

Rwanda Public Services Ombudsman (RPSO)-UMUVUNYI OFFICE or IGGs Office

In circumstances where all the University's internal procedures have been exhausted and where the complainant is still dissatisfied, the Rwanda Public Services Ombudsman (RPSO) has responsibility for investigating complaints against the University.

In these circumstances and at the end of an internal complaints process, the University will notify the complainer of his/her right of referral to the Rwanda Public Services Ombudsman. This is in line with the text provided by the Ombudsman's office by Universities/public /private institutions in Rwanda.

The Ombudsman can consider complaints if injustice or hardship is caused as a result of -

- administrative failure
- failure to provide a service
- failure in that service

Matters which the Ombudsman cannot consider are -

- Where the institution has considered the matter properly and come to a properly made decision but where you disagree with that decision (unless new information was available, decided complaints will not be re-examined).
- A commercial or contractual matter or a personnel issue relating to staff.

Only in exceptional circumstances will the Ombudsman consider complaints which could be taken to court or to an independent tribunal (and not at all if you have begun proceedings or where a period of more than 12 months has elapsed from the date of the matter being complained about).

If you do contact the Ombudsman, all relevant documents should be sent to him or her with an explanation of the complaints procedure used by the Institution. Please note it is also possible for such complaints to be submitted by staff or members of the public (including parents of students) as well as prospective students, former students or current students. This Ombudsman service is independent of the University and free.

There will also be ongoing dialogue between the Ombudsman's office and the University to highlight good practice or summarize trends and general issues in any complaints raised with that Office against the University

In terms of the Rwanda Public Services Ombudsman Act 2004, the institution is under an obligation to make arrangements for members of the public to inspect or obtain copies of any reports of an ombudsman investigation against it and this will be done by confirmation of the issue of any report

STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM FOR FORMAL PROCEDURE

[To be used only if dissatisfied after stages 1-4 of the University Complaints Procedure]

Please write down your complaint fully:

Please explain what has happened in the earlier stages of your complaint and why you remain dissatisfied:

Please write down any disability, ethnicity or other equal opportunities issues which you wish to raise.

Please explain what you would like to happen to resolve your complaint:

[Please continue on another sheet of paper if there is insufficient room on this form.]

I agree that information about my complaint may be gathered by members of staff in the Department of Academic Affairs to investigate and evaluate my complaint. Experience has shown that in order to investigate complaints properly, and to balance fairness with the rights of person about whom the complaint is made, disclosure is needed, and accordingly I agree that my name and other necessary information about the complaint may be disclosed to others as necessary in order to investigate it. I also understand and accept that the outcome of formal complaints must be recorded for the purposes of monitoring and analyzing complaints generally, and for reporting to Senate for monitoring and evaluation in terms of quality assurance as the University is required to do under the NQFW (new Rwandan law for higher education institutions) Code on Appeals and Complaints.

I confirm that I have disclosed any information which I wish to on this form regarding any disability or any other equal opportunities issue including race. I consent to this information being used and passed on in confidence to other members of staff who require to be advised of it in investigating and dealing with my complaint.

Signed.....

Name.....

(In block capitals)

Address.....

.....

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Matriculation number.....

Phone number.....

Faculty and Course of Study.....

Please send this form (marked for the attention of the University's Complaints Officer) to the Department of Academic Affairs.