

Higher Education Complaints Policy and Procedure

The Open University Validated Programmes

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Higher Education - Complaints Process

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code sets out the expectations that all higher education (HE) providers are required to meet, the expectation in regards to academic appeals and student complaints is that:

“Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement”. The policy has addressed this expectation along with best practice guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

The College take Higher Education (HE) students’ concerns seriously and the complaint handling procedure is designed to enable effective consideration of any concern raised by a student or students and the enacting of timely remedies as appropriate.

1. Definition and Scope

The College defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction that warrants a response.

- I. The Student complaints procedure can be used for complaints within the following areas, the consequences of which have an alleged adverse effect on the student wishing to make the complaint.
 - a) Provision or delivery of programmes or parts of programmes.
 - b) Inadequate planning, teaching or supervision of a degree programme.
 - c) Inadequate services or facilities of the programme or College.
 - d) Decisions, actions or perceived lack of action taken by a member of College staff.
 - e) Decisions, actions or perceived lack of action taken by a central College service; or a member of staff acting on its behalf.
 - f) Complaints relating to discrimination, harassment or bullying.
- II. Complaints not in scope of this policy and procedure:
 - a) Academic Appeals – covered by Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure

2. Terms

- a) Complaints are to be raised by students and not third parties.
- b) Group complaints are permitted, however in such cases one member of the group will be required to step forward as the group representative, through whom, communication will be made.
- c) The College does not accept anonymous complaints.
- d) The College undertakes that any student seeking to use this procedure will not be treated less favourably in her/his subsequent academic

career, or College life, because of action taken to pursue an alleged complaint.

- e) Any complaints which are deemed to be frivolous or vexatious may be terminated by the College.

3. Process

Details of how to make a complaint are included in the student PDF handbook, which also provides links to relevant policy and process documents hosted on the college website.

I. Stage 1a – Informal

If a student or students raise a concern or complaint:

- a) Students must feel they have been able to air concerns and feel they have been listened to.
- b) Resolution of the concern should be sought wherever possible by providing an on the spot explanation of why the issues occurred and/or where appropriate, an apology and explanation of what will be done to stop a similar situation happening in the future.
- c) All complaints raised must be logged on the HE Staff SharePoint, the Freshdesk.
- d) All outcomes to those complaints must also be logged and a record of the actions taken to consider and resolve the complaint.
- e) All complaints must be reported to the Head of Degree Programmes.

II. Stage 1b – Formal

The Complaint will be escalated to a formal basis when:

- a) The informal process hasn't created a resolution
- b) The student has declined to engage with the informal process
- c) The issues raised are complex and require detailed investigation because they involve:
 - o Serious concerns regarding staff conduct
 - o Serious concerns about the quality of teaching and delivery of courses
 - o Serious misconduct involving violence, threat or sexual conduct
 - o Issues that have a detrimental consequence to a student's mental health
- d) The complaint must be submitted in writing using the college complaint form. **The complaint form is attached to this document on Page 6.**
- e) An initial evaluation of the complaint will take place to assess whether the complaint meets the above categories and, if so an investigation will be instigated by the Head of Degree programmes. The final decision on the complaint will be made by the Dean.
- f) At the conclusion of the investigation, a report will be produced outlining the process followed, the information gathered, the conclusions drawn and any recommendations.

- g) The outcome of the investigation will be sent in writing to the student, students or their representative. They will receive copies of the information considered with any evidence and a copy of the report.
- h) If a student is not satisfied with the outcome and wishes to appeal the complaint, the investigation documents will be forwarded to the Dean.
- i) If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of any appeal, they may then escalate the complaint to the Open University, the validating partner. This policy can be found on the student's VLE. Support is available via the Apprenticeship programme Manager and the Head of Degree Programmes to assist students with this process.
- j) Although not obliged, students are expected to wait for the outcome of a Stage One Formal Complaint before escalating their case to Validating Partners, the Open University.

III. College Responsibilities

Ada is responsible for dealing with your initial complaint in accordance with the Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure approved by the OU. It will carry out this responsibility by:

- Ensuring that the Student Complaints Procedure of both Ada and the OU are easily accessible to all students on OU validated programmes.
- Informing you of the final outcome of its internal procedures in writing, this letter is important and you will need it if you wish to request a review of your appeal or complaint by the OU.
- Responding in a timely manner in relation to any requests made by the OU in relation to an appeal or complaint, without disadvantage to you.
- Acting in accordance with recommendations made following the final outcome of an appeal or complaint review by the OU.
- Providing information on appeals and complaints to the OU as part of its obligations in relation to annual monitoring and periodic review
- Reporting to the OU on action it has taken in response to a review of an appeal or complaint. Ada has a right to be heard and to present its case in relation to any appeal or complaint review case made against it.

IV. The Open University

The OU reviews your appeal if all of the following are true:

- Your appeal is against an institutional body, such as an Exam board, or the decision related to one or more of the following:
- Your final award
- Your progression from one stage or level of the programme to the next
- Your assessment on the programme
- Your admission to the programme and
- You can demonstrate that you have exhausted all appropriate internal procedures open to you at your institution
- and

- You have grounds to believe that the partner institution’s internal procedures and regulations for dealing with appeals were not interpreted or implemented correctly or fairly.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of an institutional body - an exam board, or an admissions board - cannot of itself constitute grounds for an appeal.

The OU formal complaints procedures are detailed in Appendix 1 of the [Open University Handbook for Validated Awards](#).

4. Frivolous or vexatious complaints

Examples of frivolous or vexatious complaints include the following:

- Complaints that are obsessive, harassing, or repetitive
- Insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes
- Insistence on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- Complaints that are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value

Ada may terminate consideration of a complaint if it considers it to be without foundation or in bad faith. In such instances Ada will write to the student to explain why it is terminating consideration of the matter. Where it is found that a student has raised a complaint of this nature, or used false information, Ada will consider taking disciplinary action.

VERSION	AUTHER	DATE	CHANGES
V1	Farhad Keissarian	10. 02 .2017	-
V2	Farhad Keissarian	10. 02 .2019	Ada’s role
V3	Farhad Keissarian	10. 02 .2021	The OU’s role

HE Student Complaints Form

Please use this form if you wish to raise a concern about any aspect of your degree programme or any aspect of the service provided by the College and submit the form to the Freshdesk.

Name: Student Number: Address:	Telephone No. Email Address:
Degree Programme/Course:	
Complaint Detail:	

For College Use Only:

Date Received and reference no:	Date Replied:	Investigating Staff:
Action Required		
Actions Taken – please detail all dates and relevant persons involved in resolving this complaint		