

**QAA's Concerns Scheme**

**Submission Form**

# Important note:

**This submission form is for those wishing to make a submission to QAA's Concerns Scheme. Before completing this application form please read 'QAA's Concerns Scheme: How to raise concerns with QAA and how QAA will respond'.**

**The guidance document will help you to check whether your concern is something we can investigate and whether the provider you have a concern about is covered by QAA's Concerns Scheme.**

# Section 1: About you

This section is for you to enter personal details so that we can contact you. We will need at least one method of contacting you with written communication as we conduct much of our concerns investigation process in writing.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  **Title:**  | Mr [ ]  | Mrs [ ]  | Miss [ ]  | Ms [ ]  | Other:  |
| **Surname:**  |  | **First names:** |  |
| **Address:** |
| **Tel:** | **Mobile:** |
| **Email:**  |

You will need to inform us of changes in your contact details while we consider your case.

# Section 2: Details of the higher education provider you have a concern about

If you are or were a **student**, please complete Section **2a**.

If you are or were a **member of staff**, please complete Section **2b**.

If you are not or were not either a student or a member of staff, please complete Section **2c**.

## Section 2a - student

**Name of the provider you are/were registered with and which awards the qualification you are/were studying for**

Please enter the name of the provider you are/were registered with and are raising a concern about. This will be the higher education provider that will have issued you with the Completion of Procedures letter following completion of the internal complaints procedure.

**Where you are/were attending classes (if different from above)**

You may be attending a local provider which is running a course leading to an award from a university - please enter the name of the institution where you are/were attending classes.

**Programme/course you are/were registered on**

Please enter the name of the course or programme you are/were studying, for example

'BA Law'.

**Programme level**: Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the programme level:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Level 4 | **Certificate** or **Higher National Certificate (HNC)** |[ ]
| Level 5 | **Diploma** or **Foundation Degree** or **Higher National Diploma (HND)**  |[ ]
| Level 6 | **Bachelor's Degree** |[ ]
| Level 6 | **Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)** |[ ]
| Level 7 | **Master's** or **Integrated Master's Degree** or **Postgraduate Diploma** or **Postgraduate Certificate** |[ ]
| Level 8 | **PhD** |[ ]

**Type of provision**

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate whether you are/were studying your course:

* full-time (attending the total number of modules assigned for a year's study)
* part-time (attending a number of the modules assigned for a year's study in one year and attending the rest the next year).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Full-time: |[ ]  Part-time: |[ ]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date you began your course:**  |  |
| **Date your course finished:** |  |
| If you are still a student, please enter the date you expect to finish your course:If you withdrew or were withdrawn from your course, please enter the date of withdrawal:  |

**How are you categorised by your provider?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Home student:  |[ ]  EU student |[ ]  International student |[ ]

## Section 2b - member of staff

**Name of the provider**

Please enter the name of the higher education provider where you are/were a member of staff and are raising a concern about.

**Your employment**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Job title |  |
| Nature of employment |  |
| Period of employment | From: (month/year)To: (month/year) |

**Is your concern currently being investigated by an Employment Tribunal, or is an Employment Tribunal pending?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes: |[ ]  No: |[ ]

**Please note:** QAA is not normally able to investigate concerns while an Employment Tribunal is in progress or pending. If you have signed a compromise agreement with the institution concerned, you may wish to seek legal advice before submitting this form. It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with the terms of any relevant prior agreements.

###

## Section 2c - neither student nor member of staff

**Name of the provider**

Please enter the name of the higher education provider that you are raising a concern about.

**What is your relationship to the institution concerned?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# Section 3: Completion of procedures

In the case of students currently enrolled on a programme of study, before raising a concern you should first raise the issue directly with the higher education provider through its internal procedures. This is so that we can be sure the provider has had an opportunity to deal with your complaint or appeal before we look at it. Once you have done so, the provider should issue you with a Completion of Procedures letter. If the provider fails to resolve the issue,
it can be raised with us. In **exceptional** circumstances we may look at a concern where the internal complaints or appeals procedures have not been completed. For example, if when the concern is raised we are satisfied that the provider was unreasonably refusing to progress your complaint, or to issue a Completion of Procedures letter, we might consider it appropriate to investigate your concern.

If the issues raised by the same person are under investigation by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), we may contact the OIA to collect relevant information about the case where it has already been compiled, under a formal information-sharing agreement.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Has your case been investigated through the provider's own internal procedures?

(please tick)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes: |[ ]  No: |[ ]

Has your case been investigated by the OIA or the Board of Visitors (for institutions in Northern Ireland)?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes: |[ ]  No: |[ ]

If yes, what is the date on your Completion of Procedures letter?

(Day/month/year)

Please submit your Completion of Procedures letter alongside this submission form.

# Section 4: Your concern

## What we can investigate

We can investigate:

* concerns about academic standards and quality, where we think these raise broader issues about the management of quality and standards
* concerns about the information that providers produce about the learning opportunities.

**Standards** - The standards set and maintained by higher education providers for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. The **threshold academic standard** is the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award.

**Quality** - A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

We will only investigate concerns we think indicate **serious weaknesses** in the higher education provider's approach to the management of quality and standards.

Information about isolated mistakes or occurrences of bad practice, or unverified anecdotes or hearsay, will not normally be sufficient to trigger further action.

