



INSTITUTIONAL GRIEVANCES POLICY AND PROCEDURE
FOR STUDENTS

INSTITUTIONAL GRIEVANCES (IG) POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR ALC STUDENTS

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

ALC is committed to the continuous improvement of all support services for students. From time to time problems arise, and students should be supported in expressing their dissatisfaction and seeking a resolution to problems encountered.

This Policy defines the scope and nature of student “Institutional Grievances” at ALC, sets out the procedure for students to make formal IGs to the institution, and maps out the roles and responsibilities of staff members in handling IGs.

1.1 Definition of Institutional Grievance (IG): For the purposes of the Policy, an “IG” is *‘a statement of dissatisfaction or an expression of grievance by a student towards a service or product provided by ALC.’*

1.2 Purpose of IGs Policy: The purpose of the IGs Policy and Procedure is to support students and staff in situations where a student makes an IG about their experience(s) at ALC.

1.3 Principles of Institutional Grievances Handling: The following principles govern how ALC handles IGs:

- ***Accessible and student-friendly:*** clearly communicated, easily understood; placing the IG at the center of the process.
- ***Simple and timely:*** minimal steps; always seeking early resolution to the satisfaction and equitable relief of all parties involved.
- ***Robust and fair:*** providing fair hearing and evidence-based investigations, where applicable, in which the IG handling principles are applied consistently.
- ***Support for improvement:*** analysis of the outcomes that will support improvements in the quality of our services and delivery.

2. STUDENT GUIDE TO INSTITUTIONAL GRIEVANCES

2.1 Introduction to the Student Guide to Institutional Grievances

ALC takes IGs very seriously and endeavors to improve our processes by listening to, responding to, recording and resolving student's grievances. ALC also believes in open communication where our students are encouraged to provide suggestions towards the resolution of IGs.

This guide provides students with information on

- (i) what constitutes an IG and what types of IGs can be made at ALC,
- (ii) how IGs or grievances can be communicated to ALC staff and management,
- (iii) how IGs will be handled by the institution, and
- (iv) any other information relevant to this policy and procedure (e.g. grievances that are not "IGs", misuse of the IGs policy and procedure, etc.)

2.2 Types of Institutional Grievances (IGs)

Students may make *IGs about any person, department, function or service* provided by, or on behalf of ALC. The definition of an IG is necessarily broad and therefore the list provided is intended to guide users, and is not intended to be exhaustive*. An IG may relate to the following issues:

- ❖ the quality or standard of any service provided or failure to provide a service
- ❖ the quality of facilities or learning resources
- ❖ the failure of ALC to follow an appropriate administrative process
- ❖ unfair treatment or inappropriate behavior by a student or a staff member (see Non-Academic Student Code of Conduct, Sexual Misconduct Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy)
- ❖ an alleged action or inaction by ALC or a member of its staff. This may include breaches of conduct and complaints of harassment, although there are alternate policies dedicated to these particular issues.

*Please note that not every issue raised with the institution will be classified as an IG. Please see section 2.3 below for information on what constitutes an 'Institutional Grievance'.

2.3 What constitutes an Institutional Grievance

Not all of these grievances listed above will qualify as ‘institutional grievances’. ALC’s Student Life/ Operations Departments have devised an internal grievance mechanism that handles ‘personal’ as opposed to ‘institutional grievances’ from students. Often students will flag a ‘personal grievance’ which could be handled at a department level as opposed to ‘institutional level’.

For all matters regarding food, accommodation, transport, lessons, administrative process, facilities and services it is highly advisable that the designated Staff or Residential Assistants be the first point of contact. It is advisable that all matters that can be addressed at the Student Life/ Operations Level are resolved at this level (team/department level)

A grievance will be considered ‘institutional’ when:

- It has passed through the Student Life/ Operations Department and has not been addressed within a reasonable timeframe. ‘Reasonability’ will be determined on a case by case basis by the Institution.
- It has been flagged by a department as ‘institutional’
- It may affect the operation of the college as a whole
- An issue has been flagged multiple times, but has not been resolved as at yet.
- It involves a sexual harassment allegation against a member of staff
- It involves public or government authorities

ALC reserves the right to direct any grievance that it does not count as ‘institutional’ back to the aforementioned departments.

2.4 Communicating Institutional Gs to ALC

2.4.1 Formal and Informal IGs

If a student wishes to make an IG falling into any one of the categories listed above (or an issue falling outside of these categories), they may communicate this IG in either an **informal** or a **formal** way.

