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Dear Prof. Scott,

By now I assume you will have received a copy of Sion Hughes' official response to my complaint (dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005). I am curious to know your views on the appropriateness of Mr Hughes' response, as I believe it is not acceptable.

Firstly, Mr Hughes twice points out the length of time that has passed since the incidents described in my original letter. Whereas this may well make it more difficult to verify my complaints, it does not, for one instant, invalidate them.

Secondly, Mr Hughes has refused to answer questions 1 – 10 from my original letter, stating that they relate to my "own subjective perceptions rather than to statements of fact which do not appear to have been shared by other students". This statement is insulting and incorrect. The majority of the issues raised in my complaint regard specific incidents, and to dismiss them so is to deny those incidents occurred. This is a very foolish stance for Mr Hughes to take considering that I was not alone in complaining about certain incidents, and that most of the incidents mentioned were witnessed by colleagues (as is quite clearly explained in my original letter). I feel the fact that Mr Hughes is unaware of the perceptions of other students indicates how badly NEWI's staff have so far dealt with informal complaints (which, I would assume you agree, should be taken just as seriously as formal complaints). To enlighten you to the *facts* Mr Hughes has had difficulty finding, two of my former colleagues (the only two I have yet been able to contact) will very soon be sending you letters of their own confirming those incidents to which they bore direct witness.

Thirdly, Mr Hughes mentions the incident where work of mine, and of other colleagues, was thrown away. He seems to be under the impression that the tutor in question has made an apology. As my original letter clearly states, no apology has yet to be received by either myself or my other colleagues. If Mr Hughes believes that John Archer's response amounts to an apology, I can see why complaints have thus far been so badly handled by him and his faculty.

Fourthly, Mr Hughes repeatedly mentions my lack of adherence to NEWI's formal complaints procedure and uses this as reason why he should not be held responsible for my complaints. He seems unable to understand how difficult it may be for a young student new to university to find the courage to complain, especially when confronted with the situations I have catalogued and when all informal complaints had led nowhere. His insensitivity in this matter is truly dismaying. However, regardless of how well I adhered to NEWI's required bureaucracy, *this* is a formal complaint, and as such I expect it to be handled more seriously and with more respect than was shown by Mr Hughes in

his response.

I will therefore re-iterate the questions of my original letter, all of which have been left unanswered by NEWI's official response. I will summarise the related incidents but I would suggest referring to my original letter in each case (I have cited the page numbers from the original letter next to each summary).

Regarding Laurence Durbur's attitude to his students when they voiced their concerns about the amount of work he had set them (page 3):

**1. Why did Laurence display such disregard for his students' academic welfare?**

Regarding an informal complaint made by myself and a number of colleagues about the way we were being treated by Laurence Durbur, that resulted in Laurence chastising me for complaining (page 3):

**2. Why was this complaint handled so atrociously?**

**3. What procedures were in place, that were not followed, that should have prevented this?**

**4. How was Laurence allowed to handle a complaint in this way?**

Regarding the chastisement of myself and a colleague for choosing not to take part in the optional trip to London, and the organisation of that trip (page 4):

**5. Why did this situation arise in the first place?**

**6. Why were we chastised for not going on an optional trip?**

Regarding a field trip to Whitworth Art Gallery in which Laurence Durber's absence affected our ability to carry out the set brief (page 4):

**7. Why was this complaint ignored?**

**8. What was done to rectify the problem?**

Regarding the disparity between Laurence Durber's requirements and those of Yadzia Williams (page 4):

**9. What controls are in place to ensure the fairness of the set work?**

**10. Why did this inconsistency in teaching methods arise?**

(Please take a moment to note that each of these questions (1 – 10) pertains to specific incidents that occurred in the first year of my course. Neither was I alone in witnessing these incidents nor were they simply "subjective perceptions" as Mr Hughes suggests.)

Regarding the cancelled course thread and the lack of trained tutors available (pages 5 and 6):

**11. Why was there such a long running shortage of staff in the Art and Design department of NEWI?**

**12. Why were there no trained replacements brought in to fill the gaps?**

Regarding the perversion of what would have been a very well handled formal complaint in which a chance to complain would have been given without the presence of the subject of the complaint (page 7):

**13. Why, once again, was I not given a chance to complain properly and formally, as I had been assured would be the case?**

**14. Why, once again, was my informal complaint not handled correctly?**

Regarding John Archer's attempt to evade responsibility by lying about his name when questioned by Lucy Davis (page 9):

**15. Is this acceptable behaviour from a NEWI tutor?**

**16. What will be done to ensure such behaviour will not happen again?**

Regarding Lucy's response from Mr Hughes regarding that matter (page 9):

**17. Again, how was this complaint allowed by Sion Hughes to be handled in this way?**

Mr Hughes' response has dismissed each and every one of these points, and has gone as far as selectively reporting two issues (that of question 15, and the case of the dissertation) in order to suggest that NEWI had displayed high standards in both humility and tutoring in those cases. I find his apologies highly condescending, considering none of them are actual apologies for any wrong doing, but are instead apologies that I did not follow the formal complaints procedure. This attitude simply isn't good enough.

My original letter of complaint was addressed to you because I had not been satisfied in the past with Mr Hughes' handling of complaints. I am now doubly dissatisfied following his atrocious effort, and as such request that someone more capable be in charge of responding to *this* letter. All my further correspondence will be addressed to you, and I count you as my primary point of contact for this complaint.

As with my original letter, I would appreciate a timely acknowledgement and at least an indication of when I might expect a more thorough response.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Simcott

CC: **Mrs Deborah Bradley** (Academic Secretary)  
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