

Complaints Policy

Originator:	Chief Operating Officer
Approved by:	SMT
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Complaints Policy

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of students, and parents of students of Academy of Science Technology and Management. This policy and procedure will be relied upon in respect of all complaints by parents and students made against the College except in respect of:

- a) expulsions where a separate policy and procedure applies
- b) appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications where a separate appeals procedure applies.

Complaints made by members of the public about the College will be dealt with under the Complaints Procedure. The complaints can be made at the college office or to COO.

The College expects that most concerns can be resolved informally and will use their best endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made informally, or any concerns that are raised, on that basis. If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not involving child protection allegations, internal assessment decisions or a decision to expel or remove a student, must be stated courteously in writing to the Academic Director and will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response. This policy and procedure is available on request to, students, the parents of students and prospective students of the College.

College Complaints Procedure

Stage One - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If students have a complaint they should normally, in the first instance, contact the Academic Director/COO. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away.
3. A written record of all concerns and complaints, and the date on which they were received, will be kept for one year after the student leaves the College.
4. The College will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaints within ten working days of them being raised, except where they are raised within College vacations or within two working days of their commencement where the College will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible after commencement of the new college term (usually within ten working days).

5. Should the matter not be resolved as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the Academic Director & COO fails to reach a satisfactory solution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this procedure

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above), then students/parents should put their complaint in writing to the Academic Director/COO in which the complaint should be expressed clearly and courteously. Students/Parents should identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved.
2. The Academic Director/COO will undertake an investigation and decide upon the action to be taken.
3. In most cases, the Academic Director & COO will meet or speak with the student concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
4. A written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be maintained.
5. Once the Academic Director/COO is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. The student will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for this decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten working days after speaking or meeting with the student to discuss the matter (pursuant to paragraph 8 above). The Academic Director/COO may, where feasible, also meet with the student to explain the decision.
6. The College will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the College's decision, which will be kept for one year after the student leaves the College.
7. Where parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of the College's response to their formal complaint, the parents have the opportunity to have their complaint considered by the Board of Board of Directors.

Stage Three – Panel Hearing

1. If the student seeks to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with the Academic Director's/COO's decision in respect of their formal complaint, the student may, in writing addressed to the College, request that their complaint be further considered by the Board of Directors.
2. This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as an "appeal"

3. Students must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten working days of the date of the College's decision made in accordance with the Stage Two Procedure. The student should provide a list of their complaint(s) made against the College and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage Two Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each. The Board of Directors is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
4. Where an appeal is received by the College, the College will, within five working days, refer the matter to the Board of Directors who will act as the Complaints Panel. Where an appeal is received by the College, the College will, within five working days, refer the matter to the Chair of the Complaints Panel. Where the appeal is received by the College during college vacations, or within two working days of their commencement, the College has five working days upon commencement of the college term to refer the matter to the Chair of the Complaints Panel.
5. The Chair provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties.
6. Once an appeal has been received by the Chair, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five working days, and inform the parents of the steps involved in this Complaints Procedure.
7. The Chair will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty college days after receipt by the College of students written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Three Procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
8. The independent Complaints Panel will consist of two members on the Board of Directors who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of the College.
9. The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
 - a) The student/s and/or one representative
 - b) The Academic Director/COO of the College and/or one representative; and
 - c) Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
10. Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in

advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:

- a) documents in support of complaint(s),
- b) chronology and key dates relating to complaint (s), and
- c) written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail. This evidence will be considered by the Panel, along with the initial submission that was lodged by the parents.

11. Evidence will be initially sent to the Chair, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Chair no later than ten working days in advance of the hearing. The Chair will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five working days in advance of the Panel hearing.
12. It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
13. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for the College will need the appropriate approval from the relevant authorities although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.
14. The Panel's findings will be sent by the Chair, in writing to the parents, the Academic Director and, where relevant, the person complained of. The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel.
15. The College will keep a record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel, which record will be kept for one year after the student leaves the College.