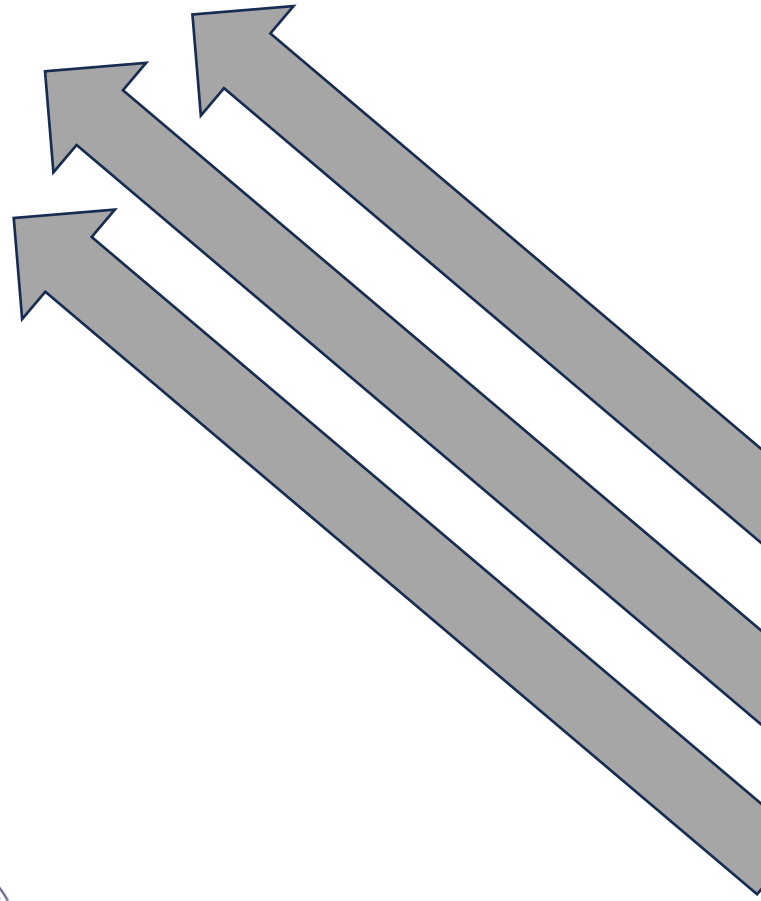


# Students' Grievance Policy



**Islamic University of Science & Technology**

<https://www.iust.ac.in>

## **Preamble**

Islamic University of Science & Technology (IUST) is committed to providing a positive culture and system where students are treated fairly with dignity and respect. However, the University recognizes that sometimes concerns and issues occur that need to be resolved to strengthen the positive culture, ensuring thereby a healthy relationship of students with different stakeholders of the University. As such, the University desires to maintain an effective system of student grievance management. The policy explains how to report and redress a grievance. The policy not only provides students' the right to register a complaint concerning an incident and/or issue pertaining to any aspect of their experience in the varsity but also exemplifies the University's response to the complaint with respect, empathy and professionalism.

This policy shall be called Students' Grievance Policy 2023. The major sections of this policy have been adapted from University Grants Commission (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023.

## **Rationale of the Policy**

The rationale of the policy is to develop a culture governed and supported by a clear set of regulations, guidelines and procedures for addressing students' grievance as reported by the aggrieved student/s promptly, objectively and confidentially. The policy aims to provide fair, equitable and orderly processes to resolve these grievances/s.

## **Scope of the Policy**

The policy is designed to deal with issues or incidents that have occurred in the University wherein a student feels that s/he has been adversely affected in his capacity as a student. The policy covers matters outside the scope of other policies of the University.

