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Mr Galalae

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Pro-Vice-Chancellor and  
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Dear Mr Galalae

### **Your Formal Complaint and Request for Reimbursement of Fees**

I received your formal complaint under the Student Complaints Procedure on 4 January 2010, comprising a completed Formal Complaints Form and a dossier of supporting evidence. This complaint had previously been investigated by Professor Mark Phythian, Head of Department, Politics and International Relations.

In summary your complaint is as follows:

1. That Nick Wright, the Associate Tutor and moderator of the discussion forum, openly criticised your academic integrity and intelligence;
2. That Nick Wright '*directed*' Dr Simon Rofe, the Director of Distance Learning to send you a threatening email;
3. That Nick Wright marked down your work (e-tivity 3) to '*satisfy his own prejudices*';
4. That the low mark you were given for e-tivity 4 (6/15 - 40%) reflected Nick Wright's '*prejudices and petty hidden agenda*' rather than the quality of the work submitted;
5. That Nick Wright attempted to stifle online debate and suppress your views and that his actions amounted to '*an act of censorship*';
6. That Dr Rofe failed to address your complaints satisfactorily, which you felt was an indication that he wished you to leave the course.

I have conducted an investigation of your complaint based on the written evidence that you provided and supplementary material from the Department. In response to the specific aspects of your complaint:

1. My reading of the posts from Nick Wright is that they offer an appropriate mix of praise, encouragement and challenge to you to hone and evidence your views and arguments. The ability to express yourself concisely, objectively and with supporting evidence are skills necessary for the discipline, which the discussion forum helps students to develop. In your email of 9 November you acknowledge that you have weaknesses in these areas and thank Nick Wright for his '*thorough analysis and fair evaluation*'.
2. Dr Rofe wrote to you in his capacity as Director of Distance learning to formally request that you to edit a post to remove '*accusatory and unhelpful remarks*' about the tutor and other students. In my view, the language in the email, while firm, was not threatening. You have presented no evidence that Dr Rofe was directed to write it.



3. As is confirmed in the feedback for the e-tivity and in subsequent correspondence, the University would consider 80% to be a very good mark. I understand that you were made aware of the online information provided by the Department explaining that British marking standards are typically more stringent than those in other parts of the world. A 100% mark would indicate that there was nothing about the work that could be improved. The feedback that you received did identify some areas for improvement.
4. The mark you received for e-tivity 4 reflected the fact that you had submitted a 4,800 word piece of work in place of a 1,000 word essay plan. The work was initially marked by the module convener James Hamill and only second marked by Nick Wright. The feedback you received, and a subsequent email from Dr Rofo offered suggestions about how you could gain a good mark for the subsequent essay and confirmed that a distinction level mark for the module was still a possibility for you.
5. I can find no evidence of attempts to stifle online debate, which appears at times to have been both robust and extensive, and no evidence of censorship, or of inappropriate moderation of the discussion forum. In these circumstances a tutor needs to take account of the needs of all of the students in the group and it may be appropriate to move discussion topics forward at certain times to ensure broad participation. Nick Wright's actions are fully within the guidelines and training given by the University to its Associate Tutors.
6. I can find no evidence either stated or implied that Nick Wright or Dr Rofo wanted you 'out of the course'. In fact your dossier provides examples of supportive remarks from both of them, in which they comment on your valuable contributions.

With regard to your subsequent assertion in the email of 20 January 2010 that the Department 'employs a secret facilitator who masquerades as a regular student'; our records clearly show that the student you name is a regular student of the University who has independently registered for the course and pays full fees. I note here that this student wrote to you on 1 December 2010, following the circulation of your dossier to the student group, saying that she thought it was inappropriate to involve them in your dispute with the University and requesting that you used the available channels rather than the discussion forum to pursue the matter.

In summary then, I find that there is no evidence for your assertions and as a result I do not uphold your complaint. I note that since you had almost completed the course when you took the decision to withdraw from it, you would not normally be entitled to a full refund of your fees. However as a gesture of goodwill from the University of Leicester I am prepared to authorise a full refund on this occasion.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the consideration of this complaint, an appeal against the findings may be made through the Academic Registrar, as detailed in the Complaints Procedure set out in the University's General Regulations.

I wish you well in your future studies and your ambition to gain a masters qualification in Politics & International Relations.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Elizabeth Murphy**  
**Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Social Science**