



# **Student Complaints Procedure**

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## **Student Complaints Procedure**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about, for example, something we have done or not done, a decision we have made, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf. A complaint submitted under this Procedure will usually be about something that has a direct impact on the student making the complaint.

Where there are more general concerns about University policies, actions or the student experience, other feedback mechanisms are available, such as module evaluation and student experience surveys.

If you wish to submit a complaint, you must follow the procedure detailed in this document.

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## **1. Who can make a complaint under this procedure?**

- 1.1 Any current undergraduate or postgraduate student registered with the University, or recent alumni when within the timeframes indicated in Section 3.
- 1.2 Complaints should be made by individuals, on their own behalf.
- 1.3 If, for good reason, you are unable or reluctant to make your complaint yourself, you can submit a request for a third party to represent you. We would need you to send us an e-mail from your University of London e-mail address to this effect.
- 1.4 In certain exceptional circumstances we may allow a complaint from a group of students about the same matter if they have all been directly affected by it. In such cases the group should nominate one student to act as its representative, who will submit the initial request and then act as the main point of contact during the process if it is accepted. The group's representative must provide a list including the names, email addresses and student numbers of all signatories.

## **2. Who cannot make a complaint using this procedure?**

- 2.1 Applicants or offer holders. If you have not yet completed registration you should raise any concerns through the Enquiry Hub.
- 2.2 Students studying at the University of London Institute (ULIP) in Paris should seek advice from ULIP about how to make a complaint. Currently ULIP uses the procedures of Queen Mary University of London.
- 2.3 Students registered for their studies with other higher education providers, including the University of London's federation members, should use the procedures of the provider they are registered with.

## **3. What is the timeframe for submitting a complaint?**

- 3.1 Complaints should be submitted as soon as possible after the event in question, as this facilitates timely investigation and enables the University to take prompt corrective action where necessary.
- 3.2 At the most, complaints must be submitted within **3 calendar months** of the event giving rise to the complaint. Complaints submitted beyond this timeframe will normally be deemed to be out of time and will not be considered unless there are compelling reasons supported by evidence to demonstrate why the complaint was not raised within the required timeframes.
- 3.3 Where a complaint is deemed out of time, the University will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter on request, noting the reason why the complaint was not considered and advising on how to make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education.

#### **4. What can you make a complaint about?**

- 4.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about, for example, something we have done or not done, a decision we have made, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf. This might include: not meeting obligations outlined in regulations, student handbooks or promotional material; concerns about the delivery or administration of a programme, the quality of learning resources, facilities or services; events that have caused disruption to the normal delivery of a course, service or other aspect of the student experience.
- 4.2 A complaint submitted under this Procedure will usually be about something that has a direct impact on the student making the complaint. Where there are more general concerns about University policies, actions or the student experience, other feedback mechanisms are available, such as module evaluation and student experience surveys.

#### **5. What can you not make a complaint about?**

- 5.1 You may not make a complaint using this procedure where another more appropriate procedure exists.
- 5.2 This Procedure does not cover the following:
- a. Complaints about academic outcomes, or other decisions of the Board of Examiners such as progression or classification. These are covered by the *Academic Appeals Procedure*.
  - b. Allegations of academic misconduct. These are covered by the *Assessment Offence Procedures*
  - c. Allegations of non-academic misconduct against students or other users who do not behave in the ways we expect of them in contexts other than examinations. These are covered by *Ordinance 17: Code of Student Discipline*.
  - d. Complaints about the outcome of a disciplinary process.
  - e. Complaints about the final conclusions reached by the individual or panel which considered your mitigating circumstances or any reasonable adjustments you requested for your assessment(s) or study.
  - f. Complaints about Recognised Teaching Centres. These should be managed by the Recognised Teaching Centre's own complaints procedure.
  - g. Complaints against admission decisions. These are covered by the *Admissions Appeals Procedures*.
  - h. Concern about a decision made under other specific regulations or procedures.

#### **6. How do you make a complaint?**

- 6.1 In all cases you should first seek an informal resolution to your concerns (Stage 1). This is normally the most effective approach and will involve the matter you have raised being directed to the member of staff best able to deal with it. Further details are provided in Section 7.2.
- 6.2 If you have attempted an informal resolution and are still unhappy you should

request formal consideration of your complaint at Stage 2. Further details are provided in Section 7.3.

- 6.3 When making a complaint, please write clearly and concisely identifying the core issue(s) and telling us what your desired outcome is. It is also important that if you have any documentary evidence you provide it to us as early as possible in the process.
- 6.4 If you require any reasonable adjustments to enable engagement with any part of the process, please let the Student Resolution and Casework team know as soon as you are able by emailing [A&C@london.ac.uk](mailto:A&C@london.ac.uk).

## **7. How will your complaint be handled?**

### **7.1 General points**

- a. We have given some indicative timings for each stage below. In total, we will aim to ensure that the process takes no longer than 90 days from receiving your formal complaint to the end of Stage 3.
- b. We will do our best to act more quickly where, for example, the impact of the issues raised might have detrimental consequences for your health or where you are feeling significant distress.
- c. We advise you to make progression decisions (for example, by meeting registration and payment deadlines) based on your current circumstances whilst you await the outcome of a complaint. If your complaint is upheld and requires any corrective action, we will take any appropriate steps to ensure you are not financially or academically disadvantaged.
- d. Making the complaint will not have a negative impact on your standing with the University unless it is deemed to be vexatious in the context of other issues and behaviours.
- e. We will treat your complaint confidentially and information from it will only be securely shared with those involved in the process and only to the extent it is relevant to their involvement.

