

Student Grievances and Redressal Policy



POLICY # EAAS/2024/240254
Adopted by the Senate on July 15, 2024

European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS)

113 MINDO, TRIQ L-IMDINA, QORMI, QRM 9016, MALTA
www.eaas.mt | info@eaas.mt

1. Introduction

The European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS) is committed to an academic environment governed by fairness, transparency, and due process. Students may encounter academic, administrative, or personal difficulties during their studies. This Policy establishes a structured, accessible mechanism through which such concerns are raised, investigated, and resolved, and through which students' rights and interests are protected.

As a fully online institution, EAAS ensures that every stage of this process is available remotely, in writing and by video conference, without disadvantage to students in any location or time zone.

1.1 Objectives

- **A structured mechanism.** To provide a clear and accessible route through which students may raise concerns formally and transparently.
- **Fair, impartial, and timely resolution.** To ensure that grievances are addressed without discrimination and within published timeframes.
- **Protection of student rights.** To safeguard the academic interests and personal well-being of students.
- **A constructive academic climate.** To resolve conflict equitably and to use the outcomes to improve institutional practice.
- **Freedom from retaliation.** To protect students who raise concerns in good faith from any adverse consequences.

1.2 Guiding principles

- **Accessibility.** The process is available to all students, in any mode of study, through VLE (Virtual Learning Environment), email, and the online grievance form, with reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.
- **Transparency.** Procedures, grounds, and timeframes are published in advance on the student portal and the VLE.
- **Confidentiality.** Grievances are handled discreetly and disclosed only to those with a legitimate need to know.
- **Impartiality.** No person investigates or decides a matter in which they have an interest or prior involvement.
- **Proportionality.** Matters are resolved at the lowest appropriate level, and remedies are proportionate to the concern.
- **Accountability.** EAAS records outcomes, monitors timeliness, and reports annually to the Senate / Academic Council.

2. Status and Legal Framework

This Policy is a linked policy under the EAAS General Academic Regulations and is to be read together with the Student Code of Conduct Policy, the Ethics Policy, the Assessment, Marking and Grading Policy, and the Data Protection Policy. Where a linked policy provides greater operational detail, that policy governs the detail; where there is a conflict on an academic matter, the General Academic Regulations prevail.

The Policy is made under, and interpreted consistently with, the Further and Higher Education Authority Act (Chapter 607) and S.L. 607.03; the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586) and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679; the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF); the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG 2015); and the MFHEA Guidelines for Quality Assurance for Online Learning Providers in Malta.

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Grievance	A written expression of dissatisfaction by a student concerning an act, omission, decision, service, or standard of conduct of EAAS or a member of its community, for which the student seeks a remedy.
Academic appeal	A request for review of a formal assessment, progression, or classification decision made on defined grounds. Appeals follow Section 15 of the General Academic Regulations, not the grievance route in Section 5 of this Policy.
SGRC	The Student Grievance Redressal Committee is the body of the first formal instance under this Policy.
IAC	The Institutional Appeals Committee, which hears appeals against SGRC decisions.
Working day	Any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or public holiday in Malta.
VLE	The Virtual Learning Environment, including Moodle, BigBlueButton, and associated institutional platforms.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all students registered on any EAAS programme, on full-time or part-time study, and to applicants in respect of the admissions process. It covers grievances concerning academic matters, administrative processes, conduct, the digital learning environment, and student well-being.

4.1 Academic matters

- **Assessment and grading.** Concerns that work has not been marked in accordance with the published rubric, or that assessment procedures were not properly followed.
- **Examinations and online assessment.** Errors in assessment papers, disruption during proctored assessment, technical failure of the VLE during a timed assessment, or delay in the release of results.
- **Teaching and course delivery.** Synchronous sessions not delivered as scheduled, absent or inadequate learning materials, or failure to meet published feedback timelines.

- **Faculty conduct.** Unprofessional behaviour, bias, or failure to teach in accordance with the approved study-unit specification.
- **Supervision.** Inadequate or inaccessible supervision of the Business Research Project or other supervised work.
- **Academic integrity.** Disputes concerning allegations of misconduct, research ethics, or the application of AI-use rules.