## **Definitions**

- *Grievance*: A student's dissatisfaction with respect to any aspect of the University's activities and services.
- *Complaint*: A concern that a policy or procedure has been incorrectly or unfairly applied.
- *Student*: A Student is an individual currently enrolled in a degree programme or a course for academic credit.
- *Aggrieved Student*: A student who has any grievance whatsoever.
- *Student Group*: A Student Group is any group of students in the University which is either a party to or has suffered the grievance.
- *Respondent*: The respondent is the faculty member, officer or staff member named in the grievance as the person or persons responsible for the act.
- *Grievant*: The grievant is the student or student group reporting the grievance.
- *Grievance Committee*: The grievance committee is the committee constituted by the University to address the student/s complaint.
- *University*: The University refers to Islamic University of Science & Technology

- *University Ombudsperson:* Someone who seeks to impartially resolve issue(s) that is/are perceived by the student(s) as adversely affecting his/their interests.
- *Commission:* The Commission refers to University Grants Commission.
- *Regulation:* The regulation refers to the University Grants Commission (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023.

## **Nature and Scope of Grievance**

The term grievance as referred in this policy shall include complaint(s) made by an aggrieved student with respect to the following:

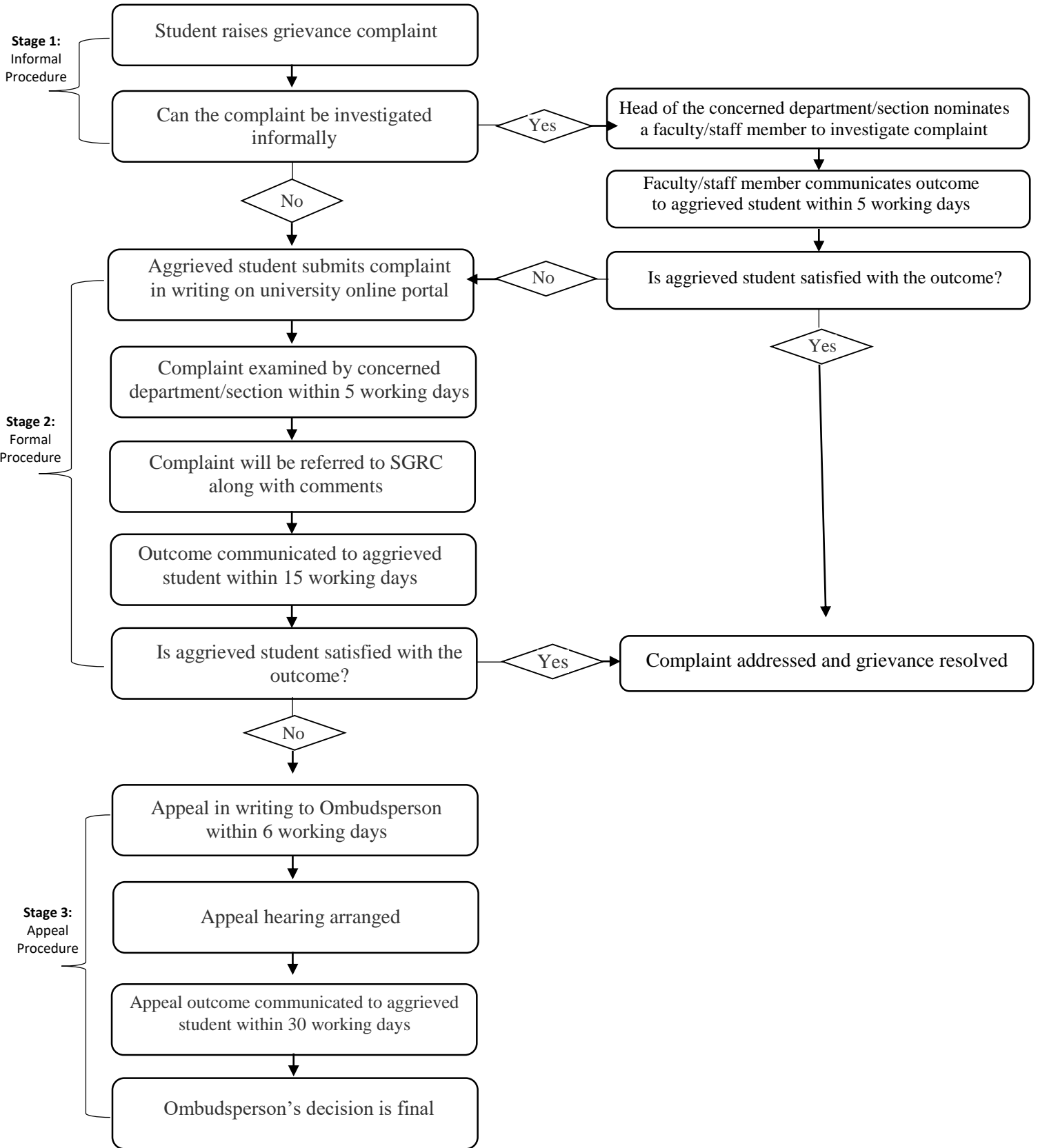
- i. admission contrary to merit determined in accordance with the declared admission policy of the University;
- ii. irregularity in the process under the declared admission policy of the University;
- iii. refusal to admit in accordance with the declared admission policy of the University;
- iv. non-publication of a prospectus by the University, in accordance with the provisions of University Grants Commission (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023;
- v. publication by the University of any information in the prospectus, which is false or misleading, and not based on facts;
- vi. withholding of, or refusal to return, any document in the form of certificates of degree, diploma or any other award or other document deposited by a student for the purpose of seeking admission in the University, with a view to induce or compel such student to pay any fee or fees in respect of any course or program of study which such student does not intend to pursue;
- vii. demand of money in excess of that specified to be charged in the declared admission policy of the University;
- viii. violation, by the University, of any law for the time being in force in regard to reservation of seats in admission to different category of students;
- ix. non-payment or delay in payment of scholarships or financial aid admissible to any student under the declared admission policy of the University, or under the conditions, if any, prescribed by the Commission;
- x. delay by the University in the conduct of examinations, or declaration of results, beyond the schedule specified in the academic calendar of the University, or in such calendar prescribed by the Commission;
- xi. failure by the University to provide student amenities as set out in the prospectus, or is required to be extended by the University under any provisions of law for the time being in force;
- xii. non-transparent or unfair practices adopted by the University for the evaluation of students;
- xiii. delay in, or denial of, the refund of fees due to a student who withdraws admission within the time mentioned in the prospectus, subject to guidelines, if any, issued by the Commission, from time to time;
- xiv. complaints of alleged discrimination of students from the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Women, Minorities or persons with disabilities categories;

