



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

Complaints and Appeals Policy

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University of London Complaints and Appeals Policy

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The University aims to provide a high-quality experience to all its users. However, we acknowledge that they may sometimes become dissatisfied with a service we provide or fail to provide. There may be complaints about, for example, the quality of premises or facilities; the delivery of an academic programme or the administrative support which forms part of it; or the way in which regulations are applied. Also, some users may want to complain formally about the behaviour of other users or wish to appeal against decisions we have taken.

1.2 The Vice-Chancellor and the Board of Trustees are committed to having effective procedures in place for handling complaints from users of the University's services. For clarity –

- Complaints in this context is a broad term which extends to include, for example, academic appeals, allegations of harassment and/or sexual misconduct and complaints about service provision.
- Users in this context can be, for example, students, library users, accommodation contract holders, visitors to the University's premises, or the University's alumni and supporters.
- Staff who wish to make a complaint about harassment or misconduct or have a grievance should follow the appropriate Human Resources Policies and Procedures.

1.3 This is an overarching Policy. It is underpinned by a suite of Procedures which are listed in Annex A; these give more detailed guidance on the right procedure to follow according to the type of user and the type of complaint.

2. POLICY AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

2.1 This Policy aims to ensure that the University takes reasonable and effective steps to ensure that both the Policy itself and the Procedures that underpin it are serious, fair, practical and are sensitive to the situation of the person bringing the complaint as well as those who may be implicated in it.

2.2 All the Procedures should follow the principles developed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. Procedures under this policy should be:

- **accessible**, i.e. easy to find and to navigate, with clear cross-references between different procedures;
- **clear**, i.e. written in plain, easily intelligible English and available in different formats;
- **proportionate** – the norm should be a three-stage process with provision for (1) speedy informal resolution wherever possible, (2) formal investigation, and (3) formal review, with onward reference to bodies such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education where appropriate;
- **timely** – procedures should take normally no more than 90 calendar days for all three stages from start to finish, with special arrangements for speedy decisions in cases where users are facing significant stress or are feeling significant distress;
- **independent**, i.e. with decisions being taken by people without actual or perceived conflicts of interest and with decisions being taken by different people at different stages; and
- **confidential**, including with due regard to data protection.

2.4 Additionally our Procedures should be:

- **Informative:** Data on trends and issues and lessons learned from the use of these procedures should be used to improve the user experience, and the operational delivery of our services
- **Up to date and effective:** The Policy and Procedures must be subject to regular review and consultation with relevant stakeholders. They should align with these principles and with recognised good practice and external statutory, legal and regulatory requirements.
- **Resourced:** The operations of this Policy and its Procedures should be supported by appropriate resources.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Board of Trustees – the Board has ultimate responsibility/accountability, which it discharges by:

- receiving assurance that the University has effective mechanisms in place for the management of complaints and appeals
- approving policy and procedure as and when required by regulation or statutory duty.
- receiving an annual report that provides assurance that the University’s approach is efficient and effective; and
- receiving recommendations from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee where issues are raised at it

3.2 Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group –

- approving the University policy and procedures on Complaints and Appeals;
- ensuring this policy and its procedure are implemented properly across the University, so that our approach to all complaints and appeals is efficient and effective.
- receiving an annual report and also reporting onwards to the Board of Trustees;
- submitting reports to the Office for Students (OfS) when required; and
- considering significant issues arising from individual decisions of the OIA on complaints by students at the University.

3.3 Academic Board

- holding strategic oversight of academic and student related policy and procedures;
- receiving an annual report on student complaints and appeals as part of the quality assurance cycle
- directing action where significant issues or trends are evident from the nature, quantity and location of complaints and appeals

3.4 University Secretary –

- ensuring the consolidated schedule of Procedures (annex A) is kept up-to-date;
- arranging for an annual report on complaints to be made to the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group in the first instance;
- ensuring relevant academic and professional staff are trained and briefed as appropriate;
- ensuring that changes in legislation and in guidance from sector-wide bodies are reflected in this Policy and in relevant Procedures as appropriate, and that members of the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group are made aware of issues arising from these changes; and
- ensuring that arrangements are in place to gather user feedback for making improvements.

