

# VOGUE COLLEGE OF FASHION

## **Vogue College of Fashion – London**

### **Student Complaints Procedure**

#### **Collegiate and Undergraduate Programmes**

Vogue College of Fashion - London (the “College”) is committed to the delivery of a high-quality experience and encourages feedback from students when there is a case for improvement or a cause for concern. The College will make every reasonable effort to deal promptly and efficiently with all complaints, to investigate them thoroughly and objectively, and to seek to resolve them satisfactorily. Complaints will be dealt with positively and constructively. The College will treat all complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination.

#### **PROCEDURE OVERVIEW**

1. Students are defined as those enrolled with the Vogue College of Fashion – London in College in Collegiate and Undergraduate programmes and courses. The definition also includes those who have recently left the programme or course they had been enrolled on.
2. The Student Complaints Procedure is designed for complaints in respect of the student’s experience at the College related to:
  - a. The provision of programmes or courses, or parts of programmes or courses of study, services or facilities by the College;
  - b. The actions or lack of actions by the College or its staff.
3. The Student Complaints Procedure does not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist:
  - a. Appeals relating to decisions made by an academic body regarding student progression, academic assessment and awards, or against expulsion or exclusion on academic grounds;
  - b. Complaints involving an allegation of misconduct by a student;
  - c. Concerns raised by a student about the outcome of their own disciplinary process;

- d. Concerns about a decision made under other specific regulations, such as Fitness to Study.
4. Students are encouraged to make a complaint as soon as possible after the events or actions that prompted the complaint.
5. The complaint should be made within thirty (30) working days of the events or actions (or lack of actions) which have prompted the complaint. The College will not normally consider complaints made after this period, unless there is a credible and compelling reason for the delay.
6. A member of the College's Programme Team will respond immediately to any concerns raised, consider the complaint and supporting documentation, and follow up with the student.
7. Members of the College's Programme Team (staff, faculty) will recuse themselves from the Complaints Procedure and related processes when:
  - a. They are unavailable to complete their responsibilities in a timely manner;
  - b. They and/or their role are named in the student(s) complaint;
  - c. They are/may be called as a material witness to the reported events;
  - d. They feel they are unable to professionally, ethically or morally fulfill the responsibilities outlined below.
8. When a member of the College's Programme Team recuses themselves from the Complaints Process, they are responsible for nominating another member of the College's Programme Team to complete the stated responsibilities.
  - a. When possible, the nominated staff member will be of equal title / responsibility (i.e. Director of Operations and Student Life, Collegiate Programmes, may nominate the Global Academic Director or Director of Operations, Pre-College Programmes, to fulfill the role of Complaints Hearing Officer);
  - b. Students will be notified of the name and title of each staff fulfilling the stated roles in the process.
9. Students should pursue their own complaints, but may seek support from, for instance, the Programme Team in submitting a complaint.
10. The effectiveness of this Procedure depends on the College being able to collect appropriate information from the parties involved in order to

investigate the matter properly. For this reason, anonymous complaints will not usually be dealt with under this Procedure.

11. The College will treat all documentation associated with a complaint from a student or group of students confidentially to the extent possible. Students need to recognise that for the complaints procedure to be effective, the College needs to be able to collect appropriate information from the parties involved in order to fully investigate a matter.
12. By submitting a complaint, the student consents to the disclosure, storage and sharing of information relevant to the complaint within the College at all stages of the Procedure. If this presents a problem for the student(s), they may wish to seek advice from a member of the Team; not providing consent may, however, affect the College's ability to consider the complaint fully. For example, the College may need to inform:
  - a. Members of staff who are involved in putting the Procedure into effect;
  - b. Staff whose input may be required to respond to the issues that a student has raised;
  - c. Members of staff who are named in the complaint, so that they may respond.
13. The College will not consider unsubstantiated complaints that it regards as vexatious or malicious.
14. The College reserves the right to postpone considering, dealing with and/or responding to a complaint when the student is pursuing legal proceedings against the College.
15. If a complaint is upheld, the College will seek to provide an appropriate response and will correct any mistakes or misunderstandings, and will take any other action as appropriate. If a complaint is not upheld, then the reasons for that decision will be given.
16. The College may also monitor, action or track any student concerns received through student surveys, raised student feedback sessions, or aired on social media. If, however, a student or students wish to pursue a complaint formally, they should follow the procedures described herein.

## **INFORMAL / EARLY RESOLUTION PROCEDURE**

17. Students are encouraged to raise any concerns directly with a member of the College's staff, with the aim of resolving the issue directly and informally.
18. College staff may refer students to another member of staff if the issue is best resolved via another team and, where appropriate, escalate the issue to the College's management team.
19. The complaint should include a description of the issue, and any relevant documentation, dates, locations, and witnesses where applicable. The complaint should also indicate the student's desired outcome.
20. Types of evidence supporting a complaint may include independent medical evidence, reports by professionals, financial information or witness statements. If the College has any concerns about the authenticity of evidence the student has put in, it may need to take steps to verify the evidence and, if it is found not to be genuine, the College may decide to consider the matter under its disciplinary procedures.
21. Staff may request to meet with student(s) to discuss the issue and possible outcomes. When an in-person meeting is not possible, virtual or remote meetings may be requested (i.e. via Zoom or Teams). These meetings are designed to hear the complaint, engage in an active discussion with the student(s) regarding the complaint, and attempt to find a mutually satisfactory resolution.
22. It is expected that the majority of complaints can be resolved through informal means.