A **formal** IG is one that is made **in writing**, to a **member of staff at ALU**. This may be a non-anonymous or an anonymous IG (see section 2.32 below for information on anonymous IGs). **All Institutional Grievances made, whether anonymous or non-anonymous are treated as confidential.**

An **informal** IG is one that is made **verbally**, to a member of staff or a student representative (e.g. Resident Advisor).

Formal IGs will be lodged to the IGs handling team, will be actioned as necessary and the outcomes will

be communicated to students (see IGs Handling diagram below). Informal IGs will not be lodged and cannot be formally actioned until a formal IG is made. However, students and staff members may seek informal resolutions to informal IGs before a formal IG is made.

2.42 Making a formal Institutional Grievance

There are several ways for a student to communicate a formal IG.

1. Communicate IG in an email to any ALU staff member
2. Contact the Student IGs Officers in the Student Life team (Ms. Mandisa)
3. Send an email to complaints@alueducation.com
4. Third-party IGs will be accepted where a student is unable, because of an inability to raise an IG of their own. The student may authorize (verbally or nonverbally) another individual to have access to personal information to pursue the IG on their behalf.
5. Make an anonymous IG through the [Anonymous IGs](#) Google form. ALC recognizes that students may want to issue anonymous IGs. However, the IG will only be considered if there is enough information provided in the IG submission to enable further meaningful enquiries. If an anonymous IG does not provide sufficient information to enable further action, ALC may decide not to pursue the IG further. Regardless of sufficiency of information, IGs will be recorded for corrective action, where applicable and appropriate.

2.4.3 Procedures for IGs Handling

Once an IG has been received by the institution, the following actions will be taken with respect to addressing the IG. ALC will:

1. Receive and record the IG, and acknowledge receipt to the student
2. Investigate the IG (ALC will seek testimony and evidence where appropriate)
3. Resolve the issue, and confirm resolution
4. Inform the student of the outcome
5. Follow-up with concerned parties

Students may ask for updates on the procedures while an IG is being processed.

2.5 Additional Information

(1) Other matters not falling within the “IGs” category

Not every issue raised with the College will be classified as an IG. For example the following are not considered to be IGs under this policy:

- ❖ an appeal seeking a review of an academic decision on assessment, progression, completion or admission. The College college provides separate appeals procedures to deal with these issues for undergraduate students.
- ❖ an initial request for information.
- ❖ a request for information or an explanation about a regulation, policy or practice.
- ❖ a response to an invitation to provide feedback through a formal mechanism, for example questionnaire or online feedback.

Where the IGs procedure is not appropriate to address the issue, we will direct students to other means of redress and alternative channels as appropriate.

(2) Confidentiality

As an institution of higher education within Mauritius, ALC has regard to any and all legislative requirements and will comply with all regulatory bodies in the operation of our Policies, such as the Data Protection Act 2004. IGs will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality and information released only to those who need it for the purposes of investigating or responding to the IG. No third party will be told any more about the investigation than is strictly necessary in order to obtain the information required from them. In making an IG, students should accept that limited disclosure of all or part of their submission will be required to enable investigation of their IG to proceed. Students have the right to expect that anyone who responds to or investigates an IG will do so impartially. No individual will be permitted to act in any manner on or regarding a case in which they have a material interest or in which any actual or potential conflict of interest may arise.

Where an IG has been raised against a student, he/she will be advised of this.

