

Regulation on the Operation of the Complaints Management Mechanism

In the context of strengthening the student-centered educational process, as well as the principles of transparency and accountability, the University of Western Macedonia has adopted the current "Complaint Management Process" for students. This process applies to all complaints concerning the quality of the educational and administrative services provided by the Department.

The process is described as follows:

For the submission of complaints, students should fill out the complaint submission form at <https://modip.uowm.gr/nfe/index.php?p=3&c=2&i=4>, where they should briefly, clearly, and objectively state the problem or complaint they are facing. After receiving the request, the Legal Advisor reviews it, informs the Rector, and refers it electronically, depending on its nature:

1. To the Head of the Department, when the complaint concerns issues related to exams and grading. The Head of the Department examines the student's complaint, along with any supplementary materials, and takes the appropriate actions. Within 20 days, the student is duly informed about the actions taken and the general handling of the complaint, as well as any decisions made by the relevant administrative body.
2. To the Student Advocate, for issues other than grading and exams, at the email address: synigorosfoititi@uowm.gr. The University has established an independent office called the "STUDENT ADVOCATE," where any student can report any issue (using the "Request Submission Form") for mediation to resolve it. The Student Advocate may investigate cases ex officio.

The Student Advocate, in the context of their role, can request from the university's services any information, documents, or other evidence related to the case, interview individuals, conduct investigations, and order expert opinions. If they find that legality is not upheld in a specific case, that there are signs of mismanagement, or that the proper functioning of the institution is disrupted, they prepare a report which is communicated to the professor involved in the case or the relevant administrative service, and the student who made the report, and mediate to resolve the issue.

Interested students can submit their requests using the request submission form, which is attached below:

- Via email to synigorosfoititi@uowm.gr
- In person or by mail to the Student Advocate's office address.

3. To the Ethics Committee of the University of Western Macedonia at ethics@uowm.gr. The Ethics Committee was established by the Rector's decision and examines ex officio or following a written complaint from students, faculty members, E.E.P., E.D.I.P., E.T.E.P., researchers, visiting professors, and administrative staff, concerning issues within its jurisdiction to verify any violation of the Code of Ethics or to investigate incidents as instructed by the Rector.

Responsibilities of the Ethics Committee:

1. Respect for Human Rights
 2. Meritocracy and equal opportunities
 3. Academic excellence
 4. Protection of intellectual property
 5. Integrity, Transparency, Effectiveness, Accountability in the use of public resources, Protection of the institution's assets
 6. Promotion of a culture of ethical behavior and adherence to ethical rules
4. To the Gender Equality Committee for cases of harassment. The Gender Equality Committee is responsible for evaluating the incident and recommending how to handle it, providing, if deemed appropriate, mediation services, restorative justice, and any support to victims of discrimination, harassment, or abusive behavior. Specifically, depending on the history of the case, the Gender Equality Committee either:
(a) encourages the victim to explain to the person causing the unwanted behavior that it is unwelcome, offensive, creates dissatisfaction, and interferes with their work/studies, or
(b) takes on the mediation process.

It is emphasized that the Gender Equality Committee will act only if the harassment and/or sexual harassment occurs over a short period, if the perpetrator seems willing to discuss the issue, and if the victim agrees to mediation. If the perpetrator refuses mediation, the Gender Equality Committee will send a letter to the perpetrator reminding them of the code of ethics and behavioral issues related to the reported action. If the victim chooses direct communication with the perpetrator, the Gender Equality Committee is responsible for monitoring the outcome. In case of mediation, the committee takes responsibility for communicating with the perpetrator. In all cases, the Gender Equality Committee handles the case with full confidentiality and ensures it is resolved in a reasonable time frame.

If the above options are not possible, or if the informal approach does not yield satisfactory results, or if the case is serious or if the annoying behavior persists, the case is referred to the Ethics Committee or the Disciplinary Council.

Once the handling of the complaint is complete, the relevant bodies must inform the student and the Legal Advisor regarding the actions taken and the outcome of the case. The Legal Advisor then informs the Rector.

According to the decision of the Senate under number H1/Σ147/06-10-2021, the violation of confidentiality and secrecy by the involved parties in the complaint management process (officials and administrative staff) will result in criminal, disciplinary, and civil penalties, as stated by the Legal Service of the University. Specifically:

I. In the Penal Code, in Chapter 22 titled “Violations of personal privacy and communication” (articles 370, 370A, 370BB, 370C, 370D, 370E, and 371), the acts of breaching confidentiality and secrecy are provided and punishable. The most relevant of these is Article 370 (titled "Violation of confidentiality of documents"), which provides for imprisonment up to two years or a financial penalty. If the violation is associated with the intent of obtaining benefit or causing harm to someone (which is almost self-evident), then Article 258 of the Penal Code ("Dereliction of duty") applies, which threatens imprisonment up to two years or a fine.

II. The breach of confidentiality and secrecy constitutes a disciplinary offense according to Articles 106 and 107 of Law 3528/2007 (Civil Servants Code) and leads to disciplinary action against the perpetrator. Depending on the severity and circumstances of the act, the disciplinary penalties stipulated in Article

III. The violation of confidentiality and privacy creates a civil claim for compensation in favor of the party whose confidential information was violated, according to the Civil Code. Relevant provisions: Articles 914 et seq. of the Civil Code (Torts), 57A of the Civil Code (Infringement of Personality), 59A of the Civil Code (Satisfaction for Moral Damage), and 299A of the Civil Code (Monetary Compensation for Non-Pecuniary Damage).

5. To the Data Protection Officer for personal data issues at the email address dpo@uowm.gr. The University of Western Macedonia accepts as personal data any information relating to natural persons, as an identified or identifiable living individual. For example, these details may include name, home address, identification number, IP address, health information, insurance status, employment status, and other relevant information.

This policy complies with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as well as with opinions/decisions issued by the Greek Data Protection Authority.

If the above steps are not feasible or if the informal approach does not provide satisfactory results, or if the case is serious or the disturbing behavior persists, the issue is referred to the Ethics Committee or the Disciplinary Council.

Once the complaint has been handled, the relevant bodies must inform the student and the Legal Advisor about the actions taken and the outcome of the case. The Legal Advisor then informs the Rector.