### Quality

We can investigate:

* the absence of effective processes for the design and approval of programmes
* failure to have admissions policies and procedures that are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied
* failure to define (and systematically review and enhance) learning opportunities and teaching practices
* the absence of effective arrangements to support students with their learning
* the absence of deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience
* the lack of appropriate opportunities for students to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit
* failure to make scrupulous use of external examiners
* the lack of effective procedures to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes
* the lack of fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals
* the lack of effective processes for managing learning opportunities delivered with other organisations
* failure to provide a robust research environment.

### Standards

We can investigate:

* where the academic standards of qualifications are not set or maintained at the appropriate level
* higher education programmes that do not meet the expectations for a degree in a particular subject area
* failure to make available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study
* the absence of independent and external participation in the setting and management of threshold academic standards
* failure of assessment to be robust, valid and reliable.

### Information about higher education provision

We can investigate:

* whether information a higher education provider makes available about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

### Examples of what we can investigate:

* misleading information about the accreditation of a course by a professional body
* inadequate guidance for examiners on marking examination scripts
* inadequate support for placement or distance learning
* failure to follow assessment regulations
* inaccurate or misleading public information
* failure to meet commitments made in prospectuses and other published material
* inadequate use of academic regulations
* weaknesses in the management of academic standards and quality when delivering learning opportunities with others.

## What we can't investigate

We can't investigate:

* matters of academic judgement, such as examination results
* individual appeals against a provider's decision to withdraw a student from his/her study
* individual claims for tuition fee refunds
* requests for institutions or external examiners to remark work
* grievances against individual staff
* problems that the institution has already rectified
* isolated mistakes or occurrences of bad practice.

We cannot investigate concerns about:

* alternative providers that do not subscribe to us and have not applied to us for educational oversight or reviews for specific course designation
* courses that do not lead to higher education awards or to specific credit towards higher education awards (other than certain elements of Access to Higher Education).

# Section 4: Your concern

Please describe your concern below. Use a separate sheet if required.

## Evidence

Your submission should be accompanied by documentary evidence to justify any inquiries to the provider concerned. If the evidence is not available to you, you could consider a
request under the *Freedom of Information Act*.

We cannot consider a submission based on wholly unsubstantiated allegations. We reserve the right not to investigate concerns considered to be vexatious or malicious.

Examples of acceptable documentary evidence include:

* external examiners' reports
* internal quality assurance reports
* copies of correspondence, including letters and emails
* papers showing that the matter has been raised directly with the provider
* published materials from the provider
* minutes of meetings and committees.

You should send us any relevant information including letters or emails, and a copy of your Completion of Procedures Letter and of your original complaint or appeal to the higher education provider.

Evidence provided (please tick)

|  |
| --- |
| Provider's Completion of Procedures letter |[ ]
| OIA Completion of Procedures letter (if required) |[ ]
| Programme specification/course handbook/prospectus |[ ]
| Copy of original complaint to provider |[ ]
| Relevant email communication/correspondence |[ ]
| Any other documentation relevant to the concern raised: Please list below |  |

# Section 5: Declaration

* I declare that the information given on this form is, to the best of my knowledge, true and complete.
* I have read 'QAA's Concerns Scheme: Guide to raising standards about academic quality and standards' and understand that the Concerns Scheme is not a complaints resolution service, but a means for QAA to identify any systemic failings by a provider.
* I understand that QAA cannot provide redress for individual students.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: |  |
| Date: |  |

Please note that if you email your form to us, typing your name into the box below will be considered comparable to an electronic signature.

**Anonymity**

We process the personal information of individuals who submit concerns to the Scheme on the basis of legitimate interest: the promotion and maintenance of quality and standards in higher education.

If we decide to investigate your concern, the process will be considerably aided if we are able to disclose the details you have provided in Sections 1 and 2 above (excluding your postal and/or email address) to the institution concerned and to any other organisation that we may need to consult in the course of our investigations.

If you request anonymity, please note that although QAA will not disclose the details you have provided in Sections 1 and 2, by completing this form you give permission to QAA to discuss the case with the institution concerned, and any other appropriate organisations that we may need to consult in the course of our investigations (such as a professional, statutory or regulatory body). **You should be aware that we may not always be able to preserve your anonymity, as you may be identifiable to the institution through the details of your submission to the Concerns Scheme.**

Regardless of whether or not we can investigate your concern, we will pass information about your submission on to the institution concerned. This is to ensure the institution is aware of the concern. We may pass information on to other relevant organisations, such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

If you have indicate that you do not want us to disclose the information you have provided in Section 1, we will ensure this information is not passed on by us to any third parties.

Please indicate if you wish QAA to maintain your anonymity during its investigation:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes: |[ ]  No: |[ ]

### How did you hear about the QAA Concerns Scheme?

Please tick.

|  |
| --- |
| QAA website |[ ]
| Internet search |[ ]
| Through student support services  |[ ]
| Through a students' union |[ ]
| Friends and colleagues |[ ]
| Through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator |[ ]
| Other, please specify:  |

**Please send this submission to:**

Concerns

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House

Southgate Street

Gloucester

GL1 1UB

Email: Concerns@qaaacuk.onmicrosoft.com

Last updated - June 2023

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2023

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786
[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/)

1. [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/how-we're-run](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/how-we%27re-run) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)