## **FORMAL PROCEDURE**

23. Where it is not possible to resolve matters informally, or if a student chooses not to raise the issue informally, the student may submit a formal complaint via email to: [undergrad.london@voguecollege.com](mailto:undergrad.london@voguecollege.com).
24. The complaint should include a description of the issue, and any relevant documentation, dates, locations, and witnesses where applicable. The complaint should also indicate the student's desired outcome.

25. Types of evidence supporting a complaint may include independent medical evidence, reports by professionals, financial information or witness statements. If the College has any concerns about the authenticity of evidence the student has put in, it may need to take steps to verify the evidence and, if it is found not to be genuine, the College may decide to consider the matter under its disciplinary procedures.
26. The College staff in receipt of the complaint and accompanying documentation will notify the Director of Operations and Student Life as soon as possible to consider the complaint and supporting documentation.
27. The Director of Operations and Student Life, Collegiate Programmes (or their Nominee) will serve as the Complaints Hearing Officer and, in this capacity, will:
  - a. Inform the student, or group of students, of receipt of the information;
  - b. Invite the student, or group of students, to a meeting if they wish to speak in person. Attendance by the student(s) is not mandatory. If the meeting is being held remotely, the student(s) will be invited to attend the Committee meeting via Teams or Zoom;
  - c. Contact other members of the College's faculty and staff, as appropriate and applicable, to discuss the complaint and gather information;
  - d. Notify the College's management team (including General Counsel) of any and all proceedings and make all materials related to the case available;
  - e. Make a determination on the complaint with the information available.
28. The possible conclusions of the Complaints Hearing Officer include:
  - a. The Complaints Hearing Officer decides that the complaint is without substance.
    - i. The Complaints Hearing Officer will write to the student informing them that the complaint has been dismissed.
    - ii. The student will be informed of their right to appeal under the Appeals Process of the Complaints Procedure and the time limit for doing so.
    - iii. If it is concluded that the complaint is trivial, vexatious or malicious, they may recommend that disciplinary action should be taken against the complainant.
  - b. The Complaints Hearing Officer upholds or partially upholds the complaint.

- i. The Complaints Hearing Officer will write to the student notifying them that the complaint has been upheld in whole or in part.
- ii. The Complaints Hearing Officer will inform the student of the recommended remedy and timescales for this, which have been agreed by the College. The recommendations of the Complaints Hearing Officer may also include any re-payments or compensation, which the committee deems appropriate, if the criteria in the College's Refunds and Compensation Policy are met, and may also indicate whether an apology is required.
- iii. The student will be informed of their right to appeal and time limit for doing so if they remain dissatisfied. If the student does not take the complaint to the Appeal Process within the given timescale, then the College will close the case.

## **APPEALS PROCESS**

29. If the student or group of students is dissatisfied with the response set forth in the written correspondence, the student, or group of students, has the right to ask for an appeal of the decision. Appeals will only be taken against the conclusions and recommendations, on one or more of the following grounds:
  - a. Procedural irregularity;
  - b. The outcome was not reasonable on the basis of the evidence available;
  - c. Availability of new evidence which could not reasonably have been expected to be presented at the original meeting with the Complaints Hearing Officer.
30. The student(s) may submit an appeal request, including a statement of the grounds on which the request for a review is being made and any new supporting evidence. The request for a review should be submitted in writing to the Complaints Hearing Officer, to be received within five (5) working days of the date of the conclusions and recommendations letter sent to the student(s). A request for a review received after this time, without good cause shown for its late submission, shall only be granted at the discretion of the Global Director, Collegiate and Pre-College Division.
31. The Global Director, Collegiate and Pre-College Division, (or their Nominee) will serve as the Appeals Officer and in this capacity:
  - a. May dismiss a review in writing to the student if they consider the review to be outside the scope outlined in paragraph 29. If the appeals

request is dismissed, the student will be notified accordingly in writing.

- b. May grant an appeal and therefore will request all information related to the previous proceedings from the Complaints Hearing Officer. The Appeals Officer will not re-hear the case afresh, but will consider whether the initial conclusions and recommendations were fair by:
  - i. Reviewing the procedures followed; and
  - ii. Establishing whether the outcome was not reasonable on the basis of the evidence available
  - iii. Establishing whether the appellant has presented any new evidence that could not reasonably have been expected to be presented at the original Complaints Committee meeting and whether this evidence is material and substantial to the conclusions and recommendations.

32. The possible conclusions of the Appeal Process include:

- a. The Appeal is denied. This decision may be based in (but not limited to) the following: lack of substance, lack of persuasive additional evidence, and or if it is determined the College had responded appropriately at an earlier stage.
  - i. The Global Director (or Nominee) will write to the student informing them that the complaint has been dismissed.
  - ii. If it is concluded that the appeal is trivial, vexatious or malicious, they may recommend that disciplinary action should be taken against the complainant.
- b. The Appeal is upheld or partially upheld.
  - i. The Global Director (or Nominee) will write to the student notifying them that the complaint has been upheld in whole or in part.
  - ii. The Global Director will inform the student of the recommended remedy and timescales for this, which have been agreed by the College. The recommendations of the Global Director may also include any re-payments or compensation, which the committee deems appropriate, if the criteria in the College's Refunds and Compensation Policy are met, and may also indicate whether an apology is required.
  - iii. The Global Director may direct a member of the Collegiate Programme Team to action the above points and any other related actions required.

33. The decision of the Appeals Officer is final.