

COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT/ GRIEVANCE POLICY

Nations Incorporated (NI)

Document Type	Policy and Procedure
Policy Owner	Academic Director
Approved By	Board of Directors
Applies To	Students and persons seeking enrolment, as applicable

1. Overview

1.1 Policy Statement

Nations Incorporated (NI) is committed to developing and maintaining an effective, timely, fair and equitable grievance handling system which is easily accessible to all complainants. The terms and conditions in this document apply to all NI students. If the grievance relates to an academic issue, the NI Academic Director (or a nominated person within the Academic Department) will action the process. If the grievance relates to a non-academic issue, the NI Academic Director will nominate the head of the relevant programme (or suitable alternative) to action the process.

1.2 Policy Aims

NI aims to:

- 1.2.1** Protect the rights of students and the reputation of NI and its partners.
- 1.2.2** Develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve the organisation and how it works.
- 1.2.3** Set in place a grievance handling system that is student focused and helps NI to prevent grievances from recurring.
- 1.2.4** Ensure that any grievances are resolved promptly, objectively, with sensitivity and in complete confidentiality.
- 1.2.5** Ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against or victimised.
- 1.2.6** Ensure that there is a consistent response to grievances.

1.3 Definition of a Grievance

A grievance can be defined as a person's expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of NI's services and activities, including both academic and non-academic matters, such as:

- 1.3.1** The enrolment and induction/orientation process.
- 1.3.2** The quality of education provided.
- 1.3.3** Academic issues, including student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study.
- 1.3.4** Handling of personal information and access to personal records.
- 1.3.5** The way someone has been treated.

1.4 Purpose of the Grievance Procedure

These grievance procedures are designed to ensure that NI responds effectively to individual cases of dissatisfaction.

1.5 Grievance Records

A written record of student grievances and outcomes shall be kept in hard copy or electronically in the student file. A summary of student grievance information will be kept securely within a grievance register.

2. Policy Coverage

In relation to non-academic grievances, the term “complainant” applies to both current students of NI and persons seeking to enrol with NI. These grievance procedures will be made available to complainants via the NI website, with the relevant URL included in the Student Handbook.

3. Informal Resolution – Before a Formal Grievance

3.1 Informal Resolution Process

Complainants are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties informally with the person(s) concerned. Staff members are available to assist with the resolution of issues at this level. Complainants may raise an informal grievance by contacting the relevant Student Support team in person, by email or by calling 225-4211.

4. General Grievance Procedure

4.1 Scope of the Procedure

This procedure can be utilised by complainants to submit a grievance of an academic or non-academic nature. Grievances of an academic nature include issues related to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course of study. Grievances of a non-academic nature cover all other matters, including grievances in relation to personal information that NI holds in relation to an individual.

4.2 Rights of the Parties

During all stages of this procedure:

- 4.2.1** The complainant and any respondent will not be victimised or discriminated against.
- 4.2.2** If requested, the complainant will have an opportunity to formally present their case, and each party to a grievance may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at any relevant meetings.
- 4.2.3** A full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the process will be provided if requested by the complainant or a respondent.
- 4.2.4** Where the internal or external grievance handling or appeal process results in a decision that supports the complainant, NI will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the complainant of the outcome.
- 4.2.5** Where required, a complainant may seek an appointment with the NI Academic Director or nominee so that this policy and associated procedures may be explained further. The complainant has the right to be accompanied by a support person.
- 4.2.6** If a complainant is dissatisfied with the result of the Stage One – Formal Grievance process set out in Section 5 below, the complainant must proceed with the Stage Two – Internal Appeal process.

5. Stage One – Formal Grievance

5.1 Submission of Formal Grievance

After following the process referred to in Section 3 above, complainants may submit a formal grievance in relation to academic and non-academic issues.

5.2 Method and Timeframe for Submission

Formal grievances must be submitted in writing, together with details and documentary evidence, marked to the attention of the NI Academic Director at the address for the NSBM Campus detailed on the NI website or emailed to director@nations.gy. Submission must take place within 10 working days after completion of the informal process described in Section 3.

5.3 Acknowledgement and Commencement

Receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged in writing. The grievance handling process will commence within 10 working days of receipt of the formal grievance, and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.