- xv. denial of quality education as promised at the time of admission or required to be provided;
- xvi. harassment or victimization of a student, other than cases of harassment, which are to be proceeded against under the penal provisions of any law for the time being in force;
- xvii. any action initiated/taken contrary to the statutes, ordinances, rules, regulations, or guidelines of the University; and
- xviii. any action initiated/taken contrary to the regulations and/or guidelines made/issued by the Commission and/or the regulatory body concerned.

### **Composition and Responsibilities of Student Grievance Redressal Committee (SGRC)**

- (i) A complaint from an aggrieved student relating to the University shall be addressed to the Chairperson, Students' Grievance Redressal Committee (SGRC).
- (ii) The University shall constitute such number of Students' Grievance Redressal Committee (SGRC), as may be required to consider grievances of the students, with the following composition:
  - a) A Professor - Chairperson
  - b) Four Professors/Senior Faculty Members of the University as Members.
  - c) A representative from among students to be nominated on academic merit/excellence in sports/performance in co-curricular activities-Special Invitee.
- (iii) At least one member or the Chairperson shall be a woman and at least one member or the Chairperson shall be from SC/ST/OBC category.
- (iv) The term of the chairperson and members shall be for a period of two years.
- (v) The term of the special invitee shall be one year.
- (vi) The quorum for the meeting including the Chairperson, but excluding the special invitee, shall be three.
- (vii) In considering the grievances before it, the SGRC shall follow principles of natural justice.
- (viii) The SGRC shall send its report with recommendations, if any, to the Vice-chancellor and a copy thereof to the aggrieved student, preferably within a period of 15 working days from the date of receipt of the complaint.
- (ix) Any student aggrieved by the decision of the Students' Grievance Redressal Committee may prefer an appeal to the Ombudsperson, within a period of six days from the date of receipt of such a decision.

