

# SPIRIT STUDIOS.

## Student Complaint Procedure

### Overview

Spirit Studios' aim is to provide a supportive environment for our students, and to be responsive to concerns when they are raised.

### What is a complaint or grievance?

A complaint or grievance is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about any programme of study or related facility or any other service provided by or on behalf of Spirit Studios, which has materially and negatively affected your experience as a student at the school.

A complaint or grievance may be raised individually or collectively, and you should feel assured that you will not encounter any disadvantage having lodged a complaint in good faith. Where complaints are raised collectively, the complaint should include a signed statement from all parties confirming that they have been affected by the issue or incident and authorising Spirit Studios to correspond with a single named spokesperson.

Spirit Studios may decline to deal with complaints which are intended to cause annoyance, or are malicious or frivolous. A complaint may be considered to be as such when it:

Clearly does not have any serious purpose or value.

May or may not be the latest in a series of requests.

The complaint is designed to cause disruption or annoyance.

Has the effect of harassing the School and/or its staff.

Can be fairly characterised as obsessive or manifestly unreasonable.

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Has the evident intention to do harm or mischief.

Has no clear desire for a sensible or reasonable form of redress or where no redress is sought and therefore malice may be implied.

The complaint is clearly not serious or sensible in content, attitude or behaviour.

Where there is reason to believe that a complaint falls under these categories, the matter will be referred to the Director who may decide to reject the complaint.

Reasons will be given as to why the complaint is considered to be an abuse of process, and Spirit Studios may also invoke the Regulations for the Conduct of Students as detailed in the Spirit Studios Student Handbook.

## **Process**

Complaints should be raised as early as possible, since any delay may affect our ability to properly investigate the complaint, or provide an appropriate response; and it is important that all relevant material pertaining to the complaint should be submitted in reasonable time with as much detail as possible.

All complaints will be investigated, and confidentiality will be maintained during the process to safeguard the interests of everyone concerned, unless disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint. Spirit Studios expects that all parties will respect the confidentiality of the process.

Any individual about whom a complaint is made will have the right to be informed of the fact and nature of the complaint by their line manager or course leader. Spirit Studios will ensure that anyone investigating or deciding on a complaint has had no prior involvement in the complaint.

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Where a complaint is found to be justified in full or in part, the complainant will be notified of any appropriate remedial action. If a complaint is found to be not justified at any stage, the reasons for the decision will be communicated, together with details of any further recourse that is available.

Any student who lodges a complaint or against whom a complaint is made will be entitled to be accompanied by a person of their choosing at any stage in the process. You may seek representation from the Students' Union or you may choose to be accompanied by a friend.

Students who lodge a complaint may not be represented in their absence, unless there are exceptional reasons (such as a health condition) which means this is necessary.

All action under this Procedure will normally cease on receipt of formal correspondence from a solicitor on behalf of the student, or on the instigation of legal proceedings against Spirit Studios in relation to the matters complained about.

## **Complaint stages**

### *Stage 1 Informal Grievance*

In the first instance, and where it is felt that a resolution is easily achievable, complaints should be raised with the relevant member of staff (normally the course leader) immediately where possible, and normally not later than 10 working days after the incident or situation arises.

In most cases the member of staff can resolve the issue immediately or within a given time frame; however where this is not possible the member of staff will advise you about the formal Complaints and Grievance Procedure.

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## *Stage 2 Formal Complaint*

A complaint or grievance should be made in writing to the Director, normally within 10 days of the incident or situation arising.

A Complaints Form can be downloaded from our website.

An investigation will take place, and all parties concerned will be interviewed separately by either the Academic Director or the Director. The matter will be considered in the light of all evidence produced, and a decision made.

A written report will be compiled, which will include any statements from the complainant, third party, or any other witnesses to the incident/series of incidents or situation. You will then be notified of the outcome within 15 days of receipt of the complaint.

## *Stage 3 Formal Complaint Review*

Should you feel that the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily you may submit to the Director a request for a review of the decision. Requests should be made within 15 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 decision.

The purpose of Stage 3 is to review the action(s) and decision(s) taken at the previous stages, and you are advised to seek advice (perhaps from the Students' Union) before progressing to this stage.

A Stage 3 review should be requested only if:

New evidence or circumstances have become known, which you could not have reasonably made known at the time of the Stage 2 complaint.

Stage 2 of this Procedure was not conducted fairly and/or in accordance with due process, and this materially affected the outcome.

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The decision and outcome of the Stage 2 complaint were unreasonable in the light of the evidence provided.

The Stage 3 review will be carried out by a Panel comprising three members as follows:

Director

Academic Director

A member of staff (normally a course leader) who is not associated with the complaint.

The Panel will review the case and may request further information from you; and will consider whether the relevant procedures were followed at Stage 2, the outcome was reasonable, and a clear rationale was provided for the Stage 2 outcomes. They will also consider valid reasons for the late submission of new evidence.

The decision and outcome of the Stage 3 review will be communicated to you by the Director, normally within 15 working days of receiving the request for a review.

## *Stage 4 Independent Review*

In the event that you are dissatisfied with the outcomes of the Stage 3 review, you are entitled to pursue the matter further by submitting a detailed letter of complaint, including a full description of the cause for complaint and the circumstances in which it arose, to the British Accreditation Council (BAC). Spirit Studios is a BAC accredited institution

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Your letter should be sent within 2 months of receipt of the stage 2 outcomes, and should include a signed statement authorising BAC to investigate the complaint and to raise the matter with Spirit Studios on your behalf. You should include copies of all supporting documentation relating to the complaint.

BAC will seek to resolve all complaints received to the mutual satisfaction of the complainant and the institution, with the exception of complaints which appear to relate to offences more appropriately referred to a statutory authority. A complaints pack with more detail is available to download from the BAC website: [www.the-bac.org](http://www.the-bac.org).

Alternatively, in the case of students on HE programmes, you can write to the university who validates your course. Details of their complaints procedure can be found on each university website.

For Higher Education students, who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint and have exhausted their institution's complaint process, options are available to seek resolution through further levels of investigation.

For service related complaints please contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

For quality of learning complaints, please contact the relevant Higher Education establishment and follow their procedure.

**END**