5.4 Clarification of Desired Outcome

The NI Academic Director or nominee will, if necessary, seek to clarify the outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve. Such clarification may be sought by written or verbal request or by a face-to-face interview with the complainant. When such clarification occurs in a face-to-face interview, the complainant or respondent may ask another person to accompany them.

5.5 Investigation and Written Response

The NI Academic Director or nominee will then endeavour to resolve the grievance and will provide a written response (“Written Response”) to the complainant on the steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision, as soon as practicable.

5.6 Responsibility for Handling Grievances

Generally, in terms of actioning the process referred to in this Section 5:

- 5.6.1** If the grievance relates to an academic issue, the NI Academic Director (or a nominated person within the Academic Department) will action the process.
- 5.6.2** If the grievance relates to a non-academic issue, the NI Academic Director will nominate the head of the relevant programme (or suitable alternative) to action the process.

6. Stage Two – Internal Appeal

6.1 Right to Appeal

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal grievance, they may lodge a written appeal, together with new details and documentary evidence, to the Appeals Committee within 10 working days of the date of the Written Response. If it is not lodged within this timeframe, the outcome of the Written Response will stand.

6.2 Acknowledgement and Timeframe

Receipt of the appeal will be acknowledged in writing. The appeal process will commence within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal, and all reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the appeal process as soon as practicable.

6.3 Appeals Committee

The Appeals Committee will consist of the following members:

6.3.1 Two members of the Board of Directors.

6.3.2 Two academic staff members.

6.4 Consultation

The Appeals Committee may, at its discretion, consult with the complainant and other relevant parties. Where possible, such consultations should take the form of face-to-face meetings. The complainant or the respondent may ask another person to accompany them to these interviews.

6.5 Internal Appeal Report

As soon as practicable, the Appeals Committee will provide a written report (“Internal Appeal Report”) to the complainant advising the further steps taken to address the grievance, including the reasons for the decision.

7. Stage Three – External Appeal

7.1 Right to External Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their internal appeal, they may lodge an external appeal within 10 working days of the date of the Internal Appeal Report.

7.2 Timeframe

External appeals lodged after the timeframes stipulated above will not be considered.

7.3 Scope of External Review

The purpose of an external appeal is not to review the determination of the internal appeal or the outcome of a formal re-marking request (for example, the external review will not review what an assessment or subject mark/grade should be). Rather, it will evaluate whether the policies and procedures of the internal appeal or re-marking process were complied with. Due consideration will be given to any recommendation arising from the external review.

7.4 External Appeal Body

The external appeal is handled by Dochas Consulting. Contact details are:

Address: Lot 27 Prince Williams Street, Plaisance, East Coast Demerara

Telephone: 592 222 4943

Email: info@dochasconsulting.com

Website: www.dochasconsulting.com

7.5 Cost

The services of Dochas Consulting are provided free of charge.

8. Referral to Partner Institution/University

The student always has a right to go to the partnering institution/university to have an unresolved issue dealt with.

9. Further Action

The procedures set out in this document do not replace or modify procedures or any other responsibilities which may arise under other higher education policies, statute or any other law. Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of individuals to take action under Guyana's Consumer Protection laws. These procedures also do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

10. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

A written record of all grievances handled under this procedure and their outcomes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years to allow all parties to the grievance appropriate access to these records, upon written request to the Registrar. These records will be maintained at the NI campus. All records relating to grievances will be treated as confidential.

11. Approval, Publication and Training

This Policy and Procedure was agreed to and ratified by the Board of Directors. This Policy and Procedure will be made available to students and persons seeking to enrol with NI through reference in the Student Handbook and on NI's website (www.nations.gy). For the purposes of communicating to and training staff, this Policy and Procedure will be referenced in the Staff Handbook and will form part of the staff induction process, which will be facilitated by the NI Academic Director.

Current Status – Version 3 / 2020

Approved by – Board of Directors

Date of Approval – January 17, 2017

Reviewed – January 17, 2019

Reviewed – August 2020 no changes

Reviewed: January, 2025

Version: 4 / 2025

May 30th, 2021 Board of Directors approved the name change of this policy to Complaint Management