# Grievance Process Overview



## Procedure for Redressal of Grievances

The procedure for grievance resolution shall consist of the following three stages:

1. Informal stage
2. Formal stage
3. Appeal stage

### Informal Stage

This stage shall involve an informal procedure for resolving the grievance of an aggrieved student. At this stage, an aggrieved student shall informally report his/her grievance to the Head of the concerned department/section. The Head of the concerned department/section shall nominate a faculty/staff member to investigate the complaint. The faculty/staff member nominated shall communicate the outcome to the aggrieved student **within 05** working days. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, s/he shall formally raise her/his complaint.

### Formal Stage

Once the informal process fails to provide an acceptable resolution to the grievance of the aggrieved student, s/he shall opt for the formal process by submitting an application on the University online portal **within 5 working** days seeking redressal of the grievance. The application should provide full details of the complaint, relevant supporting documentation, and details of witnesses if any. On the receipt of the application from the aggrieved student, the following procedure shall be followed to resolve the grievance:

- (i) On receipt of an online complaint, the application shall be examined first by the concerned section/department of the University depending on the nature of the grievance and subsequently the complaint shall be referred to the appropriate Students' Grievance Redressal Committee (SGRC), along with comments of the concerned section/department within 5 days of receipt of complaint on the online portal.
- (ii) The Students' Grievance Redressal Committee shall fix a date, as the case may be, for hearing the complaint which shall be communicated to the department/section and the aggrieved student at least 3 days before the meeting.
- (iii) An aggrieved student may appear either in person or authorize a representative to present the case.
- (iv) The SGRC shall send its report with recommendations, if any, to the Vice-chancellor and a copy thereof to the aggrieved student, preferably within a period of **15 working** days from the date of receipt of the complaint from the concerned section/department of the University. Student will be informed if extenuating circumstances require additional time.
- (v) If an aggrieved student does not believe that his/her grievance has been resolved satisfactorily s/he may appeal to Ombudsperson of the University. Further, grievances not resolved by the Students' Grievance Redressal Committee within the stipulated period shall also be referred to the Ombudsperson by the University.

## Appeal Stage

Once the decision of SGRC does not satisfy the aggrieved student, s/he has the right to appeal against it to Ombudsperson of the University. The aggrieved student should submit a written appeal in the office of the Ombudsperson within **15 working** days of the transmission of the formal grievance decision for reviewing his/her application. An aggrieved student should have a genuine reason for the appeal. Reasons for appeal may include:

- The correct procedure was not followed by the SGRC and therefore impacted the grievance decision.
- The grievance decision was not based on the evidence presented.
- Evidence of bias or unfair treatment in the process.
- New evidence that supplements the complaint is available after the decision of SGRC.

The procedure involved in appeal shall involve the following:

1. The appeal hearing shall be arranged as soon as possible and without unreasonable delay.
2. The aggrieved student shall be given at least 5 working day notice for the appeal hearing.
3. If the aggrieved student has any written evidence s/he wishes to discuss at the appeal hearing, this should be submitted in the office of Ombudsperson at least two working days before the appeal hearing.
4. The original complaint and related documentation shall be made available to the Ombudsperson for review.
5. At the hearing, the aggrieved student shall be asked to restate the grounds of his/her appeal.
6. The Ombudsperson shall provide reasonable opportunities to the parties concerned of being heard that may also include the members of SGRC or faculty/staff of the concerned department/section.
7. Once all the details have been heard and considered, the Ombudsperson shall confirm his decision to the aggrieved student within 30 working days of receiving the appeal.
8. The Ombudsperson has the authority to uphold or overturn the original grievance decision.
9. The decision of the Ombudsperson shall be final.
10. The University, as well as the aggrieved student, shall be provided with copies of the order under the signature of the Ombudsperson.
11. The University shall comply with the recommendations of the Ombudsperson.

## Functions of Ombudspersons in the Appeal Process

- (i) The Ombudsperson shall hear appeal from an aggrieved student, only after the student has availed all other remedies provided under the University Grants Commission (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023.
- (ii) While issues of malpractices in the conduct of examination or in the process of evaluation may be referred to the Ombudsperson, no appeal or application for revaluation or re-totaling of answer scripts from an examination, shall be entertained by the Ombudsperson unless specific irregularity materially affecting the outcome or specific instance of discrimination is indicated.
- (iii) The Ombudsperson may avail assistance of any person, as amicus curiae, for hearing complaints of alleged discrimination.