4.2 Administrative matters

- **Admissions.** Denial of admission, incorrect processing of an application, or opacity in the application of published criteria, including decisions on Recognition of Prior Learning.
- **Records and documentation.** Errors in student records, transcripts, certificates, or the Diploma Supplement, or a delay in their issue.
- **Financial matters.** Tuition and billing errors, refunds, payment arrangements, or communication regarding financial support.
- **Student services.** Unresponsive administration, inadequate academic advising or career guidance, or inefficient handling of queries and helpdesk requests.

4.3 Conduct, harassment, and discrimination

- Harassment or discrimination on any protected characteristic, including in live sessions, discussion forums, and institutional messaging channels.
- Bullying, cyberbullying, verbal abuse, intimidation, or threats by a member of staff or a fellow student.
- Disciplinary action that a student believes to have been wrongly imposed or disproportionate.

Matters under this heading are referred by the SGRC to the Ethics and Compliance Committee, which assumes conduct of the case under the Ethics Policy and the Student Code of Conduct Policy. The student is informed of the referral and of the procedure that will apply.

4.4 Digital learning environment and resources

- **VLE and platform availability.** Sustained technical failure, login and authentication problems, or inaccessibility of course materials.
- **e-Library and study resources.** Lack of access to databases, e-books, journals, or research materials required by a study-unit.
- **Accessibility.** Failure to provide captioning, screen-reader compatibility, alternative formats, or agreed reasonable adjustments.
- **Online proctoring and privacy.** Concerns regarding identity verification, environment scanning, recording, or the handling of data captured during assessment.

4.5 Wellbeing and other matters

- Unclear, inconsistent, or inadequately communicated institutional rules.
- Inadequate counselling, mental-health, or student-welfare provision, or failure to respond to a disclosed wellbeing concern.

- Any other matter materially affects a student's learning experience, rights, or well-being.

4.6 Matters outside this Policy

This Policy does not apply to:

- appeals against a formal assessment, progression, or classification decision, which proceed as academic appeals under Section 15 of the General Academic Regulations;
- claims of mitigating circumstances, which are determined by the Didactic Board under the Assessment, Marking and Grading Policy;
- matters already the subject of an active disciplinary investigation, until that investigation concludes; or
- Anonymous reports, which are recorded and may inform institutional review but do not, on their own, initiate the formal process. Anonymous reporting of ethical violations remains available under the Ethics Policy.

Where a submission raises both a grievance and an academic appeal, the SGRC identifies the correct route for each element and informs the student in writing.

5. Grievance Redressal Mechanism

5.1 Informal resolution

Students are encouraged to seek an informal resolution first, normally within 10 working days of the event concerned, by:

- raising the matter directly with the module tutor, supervisor, Programme Coordinator, or the administrative unit concerned;
- requesting mediation through Student Support Services; or
- requesting clarification of an academic or administrative decision.

The outcome of informal resolution is recorded. Informal resolution is not a precondition where the matter concerns harassment, discrimination, or a serious allegation, or where the student reasonably considers informal contact inappropriate.

5.2 Formal submission

A formal grievance must be submitted in writing, normally within 20 working days of the event or of the conclusion of informal resolution, by any of the following routes:

- the online grievance form on the student portal;
- email to the Student Grievance Redressal Committee at the published address; or
- written submission through the institutional helpdesk.

The submission should identify the matter complained of, the remedy sought, the steps already taken, and any supporting evidence. A grievance submitted outside the time limit may be admitted where the SGRC is satisfied that there is good reason.

5.3 Investigation

- Receipt is acknowledged by the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit within 2 working days, and the grievance is entered on the grievance register.