(4) Unacceptable behavior and misuse of the IGs procedure

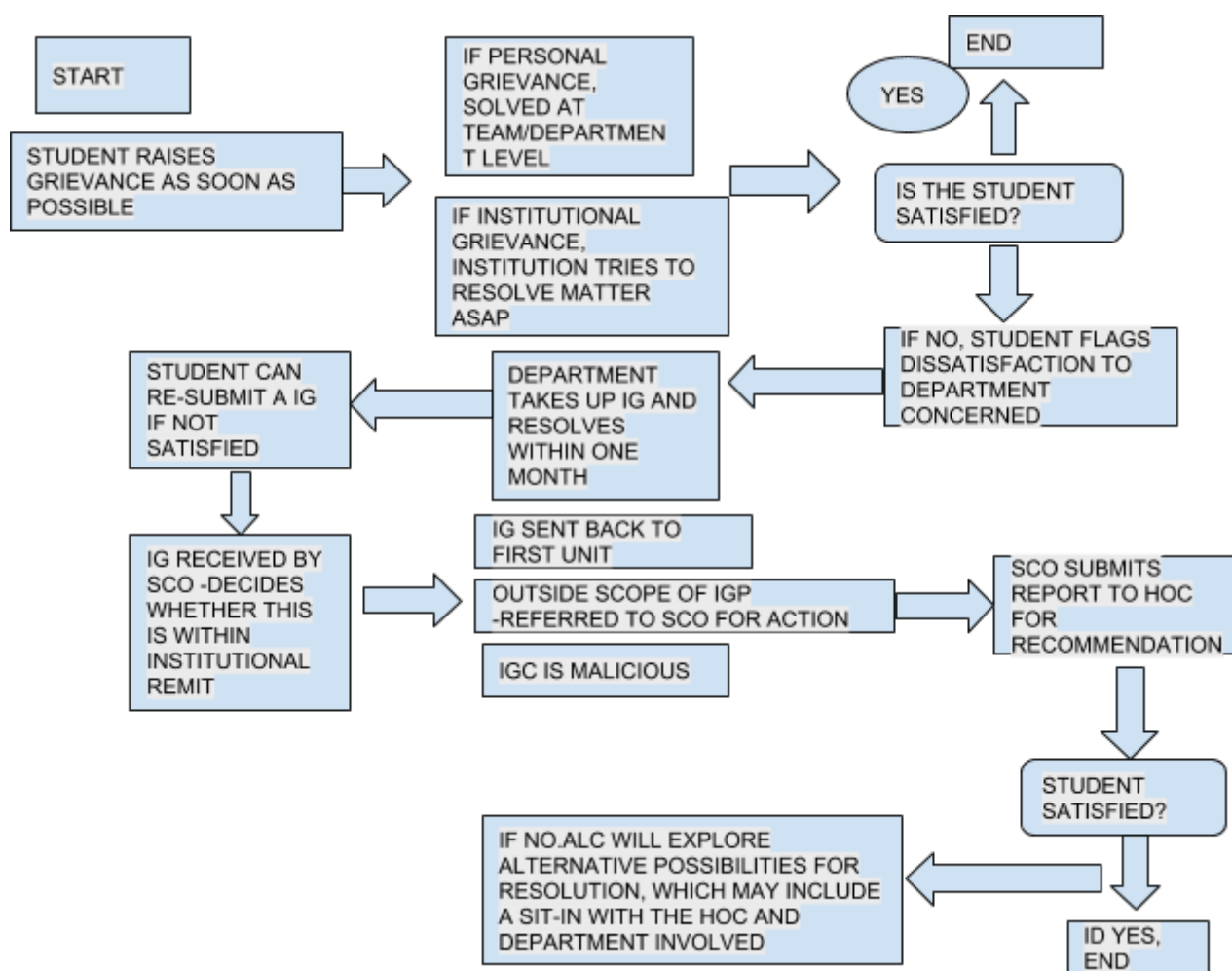
ALU recognises that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. Complainants who display difficult behaviour may still have a legitimate grievance, and the College will therefore treat all IGs seriously. However, the actions of students who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on time and resources or unacceptable behaviour towards ALC staff.

Unacceptable behaviour includes (but is not limited to):

- (a) Aggressive or abusive behaviour, including inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations against staff members or against the reputation of ALC.
- (b) Unreasonable demands, the result of which is that the complainant takes up an excessive amount of staff time and in so doing disadvantages other students.
- (c) Unreasonable use of the IGs process - when the effect of repeated IGs is to harass or to prevent the College from pursuing a legitimate aim or implementing a legitimate decision.

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against students who have acted maliciously (*defined as IGs without probable cause, which constitute an 'abuse of the system' or IGs which are false in nature, which includes the implication of innocent parties in false IGs*), which will constitute a breach of this policy. Where a complainant has exhibited unacceptable behaviour, ALC reserves the right to conduct disciplinary hearings as per the current Disciplinary Hearing Procedures.

IGS REPORTING PROCEDURE



3. STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IG HANDLING AT ALC

All Staff

All staff are required to be familiar with the ALC IGs Policy and Procedures, including how to handle and record IGs at a resolution stage. As most IGs are likely to be dealt with locally, staff should be appropriately equipped to respond to IGs, including being given clear guidelines on the appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Team Leads/Heads of Departments

Local responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with the team leads/heads of department.

The lead will receive appropriate training and guidelines.

The responsibilities of the leads in respect of IG handling will include:

- ❖ Ensuring staff within their team are provided with information and guidelines on IG handling, including good practice guidelines and other relevant publication
- ❖ Ensuring that student IG records are established and maintained and that data in relation to IGs is provided and forwarded to the team which would be in the best position to address the IG.
- ❖ Producing a report of IGs to senior management on a quarterly basis.