- (iv) The Ombudsperson shall make all efforts to resolve the grievances within a period of 30 days of receiving the appeal from the aggrieved student(s).

The University shall extend co-operation to the Ombudsperson or the Student Grievance Redressal Committee(s), for an early redressal of grievances.

### **Appointment, Tenure, Removal and Conditions of Services of Ombudsperson**

- (i) The University shall appoint Ombudsperson for redressal of grievances of students of the University under University Grants Commission (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023.
- (ii) There shall be one or more part-time functionaries designated as Ombudspersons to hear, and decide on, appeals preferred against the decisions of the SGRCs.
- (iii) The Ombudsperson shall be a retired Vice-Chancellor or a retired Professor (who has worked as Dean/HOD) and has 10 years' experience as a Professor at State/Central Universities/Institutions of National Importance/Deemed to be Universities or a former District Judge.
- (iv) The Ombudsperson shall not, at the time of appointment, during one year before appointment, or in the course of his/her tenure as Ombudsperson, be in conflict of interest with the University where his/her personal relationship, professional affiliations or financial interest may compromise or reasonably appear to compromise, the independence of judgment towards the University.
- (v) The Ombudsperson shall be appointed for a period of three years or until s/he attains the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier, from the date of assuming office, and shall be eligible for reappointment for another one term.
- (vi) For conducting the hearings, the Ombudsperson shall be paid a sitting fee, per diem, in accordance with the norms fixed by the University and shall, in addition, be eligible for reimbursement of the expenditure incurred on conveyance.
- (vii) The University may remove the Ombudsperson from office, on charges of proven misconduct or misbehaviour.
- (viii) No order of removal of Ombudsperson shall be made except after an inquiry made in this regard by a person, not below the rank of a retired judge of the High Court in which a reasonable opportunity of being heard is given to the Ombudsperson.

### **Role and Responsibilities of the Ombudsperson**

The Ombudsperson shall be a designated neutral or impartial dispute resolution practitioner whose basic role shall be to ensure procedural fairness in the University decision-making. Further, the Ombudsperson shall be committed to educate the students and find ways to work together with various stakeholders of the University Community. The Ombudsperson shall make recommendations when trends, patterns, policies, or procedures of the university generate concerns or conflicts. Further, the role of the Ombudsperson shall be to:

- serve as a neutral party to help resolve grievances of the students, and work to achieve fair outcomes;
- identify and explain relevant university processes/policies;



- work with students to explore and strategize options for problem-solving;
- empower students to deal directly and effectively with their concerns;
- facilitate discussions and make inquiries for clarification to seek resolution;
- provide sound and practical advising; and
- listen and provide an objective perspective.

The Ombudsperson shall be directly responsible to the Vice-Chancellor of the University and not to any other administrative office of the University.

### **Consequences of Non-compliance**

The Commission shall in respect of the University, which willfully contravenes of any provision of the University Grants Commission (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023 or repeatedly fails to comply with the recommendation of the Ombudsperson or the Students' Grievance Redressal Committee, as the case may be, proceed to take one or more of the following actions till the University complies with these Regulations to the satisfaction of the Commission, namely:

- (a) withdrawal of declaration of fitness to receive grants under section 12B of the Act;
- (b) withholding any grant allocated to the University;
- (c) declaring the University ineligible for consideration for any assistance under any of the general or special assistance programs of the Commission;
- (d) declaring the University ineligible to offer courses through Online/ODL mode for a specified period;
- (e) withdrawing / withholding / suspending the approval for offering courses through Online/ODL mode;
- (f) informing the general public, including potential candidates for admission, through a notice displayed prominently in suitable media and posted on the website of the Commission, declaring that the University does not possess the minimum standards for redressal of grievances;
- (g) recommend to the State Government to take necessary and appropriate action;
- (h) such other action as may be deemed necessary and appropriate against the University for non-compliance.

Provided that no action shall be taken by the Commission under the University Grants Commission (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023, unless the University has been provided an opportunity of being heard to explain its position.