



# UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

## Procedure for Student Complaints and Academic Appeals

The University of London is dedicated to providing a high quality student experience. However, we recognise that students may sometimes become dissatisfied. Where concerns are brought to our attention we commit to investigating the matters raised, clarifying regulatory or procedural issues and, where appropriate, taking the necessary steps to provide remedy and redress.

If a student wishes to make a complaint or submit an academic appeal, they should follow the guidance below.

It is understood that making a complaint or submitting an academic appeal is a serious matter and it is treated as such by the University. All submissions under this Procedure are treated confidentially and students should be assured that raising a grievance of any kind will not negatively impact their academic progress or standing with the University.

It is our principal aim to resolve any complaint or problem quickly, fairly and simply at the informal stage (see Stage One, below).

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### A. Explanation of key terms:

#### 1. Student Complaint

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf. Appeals against applications of the regulations, or decisions made by us (including responses to progression and refund requests) are also considered as complaints.

#### 2. Academic Judgement

Academic judgement refers to the determination of a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential. You may not complain about, or appeal against, a matter of academic judgement. For example, disagreement with an assessment mark or classification decision is not grounds for appeal.

#### 3. Academic Appeal

We can only consider an academic appeal when it relates to:

- a. Serious circumstances which the Board of Examiners was not aware of when confirming the final mark, and which you were, for valid reasons, unable or unwilling to disclose earlier
- b. Procedural irregularities in the conduct of assessment
- c. Evidence of prejudice or bias

An academic appeal made on the above grounds will be considered in line with University of London [Regulation 1 Annex 3](#) (*Procedure for Consideration of Representations Concerning Decisions of Boards of Examiners*) and should be submitted to [A&C@london.ac.uk](mailto:A&C@london.ac.uk) in line with Stage Two of the *Procedure*.

4. Throughout the *Procedure for Student Complaints and Academic Appeals* (the *Procedure*), 'we' 'us' and 'our' mean the University of London; 'you' and 'your' mean the complainant or appellant.
5. '**Working day**' is defined as a day when the University is open for business and excludes public holidays and seasonal closures, such as Christmas and Easter.

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## **B. Guidance for using the Procedure**

### **1. Who can use the Procedure? <sup>1</sup>**

- a) Any current student
- b) Groups of current students
- c) Recent alumni, when within the timeframes indicated below

### **2. Timeframe for making a submission**

A complaint or academic appeal should be raised as soon as possible and within 28 calendar days (4 weeks) of an incident taking place, or of you becoming aware of the issue. For an academic appeal this would usually be 4 weeks after your release of results. After that period, the basis of any complaint or appeal shall normally be deemed to have lapsed.

### **3. The Procedure does cover: <sup>2</sup>**

- a) Complaints about service provision (for example, processes relating to registration, examination, enquiry management)
- b) Complaints about the quality of the student learning experience (for example, study materials, VLE provision)
- c) Appeals against the application of the regulations (for example, progression or transfer decisions)
- d) Appeals against administrative decisions made by us (for example, refund requests)
- e) Academic appeals
- f) Allegations of harassment

### **4. The Procedure does not cover: <sup>2</sup>**

- a) Appeals against exam results. You cannot appeal against academic judgement.
- b) Appeals against the outcome of disciplinary processes (including assessment offence penalties). Please refer to the appeals process within the appropriate procedure.
- c) Complaints from anonymous individuals or from an un-attributable source.

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<sup>1</sup> This procedure does not apply to students at Member Institutions of the University, or at the University of London in Paris. Those students should follow the procedures published by the body they are registered with.

<sup>2</sup> These lists are indicative and are not intended to be exhaustive

- d) Appeals against admissions decisions. Please see the [Admissions Appeals Procedure](#).
- e) Complaints about Teaching Centres. You must follow the Teaching Centre's internal complaints procedure in the first instance. The University may consider a submission from you if it meets the criteria under the *Procedure for handling student complaints against Recognised Teaching Centres*. Please contact [A&C@london.ac.uk](mailto:A&C@london.ac.uk) for guidance.

### C. The Procedure

At all stages of the *Procedure* you are invited to communicate clearly and concisely, identifying the core issue(s) and stating what your desired outcome is. This will help us when responding to your submission. It is also important that you provide any evidence you have to support your case as early as possible in the process.

#### **1. Stage One: Informal Stage**

*Local resolution within the appropriate department of the University.*

- 1.1 In most instances your initial contact with us should be through the 'Ask A Question' tab on the Student Portal. Students of the School of Advanced Study (SAS) should seek advice and guidance through the Registry. Students registered on University of London distance learning programmes through SOAS should contact the relevant student services office for their programme.
- 1.2 Complaints should first be raised, wherever possible, with the member of staff you have been dealing with on the issue in question.
- 1.3 If you are not yet in correspondence with a member of staff, please open a new query.
- 1.4 Consideration of a complaint at this stage may involve referral to other members of staff in order to seek resolution. It is normally expected that if a complaint cannot be resolved at the early stages, it will be escalated to the line manager of that functional area before Stage One can be considered complete. It is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure that complaints relating to their department are resolved in a fair and expeditious manner.
- 1.5 A record of all correspondence and telephone calls will be maintained.