### **7.2 Stage 1 – Informal resolution within the appropriate department of the University**

- 7.21 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.
- 7.22 Complaints should first be raised, wherever possible, with the member of staff you have been dealing with on the issue in question. If you are not yet in correspondence with a member of staff, please open a new query.
- 7.23 Consideration of a complaint at this stage may involve referral to other members of staff to seek resolution. It is normally expected that if a complaint cannot be resolved at the early stages, it will be escalated to the manager of that functional area before Stage 1 can be considered complete. It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that complaints relating to their department are resolved fairly and promptly.

7.24 A record of all correspondence and telephone calls should be maintained by the area handling the complaint.

### **7.3 Stage 2 – Formal investigation**

7.31 To be considered at Stage 2, you should email [A&C@london.ac.uk](mailto:A&C@london.ac.uk) to outline your complaint and request a Stage 2 submission form. Stage 2 is initiated by the submission of a completed form.

7.32 Where you are requesting escalation of a complaint not resolved at Stage 1 your submission must be made within 28 days (4 weeks) of conclusion at Stage 1 and include details of efforts already made to resolve the issue and explain why you remain dissatisfied.

7.33 In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Head of Student Resolution and Casework, a case that has not completed Stage 1 may be considered at Stage 2 if there is a clear reason for doing so. If you believe this applies to you, you should explain why in your submission.

7.34 You will normally receive confirmation of whether your submission has been accepted at Stage 2 within 7 days.

7.35 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.

7.36 An investigation will be conducted by the Student Resolution and Casework team 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 you, and escalation (for example, to the Programme Director, Chair of the Board of Examiners or Senior Management) to obtain the necessary authority for a pending outcome, where appropriate.

7.37 You will receive a letter from the Student Resolution and Casework team informing you of the outcome, normally within 28 days of receipt of your case. The outcome letter will set out the reasons for the decision and any actions that will be taken by the University.

### **7.4 Stage 3 – Review by the Complaints Resolution Panel**

7.41 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage 2, you can escalate the matter to Stage 3 for review on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. that the procedures set out in Stage 1 and Stage 2 were not followed properly;
- b. that new evidence, which could not reasonably have been made available during Stage 1 or Stage 2, has come to light and that it might have had a bearing on the decisions we took earlier;
- c. that the outcome at Stage 2 was unreasonable.

- 7.42 To be considered at Stage 3 you must first request a submission form from [ac-stage3@london.ac.uk](mailto:ac-stage3@london.ac.uk) and then submit a fully completed copy of the form within 14 days of the date on your Stage 2 outcome letter.
- 7.43 Your case will be referred to the Chair of the Complaints Resolution Panel who will determine whether one or more of the criteria (noted at 7.41) are met.
- 7.44 If the criteria are not met, you will receive an outcome letter, normally within 14 days of submission to Stage 3. A Completion of Procedures letter will follow from the University Secretary or appropriate delegate.
- 7.45 If the criteria are met, the full Complaints Resolution Panel will be convened. The Panel will normally meet within 28 days of receipt of the case at Stage 3. It will normally conduct its business either in person or by electronic means. However, in exceptional circumstances, it is open to the Chair to decide that its business can proceed by correspondence if there is a clear reason for doing so.
- 7.46 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.
- 7.47 The Complaints Resolution Panel, appointed by the University Secretary or an appropriate delegate, will consist of:
- Chair
  - Secretary
  - A member of staff from within an appropriate department of the University
  - A student member
- 7.48 No member of the Complaints Resolution Panel will have a personal or other significant interest in the case to be considered.
- 7.49 The Complaints Resolution Panel will be presented with all documentary evidence relating to your case, including records of consideration at Stages 1 and 2 and your Stage 3 submission, in order to make a decision. You will be provided with a copy of the documentation that will be considered by the Panel.
- 7.50 You are entitled to present your case to the Complaints Resolution Panel in person or through online video conferencing arrangements, depending on the format of the meeting, or by providing a written statement. You will be informed of the date of the meeting and the arrangements for attending.
- 7.51 You may be accompanied by a companion in a support capacity, but this person will not be a legal representative and will not normally be permitted to present on your behalf.
- 7.52 If you do attend the meeting, the Panel will be permitted to ask you questions and seek clarifications relating to your written and verbal submissions. You will not be able to take part in or observe the deliberations of the Panel.
- 7.53 You will be informed in writing of the outcome normally within 14 days of the

meeting. A Completion of Procedures letter will follow from the University Secretary or appropriate delegate.

- 7.54 In exceptional circumstances, when the criteria are met and the validity of the case is manifestly clear, the Chair of the Complaints Resolution Panel may uphold your complaint and decide on the outcome without referral to the full Panel. In such cases you will normally receive an outcome letter within 14 days of escalating your complaint to Stage 3.

## **8. What happens if you remain unhappy?**

- 8.1 If Stage 3 has been completed and you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may be able to take your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education.
- 8.2 For more information on the OIA, including how to make a submission, please refer to their website [Can you complain to us? - OIA](#) and [How to complain to us - OIA](#).
- 8.3 Please note that the OIA will normally only accept your complaint (a) if you have a Completion of Procedures letter from us and (b) if you submit the complaint within one year of the decision you are complaining about.

## **9. Wellbeing support**

- 9.1 For University of London distance learning students, the [Wellbeing Hub](#) provides support through a range of articles and other resources, including information on accessing our mental health app TalkCampus, a peer support network with access to a 24/7 crisis helpline.
- 9.2 For School of Advanced Study students, please consult the [Health and Wellbeing](#) pages on the SAS website, which contains advice, links to support, appropriate contact details and information on seeking counselling.