- The SGRC reviews the submission and determines admissibility within 5 working days, informing the student of the outcome and of any referral.
- The investigation may include interviews conducted by video conference, review of VLE logs, assessment records, and correspondence, and consultation with the relevant unit.
- Any member of staff or student named in a grievance is informed of the substance of the allegation and given a fair opportunity to respond before any finding is made.
- A full investigation is normally completed within 10–15 working days from the date the grievance is admitted.

5.4 Resolution and decision

- The SGRC issues a written decision with clear reasons, normally within 15 working days from the date of admission (and no later than the completion of the investigation).
- Remedies may include an apology; correction of a record; provision of a service or resource; re-marking or further assessment where procedural irregularity is established; a change of supervisor or tutor; referral for disciplinary action; or amendment of an institutional procedure.
- Grievance may also be dismissed, with reasons, where it is not substantiated.
- Where a timeframe cannot be met, the student is informed in writing of the reason and of the revised date.

5.5 Appeal

A student dissatisfied with the SGRC decision may appeal to the Institutional Appeals Committee within 7 working days. Appeals are admitted on defined grounds:

- procedural irregularity in the handling of grievance;
- bias, or a conflict of interest affecting the decision;
- new and material evidence that was not reasonably available at the time; or
- a decision or remedy that is manifestly disproportionate to the findings.

The IAC is composed of people with no prior involvement in the matter. It issues a final institutional decision, with written reasons, within 10 working days. Where internal remedies are exhausted, the student retains the right to refer the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), which will act in accordance with applicable Maltese legislation.

5.6 Summary of timeframes

Stage	Timeframe	Responsible body
Acknowledgement of receipt	Within 2 working days	Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit
Initial review and admissibility decision	Within 5 working days	SGRC
Investigation	Within 10–15 working days	SGRC

Stage	Timeframe	Responsible body
Written decision issued	Within 15 working days of admission	SGRC
Notice of appeal by student	Within 7 working days of the decision	Student
Appeal heard and final decision issued	Within 10 working days	IAC

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Body/role	Responsibility under this Policy
Student	Raise concerns promptly and in good faith; attempt informal resolution where appropriate; provide evidence; engage with the process.
Module tutor / Programme Coordinator	Address informal concerns at the first point of contact and record the outcome.
Student Support Services	Offer mediation, guidance on the process, and well-being support to any party.
Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit	Receive and log grievances, acknowledge receipt, maintain the register, and monitor timeliness.
SGRC	Determine admissibility, investigate impartially, decide, and issue written reasons.
IAC	Hear appeals; members must have had no prior involvement in the matter.
Ethics and Compliance Committee	Assume conduct of matters involving harassment, discrimination, or academic misconduct under the Ethics Policy and Student Code of Conduct Policy.
Senate / Academic Council	Own the Policy; receive the annual grievance report; approve amendments.

7. Confidentiality, Data Protection and Non-Retaliation

- **Confidentiality.** Grievance records are held securely and disclosed only to those with a legitimate need to know. Both the student raising the grievance and any person named in it are entitled to confidentiality.
- **Data protection.** Personal data gathered under this Policy is processed under the GDPR, the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586), and the EAAS Data Protection Policy, and is used only for grievance and institutional monitoring.
- **Records and retention.** The grievance registers and case files are maintained by the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit and retained in accordance with the

institutional retention schedule. Grievance records are held separately from the student's academic record and do not affect assessment or progression decisions.

- **Non-retaliation.** Retaliation against a student who raises a grievance in good faith, or against any person who participates in an investigation, is prohibited and constitutes misconduct. This protection does not extend to grievances raised maliciously or in bad faith, which may themselves be treated as a conduct matter.

8. Monitoring, Review and Version Control

- The Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit monitors the volume, category, timeliness, and outcome of grievances and reports annually to the Senate / Academic Council.
- Findings are used to identify systemic issues and are fed into programme review, service improvement, and the institutional quality cycle.
- This Policy is owned by the Senate / Academic Council, maintained by the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit, and reviewed at least annually or upon regulatory change.
- Student feedback on the process is gathered through surveys, support logs, and stakeholder consultation, and informs each review.
- Amendments are approved by the Senate / Academic Council and communicated to students and staff.