#### **2. Stage Two: Formal Stage**

*Investigation by the Associate Director: Student Affairs, acting on behalf of the the Director of Operations and Deputy Chief Executive<sup>3</sup>.*

- 2.1 The following matters can be referred to Stage Two:
  - Complaints not resolved at Stage One
  - Academic appeals – in line with [Regulation 1 Annex 3](#)
  - Allegations of harassment – in line with [Guidance for Students on Preventing and Responding to Harassment](#)
- 2.2 To be considered at Stage Two you must submit a fully completed copy of the Stage Two submission form, available from [A&C@london.ac.uk](mailto:A&C@london.ac.uk)

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<sup>3</sup> Director of Operations and Deputy Chief Executive of the School of Advanced Study, or, of the University of London Worldwide, as appropriate

- 2.3 Where you are requesting escalation of a complaint not resolved at Stage One of the *Procedure* your submission must be made within 28 calendar days (4 weeks) of your Stage One outcome and include details of efforts already made to resolve the issue and explain why you remain dissatisfied.
- 2.4 In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Associate Director: Student Affairs, a case that has not completed Stage One may be considered at Stage Two if there is a clear reason for doing so. If you believe this applies to you, you should explain why in your submission.
- 2.5 You will normally receive an acknowledgement by email within three working days and, following a review of your submission, confirmation of whether it has been accepted at Stage Two.
- 2.6 If your submission is not accepted, or further information is required from you in order for a decision to be made, you will be informed of the next steps.
- 2.7 An investigation will be conducted by the Associate Director: Student Affairs, or a case-handler acting on their behalf. This may include the gathering and verification of evidence, further consultation with involved parties, requests for additional information from the student, and escalation (for example, to the Programme Director, Chair of the Board of Examiners or Director of Operations) to obtain the necessary authority for a pending outcome, where appropriate.
- 2.8 You will receive a letter from the Associate Director: Student Affairs informing you of the outcome, normally within 20 working days of receipt of your case.
- 2.9 If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will notify you of the revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.

### **3. Stage Three: Review Stage**

*Complaints Resolution Panel on behalf of Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) or the Dean of the School of Advanced Study, with the delegated authority of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London.*

- 3.1 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage Two, you can escalate the matter to Stage Three on one or more of the following grounds:
  - That the procedures outlined above were not followed;
  - That the outcome at Stage Two was not reasonable
  - That evidence which could not reasonably have been made available during Stage One or Stage Two has come to light;
- 3.2 To be considered at Stage Three you must submit a fully completed copy of the Stage Three submission form available from [ac-stage3@london.ac.uk](mailto:ac-stage3@london.ac.uk) within 14 calendar days (2 weeks) of the outcome at Stage Two of the *Procedure*.
- 3.3 Your case will be referred to the Chair of the Complaints Resolution Panel who will determine whether the criteria (noted at 3.1 and 3.2) are satisfied.
- 3.4 If the criteria are not satisfied, you will receive an outcome letter, normally within 10 working days, and a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued from the Office of the Vice Chancellor.
- 3.5 If the criteria are satisfied, the full Complaints Resolution Panel will be convened.
- 3.6 The Complaints Resolution Panel, appointed by the *Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) or the Dean of the School of Advanced Study, as appropriate*, will

consist of a Chair and secretary, a member of staff from within an appropriate department of the University, and a student member.

- 3.7 No member of the Complaints Resolution Panel will have a personal or other significant interest in the case to be considered.
- 3.8 The Complaints Resolution Panel will be presented with all documentary evidence relating to your case, including records of consideration at Stages One and Two and your Stage Three submission, in order to make a decision.
- 3.9 You will not be requested, nor have any right, to appear before or address the Complaints Resolution Panel, nor to appoint a representative to do so on your behalf.
- 3.10 The Complaints Resolution Panel will meet within 20 working days of receipt of the case at Stage Three and you will be informed in writing of the outcome within 10 working days of the meeting. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued from the Office of the Vice Chancellor.
- 3.11 If the panel will take longer than the agreed timescales, we will tell you. We will notify you of revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.

#### **4. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

- 4.1 Following completion of all stages of the *Procedure*, if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you can submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
- 4.2 Please note that the OIA require a Completion of Procedures letter, issued from the office of the Vice-Chancellor, before a complaint is considered eligible under the rules of their scheme.
- 4.3 For details of the OIA, the rules of their scheme and how to make a submission, please refer to their website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

*approved May 2019*