



HE Complaints Policy and Procedure

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1. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

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 regard 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.

2. 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

3. 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.

4. Process

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

4.1. Stage 1 – Informal Review

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) The complaint in the informal stage must be submitted by the student in writing and **within ten working days** from the date that the concern/issue occurs.
- c) 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.
- d) All complaints raised must be logged on the HE Staff SharePoint, the Freshdesk.
- e) All outcomes to those complaints must also be logged and a record of the actions taken to consider and resolve the complaint.
- f) The student must be notified of the outcome at this stage **not later than ten working days** from the date that the complaint was logged in the system.
- g) All complaints must be reported to the Head of Degree Programmes.

4.2. Stage 2 – Formal Review

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 for the formal stage must be submitted by the student in writing and within **ten working days** from the date that students was notified of the outcome of the informal stage, using the college complaint form. *The complaint form is attached to this document in the Appendix.*
- 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 of the formal stage will be sent in writing to the student, students, through a Completion of Internal Procedures (COIP) **not later than ten working days** from the date that the complaint form was received. The decision is binding within college.
- h) The whole process should not exceed **28 calendar days** from receipt of formal academic appeal till the issue of COIP.

4.3. Stage 3 - Referral to Open University review

1. If you are unhappy with the Appeals Panel decision at the College, you have the right to appeal to the validating partner, the Open University (OU). You will have **28 calendar days** from receipt of COIP to appeal to the OU. The review stage (three) will be received and managed by The Student Casework Office at the OU. The OU formal complaints procedures are detailed in section F1.27 and Appendix 1 of

the [Open University Handbook for Validated Awards 2024-25](#).

2. The Office for the Independent Adjudicator [OIA](#), stipulates that formal and review stages (stages two and three above) should be completed within **90 calendar days** of the student raising their complaint or academic appeal at the formal stage.

Appendix : Complaint 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.