



National Institute of Social Development Policy on Grievance Handling for Students

Policy Title: Policy on Grievance Handling for Students

Policy Number: 20

Functional Area: Institute Staff and Students

Effective Date: 11.07.2024

Approving Authority: The Governing Council, National Institute of Social Development

Administrative Responsibility: Director General, ADG, Directors, Heads of Department, Director, Student Supportive Service Centre

20.1 Rationale & Purpose:

A high level of commitment and satisfaction among students is vital for an educational institution's effective functioning and achievement of its objectives. Grievances may arise among students due to unfair treatment, discrimination, misapplication or misinterpretation of the policies, regulations, rules, or procedures. The National Institute of Social Development (hereinafter referred to as "the Institute") aims to ensure that the grievances of students are redressed fairly and impartially.

It is imperative to maintain standard procedures in the Institute for Grievance Handling. The purpose of this policy is to provide a process for an impartial review of the grievances of students and to ensure that the concerns of the grievant are properly and impartially addressed and remedied. The policy provides guidelines to students who believe that they have been unfairly or improperly treated or adversely affected in their academic and/or personal capacity. Further, this policy describes the procedure that should be adopted to handle the grievances of students at the Institute. All the Institute community are bound by this policy, and the relevant decisions are made by the committees appointed under this policy.

20.2 Scope:

- Any student can complain due to a grievance that may have occurred by the Institute.
- The Policy on Grievance Handling for Students cannot be adopted or applied to challenge the policies and procedures that have been laid down for the betterment of the Institute.
- Issues related to academic assessments and any acts that violate the rules, regulations and standards that are set out in the Faculty Prospectus, Student Handbook, relevant rules and regulations on student discipline, Examination By-laws, or any relevant law in the time being, are not considered grievances.
- Complaints relating to disputes arising among students from matters not related to the affairs of the Institute, disciplinary decisions administered by external sources, and decisions made by or acts of individuals not employed by the Institute shall not be considered under this policy.

20.3 Policy Aims

The Policy aims to:

- Develop a culture that views grievances as an opportunity to improve the Institute and its internal functioning.
- Set in place a consistent, student-focused grievance handling procedure and prevent grievances from recurring.
- Ensure that grievances are resolved promptly, objectively, and in complete confidentiality.
- Handle the grievances in a professional, fair, objective, and transparent manner.
- Ensure that the views of each complainant and respondent are respected and that any party to a grievance is not discriminated against nor victimized.

20.4 Policy Principles

The principle of this policy is to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all students. Resolution of student complaints, regardless of the outcome, can improve students' progress toward completion of a course or degree and ultimately success at the institution. Moreover, the Institute considers these instances as opportunities to improve its internal systems to make it an exemplary and responsive organization.

20.5 Policy Statement

Any physical, psychological, academic, or other problem related to institute life, if considered a grievance, shall be informed to the Office of the Grievance Handling Committee (GHC) by any means of communication. The GHC will coordinate the arrangements with the relevant parties to redress the issue.

20.6 Grievance Handling Committee (GHC)

The GHC will consist of the following members:

1. Chairperson: ADG (appointed by the AAB and approved by the GC with the agreement of the GHC). Based on the grievance, the Chairperson will be selected from a faculty other than the faculty of concern.
2. Registrar of the Institute (or a permanent representative).
3. Administration Officer.
4. One representative from each Department – appointed by the AAB.
5. An outside member (an Attorney at Law) with the AAB and GC approval.
6. One or two independent members from the Institute with expertise in the particular concern/area, appointed by the AAB, as the case may be.

20.7 Special Circumstances

In an instance where the complaint relates directly or indirectly to a member of the GHC, the Chairperson of the GHC shall make necessary changes to the composition of the GHC to maintain the impartiality of the conduct of the particular investigation/inquiry. In a case where the complaint relates directly or indirectly to the Chairperson of the GHC, the Director General shall make necessary changes to the composition of the GHC.