Student IGs Officer

The student IGs officer should be the person with overall responsibility for communication with students. There may be multiple people communicating with student within the department, however, the SCO will have an overarching responsibility and lead the processes of communicating with students. The SCO's role will include preparing a written report, including any recommended procedural changes and will submit this to the team/department lead.

At ALC, the Investigation will be conducted by the Student IGs Officer, the Student Life team and the Public Affairs team, where necessary. Teams have discretion as to who will communicate to the student and under which circumstances.

Due to the ways in which we work at ALC, there is a possibility that more than one person in the department will be communicating directly with students. This is fine, provided that one person is highlighted as the official officer and to whom questions can be directed should management need to

know. Teams should ensure that there is open communication within their teams regarding IGs at their WR.

REQUIREMENTS FOR RESPONSE STEPS DETAILED BELOW:

1. RECEIVE AND CLASSIFY

Ensure that all potential issues are captured by the organisation, and classified for escalation, review and action as required.

Any IG, issue or negative student interaction, documents and submitted to an ALC staff member in writing must be logged and classified for action. Any staff member receiving an IG from a student will, as they deem necessary, forward the IG to the Student Life and Public Affairs teams.

All of these IGs will be formally logged.

All IGs should be prioritised as follows:

Priority 1- Emergency

Very High Impact

Ability to cause significant injury a Student or Staff member either physically or psychologically

Ability to cause significant damages to property

Ability to jeopardize ALUs' operations or reputation

'Very High Impact' IGs should be responded to within 12 hours.

'Very High Impact' IGs must be forwarded to the Director of the Department as soon as the IG is received.

Directors may escalate the 'IG' to senior management, including the Head of College.

Priority 2 - Urgent

High Impact

Cause perceived concern for the wellbeing of a student that is not considered to be an emergency.

Cause perceived concern with regard to any of our services or products

'High Impact' IGs should be responded to within 72 hours. This allows a reasonable time to collect information and produce a balanced response.

The staff member logging the IG should review the IG and its priority with their Manager before proceeding to the next step.

Managers will decide on the appropriate person(s) to carry out subsequent steps, including the investigation.

Priority 3 - Elective

Low Impact

'Low Impact' issues do not constitute any perceived or actual risk to any student or staff or to the institution or its reputation.

These IGs refer to a product or service and should be responded to within two weeks.

1. ACKNOWLEDGE

Ensure that every IG receives a formal written acknowledgement, containing an expectation of when they will receive a response, and naming the representative tasked with following up person dealing with it. This person will be assigned by their team or Director.

All IGs, regardless of priority, should receive a pro forma (see below) acknowledgement sent out as an email on the day of receipt.

2. INVESTIGATE

Follow up all aspects of the IG, both internal and external, to ensure that the key facts are identified and clarified.

The priority of the IG will drive the timescale for completion (timescales are included in the above section.)

All areas of interaction and communication should be established (who, what, where, when, why etc) and documented where possible.

3. RESOLVE AND CONFIRM

Ensure that the final resolution is clear and fair. Also confirm the proposed action and resolution with another senior person.

Document the proposed action and discuss and agree with your Manager.

Discuss and review the solution from both the institutional and student viewpoint to ensure fairness and clarity.

The review should include recognition and documentation of any underlying issues that have

contributed to the IG and recommendations for actions to prevent further occurrence.

It would be recommended to include an update of any issues that arose during departmental reviews.

4. RESPOND TO CONCERNED STUDENT

Provide the concerned student with the resolution within the timescales promised.

The details of the findings and proposed resolution should be clearly explained (in written or verbal form as appropriate) to the student- within the agreed timescales.

If this cannot be done on time the student should be contacted by email, which may be followed up by a phone call to request further time.

5. FOLLOW UP

Ensure that IGs are followed up to confirm that students are satisfied with the response given.

All Priority 1 IGs and priority 2 IGs must be followed up within a reasonable timescale.

The relevant follow up should be carried out by the team to whom the concern was addressed.

The follow up should identify the following

Is the student satisfied with the response?

Did they feel that their IG was properly and fairly handled?

Any negative responses to these questions should be referred to Public Affairs team for action and direct follow up with students.

6. REVIEW

Ensure that the organisation as a whole is aware of IGs and any underlying issues. Plan actions to remove these and prevent future recurrence.

All IGs should be reviewed monthly as part of the team review meetings. These 'IGs' should be synthesized into a report by a member of the department. The Director of the Department will have the power and discretion to escalate IGs to ExCo.

Any IGs where action can be taken to avoid recurrent must be acted upon and raised with the appropriate managers/teams across the organisation.