3.5 Staff with specific responsibilities. Some professional staff have specific responsibilities for or as part of the Procedures listed in annex A. These responsibilities include:

- reading all relevant documentation, including relevant pronouncements and initiatives from government and sector-wide bodies, and understanding and acting on their requirements or recommended good practice;
- attending training in this area as appropriate;
- ensuring that they keep appropriate records on the complaints they handle, including a log as set out in section 14 below; and
- updating the Procedures for which they are responsible.

3.6 All members of our staff have a general responsibility in this area. A complaint can arise, for example, in a discussion between a tutor and a student or between a member of reception staff and a visitor to the University's premises. Staff for this purpose can include e.g. freelance practitioners, student ambassadors, and any associated personnel acting as representatives of the University. Staff are responsible for:

- ensuring they understand the Procedure(s) that apply to the activities they are carrying out;
- responding sensitively to approaches from users that could escalate into a complaint, seeking to resolve them speedily and informally if possible, and making a note of the discussion and the outcome where appropriate;
- attending training in this area as appropriate; and
- co-operating fully with any internal or external investigations carried out into complaints or allegations under the University's Procedures.
- Taking action to improve processes, procedure or service provision when required or recommended as an outcome of a complaint or appeal.

4. REPORTING

4.1 The members of staff with designated responsibilities for the Procedures listed in annex A will keep an up-to-date log of the formal complaints they handle.

4.2 The University Secretary will arrange for an annual report to be made to the Vice- Chancellor's Executive Group and academic board on complaints made to the University over the previous year. The report will include (a) information on the number, type and outcome of complaints received, including an analysis by protected characteristics where feasible; (b) a review of the University's performance in handling them, including user feedback; (c) a review of the effectiveness of this Policy and the procedures which come under it; and (d) an analysis of common issues and the steps taken to address them.

Annex A

CONSOLIDATED SCHEDULE OF PROCEDURES

| <i>Procedure</i> | <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Coverage</i> | <i>Users</i> |
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| Academic Appeals Procedure | Head of Student Casework and Resolution | Review of an exam board decision on a student's progression, assessment, and award | Students registered directly with the University of London |
| Student Complaints (Service Provision) Procedure (s) | Head of Student Casework and Resolution | Complaints about service provision, for example <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the quality of the student learning experience• administrative support arrangements• facilities, events, advertising• policy and process• accessibility | Students registered directly with the University of London |
| Admission Appeals Procedure | Head of Student Casework and Resolution | Appeals against admissions decisions by UoLW or SAS | Applicants for programmes of study which require direct registration with the University of London. |

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| <p>Service User Complaints (Service Provision) Procedure</p> | <p>Director of Governance, Policy and Compliance</p> | <p>Complaints about service provision, from non-UoL student users if our services such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • library • visitors • donors • residents | <p>All other users of the University's services</p> |
| <p>Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Procedure (s)</p> <p><i>NB: We currently have supporting guidance for students (and staff) on preventing and responding to harassment – which directs to the new procedure for students and to appropriate grievance procedures for staff.</i></p> | <p>Director of Governance, Policy and Compliance</p> | <p>Complaints about harassment as defined in section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 and section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (in its entirety, and as interpreted by section 7 of the Act).and/ or Sexual Misconduct as defined .by section 26(2) of the Equality Act 2010; and ii. assault as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003; and iii. rape as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003.</p> | <p>Students registered directly with the University of London.</p> <p>Students resident in University of London halls</p> <p>Students of Federation members using Senate House and Senate House Library</p> <p>Visitors</p> <p>Users of Senate House Library</p> |
| <p>FOI or Data Protection rights complaints</p> | <p>Head of Information Governance</p> | <p>Complaints about the management of requests under the Freedom of Information Act or the handling of data subject rights under the Data Protection Act 2018.</p> | <p>FOI – all members of the public Subject Access Request Handling – anyone who has submitted a subject access request and whose personal data we process</p> |

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| <p>Public Interest Disclosure 'Whistleblowing' Policy and Procedure*</p> | <p>University Secretary</p> | <p>Any disclosure which, in the reasonable belief of the person making the disclosure, tends to show one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed, • that there is a failure or likely failure to comply with any legal obligation or with the Statutes, Ordinance and Regulations of the University • that a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur, • that the health or safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered, • that the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged, or • that information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed | <p>Any member of the University's staff</p> <p>Any current undergraduate or postgraduate taught student registered with the University.</p> <p>Any external members of the University's Board of Trustees or of its or other committees of the University.</p> <p>Anyone contractually connected with the University.</p> |
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