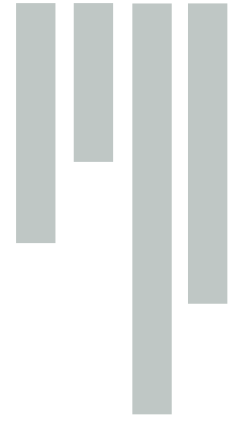


HEA

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy



The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is committed to engaging with any complaints made about its services in an efficient, effective and timely manner. This policy has been developed to align with Ombudsman guidelines and also to ensure fair procedures.

If we get something wrong, we will apologise and where possible we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from mistakes and use the information we gain to continually improve our services.

Feedback can be provided directly to any of our staff at point of service delivery.¹ However, in the event a concern has not been satisfactorily resolved, a formal complaint should be made in one of the following ways:

- Online through our website using this webform for complaints
- By letter, official complaint form, email, or phone to:

Corporate Affairs

The Higher Education Authority

3 Shelbourne Buildings, Crampton Avenue,

Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge,

Dublin 4,

D04 C2Y6

Email: info@hea.ie

Phone: +353 1 231 7100

Please note that separate appeals procedures apply in relation to funding applications in the HEA. These guidelines are available on the relevant sections of the HEA's website.

Please also note that the HEA has issued separate guidelines for workers who wish to make a protected disclosure to the CEO of the HEA as a prescribed person in accordance with the provisions of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended) and Statutory Instrument 367/2020 (as amended). These are available [here: https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/governance/protected-disclosures/](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/governance/protected-disclosures/)

¹ You will appreciate that we do not expect our staff to accept abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour. If such a concern arises for a member of our staff (s)he will raise the matter with HEA management with a view to determining an appropriate and reasonable manner to engage with our customer's concerns in an appropriate way within the resources that we have available and which we will clearly communicate to the customer.



How we engage with other Customer Concerns/Complaints

We appreciate that you may have concerns in relation to other aspects of our work. For example, you may believe that we have not met our standards as set out in our Quality Customer Service Charter and Action Plan or that a decision was not clearly explained or that undue delay has occurred.

Where you have a concern or complaint about an action, or inaction, of the HEA, please first bring it to the attention of the HEA staff member who was directly involved. If, having followed the above procedure, you consider that your concern has still not been satisfactorily resolved, you may make a more formal written complaint.

If your concern/complaint is not adequately resolved following direct contact with the HEA staff member involved, or if you do not wish to raise the issue directly with them, you may raise it with the Head of Corporate Affairs via the mailbox at complaints@hea.ie. The Head of Corporate Affairs will appoint an appropriate officer to review the matter and reply to your complaint.

Formal Complaints Process

We will tell you who has been assigned to investigate your complaint. Depending on the nature of the complaint, we will address it in one or a number of the following ways;

- Request the matter to be reviewed by the person who you interacted with in the first instance or, if you prefer, their line manager.
- Refer the matter to the relevant Section Head.
- Refer the matter to a Manager working in a different section.
- In exceptional circumstances the HEA may have the matter investigated by a person outside the organisation.

Before investigating your complaint, we will outline to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have understood it correctly. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person managing with your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you do not want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.



We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days.

If your complaint is more complex we will:

- Let you know within 30 days why we think it may take longer to investigate.
- Tell you how long we expect it to take.
- Give you regular updates on any progress made (no longer than 20 days).

The person who is investigating your complaint will aim firstly to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on the complexity and seriousness of the issues raised. In more complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or an alternative method to resolve the matter.

When investigating your complaint, we will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your complaint. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and will refer to our own policies in doing so.

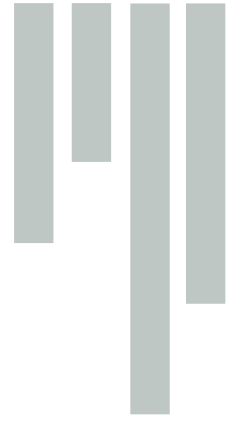
Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found using your preferred form of communication (we will also ask for a secondary method of contact). This could be by letter or email, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we get it wrong, we will tell you what happened and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to prevent it from occurring again. If we get it wrong, we will always apologise.

Resolutions

If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we will, where practical, make every effort to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.



Complaints to Office of the Ombudsman

If you are not satisfied with the HEA's response to a formal written complaint, you have the option of pursuing the matter further with the Office of the Ombudsman.

Contact Details

Website: <https://ombudsman.ie/en/>

Phone: 01 639 5600

Address:

Office of the Ombudsman
6 Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2,
D02 W773

Notes

1. Complaints which are the subject of legal proceedings: The HEA is not able to engage with a complaint that is the subject of civil litigation or criminal prosecution, or is currently under investigation by another statutory body.
2. Our expectations in managing appeals and complaints: We will always interact with our customers with courtesy and respect. We also expect that our staff will be treated courteously and with respect.