20.8 The Formal Process for Handling the Grievances of Students

- 20.8.1 If a student feels that he/she has a grievance related to any issue falling within the parameters stated in Section 5 of this policy, he/she has the right to make a complaint using the communication methods stated on the relevant web page.
- 20.8.2 A representative of a student can also make a complaint with the consent of the student. If a representative is making the complaint, a designated form must be used to make the complaint.

- 20.8.3 The details stated in Section 3.4 of this policy should be provided when making a complaint.
- 20.8.4 Concerns/grievances that had taken place before one month or more shall not be entertained unless there are special circumstances.
- 20.8.5 A designated person shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and inform the GHC about the complaint within three working days of the receipt of the complaint to have an investigation or an inquiry into the matter.
- 20.8.6 Applications are treated on a first come-first serve basis unless otherwise urgent, decided by the Registrar of the Institute based on the prima facie evidence.
- 20.8.7 The GHC must initiate the process to redress the issue immediately for urgent cases. In the case of issues that are not urgent, the GHC must initiate the grievance-handling process within fourteen (14) days of the receipt of the complaint.
- 20.8.8 The GHC may communicate with the relevant parties, including but not limited to the academic staff, non-academic staff, and students, whenever necessary during the investigation process to obtain evidence and gather information.
- 20.8.9 The GHC, upon investigation, will provide a report to the Director General with suitable remedial action that should be taken.
- 20.8.10 The action/s taken by the Director General based on the recommendations made by the GHC will be communicated to the grievant/complainant and the GHC.
- 20.8.11 The GHC should obtain feedback from the complainant on the solution offered, protecting the privacy of the complainant and Trauma-informed Care (TIC)
- 20.8.12 If a grievant/complainant or the representative is unsatisfied with the action/s taken, he/she could make an in-detail appeal to the GHC within fourteen (14) days (excluding public holidays and Sundays) using the Grievance Appeal Form.
- 20.8.13 The GHC can make recommendations to the Director General to take appropriate action based on the action taken.
- 20.8.14 The GHC should keep records of the initial receipt, to whom it was referred, the type of the issue, and the remedial actions with the date and time.
- 20.8.15 A summary report of complaints and their remedial measures must be sent to the Director/CQA once every six months for recording purposes.
- 20.8.16 Information that should accompany a Formal Complaint. It is the responsibility of the complainant to provide the following information to facilitate a fruitful formal investigation:

20.8.16.1. Name of the complainant

- Relationship of the representative to the grievant party (if applicable)
- Student Registration Number of the complainant
- A caption that summarizes the nature of the complaint
- Date, time, and place if the complaint is related to a specific incident
- Date and time of notifications (if any) if the complaint is related to the continuation of a violation

20.8.16.2. A descriptive account of the complaint

- Evidence of consent of the grievant party (if applicable)
- How the incident/issue impacts the complainant's academic pursuits at the Institute during his/her studentship
- Any supporting evidence by way of information/witness(es) or any circumstantial evidence
- Anonymous complaints sent, transmitted, and forwarded, lodged, or conveyed in any other manner shall not be entertained.
- Confidentiality of Information revealed at Grievance Handling Processes
- All information revealed/intimated/transpired/transmitted at all grievance handling processes will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- All material recorded/documented during the investigations will be treated as highly confidential, filed separately, and maintained in total confidentiality under the personal custody of the Chairperson of the GHC. After the investigation, all material should be preserved under the custody of the Registrar of the Institute.
- Members of the GHC are duty-bound to maintain total privacy and confidentiality in the proceedings of investigations/inquiries.

20.9 Appeal Handling Procedure

20.9.1 In an instance where the grievant/complainant or the representative is not satisfied with the action/s taken, he/she may appeal to the Director General within fourteen (14) days (excluding public holidays and Sundays) using the Grievance Appeal Form. In a case where the complaint relates directly or indirectly to the Director General, the Council will take a collective decision on the proceedings of the appeal.

20.9.2 The Director General shall place appeal/s before the next immediate meeting of the Governing Council.