



Brunel
University
London

STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Maintained by:	Student Complaints Officer
Owned By:	Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals
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Brunel University London's Complaints Procedure for students

1. Introduction

The University welcomes the views of its students. It recognises however that there may be occasions when a student is dissatisfied with an aspect of their experience at the University. It is the University's policy that such concerns are dealt with in a fair and transparent way that respects the rights of all individuals involved. In devising this Procedure, we have taken into account the provisions of:

- 1.1 The [Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals](#) published by the [OIA](#) in December 2014.
- 1.2 [Chapter B9 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) published by the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#) in April 2013.
- 1.3 Competition and Markets Authority [Higher education: consumer law advice for providers](#), published 12 March 2015.

In the operation of the processes set out in this Procedure the University will remain mindful of its legal obligations, including its duty of care and its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 where appropriate to make reasonable adjustments.

2. What matters are dealt with under the Complaints Procedure?

- 2.1 One or more students can use this Procedure to express: *'dissatisfaction ... about the University's action or lack of action or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University'*
- 2.2 Concerns and complaints can be made under this Procedure about the following:
 - 2.2.1 non-academic services provided by the University;
 - 2.2.2 the administration or delivery of a programme;
 - 2.2.3 the facilities or learning resources provided by the University;
 - 2.2.4 failure to meet obligations set out in programmes, college or student handbooks;
 - 2.2.5 failure to follow published regulations, procedures and / or policies.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and, where appropriate, other matters will be considered under this Procedure.

- 2.3 Students on placement are entitled to bring complaints about their placement experience should they feel it is necessary. Whether the complaint is dealt with by the University, by the employer, or by the placement provider is decided by which organisation has responsibility for the incident being complained about. For example, complaints about human resource issues will be dealt with by the employer or placement provider, but academic and/or University pastoral care matters will be dealt with by the University. A student who wishes to raise a

complaint regarding their placement experience, but is unsure who has responsibility for dealing with the complaint, should contact their University Placement Convenor / Coordinator in the first instance. If a student thinks they are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against whilst on placement, they should refer to the [Equality Policy: Student Work Placement Policy and Student Work Placement Guideline](#)

- 2.4 Students studying at partner institutions can raise a complaint under this Procedure if it relates to the academic provision of their programme. If the complaint does not relate to the academic provision of their programme, for example, complaints about accommodation, they should raise their complaint with the partner institution under its own complaints procedure.
- 2.6 This Procedure cannot be used to determine concerns or complaints about matters of academic judgment. 'Academic judgement' is a term found in Part 2 of the Higher Education Act 2004. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) states that academic judgment is not any judgment made by an academic, but a judgment that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice. For example, a judgment about assessment, a degree classification, professional suitability, research methodology, or course content/outcomes and how best to teach them, will normally be academic judgment and another procedure may apply. If matters of Academic Judgment are raised in a Stage 2 complaint, the Student Complaints Officer will not be able to decide if it should be upheld or not. However, the Student Complaints Officer may ask the Department for their comments on the academic issue as part of the Stage 2 investigation.

3. Guidance on the Complaints Procedure

- 3.1 Before submitting a complaint, students are strongly advised to look at the ['Guidance to the Complaints Procedure'](#). The ['Guidance to the Complaints Procedure'](#) provides important information regarding the operational conditions and core principles of the Complaints Procedure.
- 3.2 Further information on the Complaints Procedure can be obtained from the Office for Student Complaints, Conduct and Appeals, who can be contacted by:
Email: student-complaints@brunel.ac.uk
- 3.3 Independent advice on raising a concern/complaint can be obtained from the Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) in the Union of Brunel Students. They can be contacted on 01895 269169, via their online enquiry form [here](#) or by email to advice@brunel.ac.uk.

Stage 1 - Early Resolution

- 4.1 Students should first raise concerns informally with staff at the point the concern arises, such as their Tutor, the Programme Director, their Departmental Senior Tutor, their Placement Tutor, Supervisors or the Head of a University Service. Students may also informally contact their College Education Manager and/or Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) about their concern by emailing the relevant email inbox as follows:

Complaints-cbass@brunel.ac.uk

Complaints-cedps@brunel.ac.uk

Complaints-chls@brunel.ac.uk

Students can also provide feedback on their programme to their Student Representative who can raise issues at Student Staff Liaison Committees, (SSLCs).

- 4.2 **Concerns should be raised as soon as possible after the incident being complained about. Informal concerns which are raised at Stage 1 more than 3 months after the incident occurred may be deemed to be out of time and staff may not consider them.**
- 4.3 Stage 1 is designed to address straightforward concerns locally and as swiftly as possible. This might be done, for example, by face to face discussion with a member of staff. **If the concern is not satisfactorily resolved through these discussions, students must submit a Stage 2 complaint within three months of the incident causing the concern.**
- 4.4 Where proportionate to do so, students will be provided with a written outcome at the end of Stage 1. Where appropriate, a written record will be kept of the actions taken to resolve the concern and the response communicated to the student by the Department.
- 4.5 Students may also wish to contact the University Mediation Service if they feel it would helpful to speak to an independent mediator about their complaint. Further information about mediation can be accessed [here](#).
- 4.6 **If the concern is time-sensitive (concerning an exam or other activity) and needs a prompt decision or is complex and/or serious and needs detailed investigation, students should contact the Student Complaints Officer immediately in accordance with the Stage 2 procedure outlined below.**

5. Stage 2

- 5.1 To submit a Stage 2 complaint, students must complete a [Complaint Action Form](#) and provide supporting evidence. **The Complaints Action Form and evidence must be sent to the Student Complaint Officer at student-complaints@brunel.ac.uk within 3 months of the incident complained about.**

5.2. The Student Complaints Officer will acknowledge the Stage 2 complaint, and will first consider if the complaint is eligible under this Procedure. In doing so, the Student Complaints Officer will consider the following:

5.2.1 Whether the Stage 2 complaint was submitted within 3 months of the incident giving rise to the complaint;

5.2.2 If not, whether the student has given a good reason for not submitting the Stage 2 complaint on time;

5.2.3 Whether the complaint falls within the scope of this Procedure or should be considered under another procedure.

The Student Complaints Officer will also consider whether the issues were considered at Stage 1 of the Procedure and/or if the complaint is suitable for mediation. In these cases, the Student Complaints Officer may refer the matter for consideration under these processes in consultation with the student.

5.3 If the Student Complaints Officer decides that the Stage 2 complaint has been submitted out of time, without a good reason, he/she will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter to confirm that the University's procedures have ended.

5.4 If the Stage 2 complaint is eligible under this Procedure, the Student Complaints Officer may arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the complaint. The Student Complaints Officer may ask another member of staff to be present at the meeting and the student will be informed of this. Students are referred to the ['Guidance to the Complaints Procedure'](#) for information about who may attend the meeting with them as their representative.

5.5 The Student Complaints Officer will normally ask staff involved in the complaint to respond to the issues raised. **The Student Complaints Officer will complete his/her investigation of the Stage 2 complaint as promptly as possible and will normally respond to the student in writing within 60 days of the receipt.** If the investigation cannot be concluded within 60 days, the student will be informed of the progress of the investigation and will be given a revised date for the formal written response.

5.6 The formal written response will give reasons for the decision made, details regarding how to progress the complaint and how to access support from [the ARC](#).

6. Stage 3

6.1 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint may request a review by the Chief Student & Staff Services Officer providing they can demonstrate one or more of the following grounds:

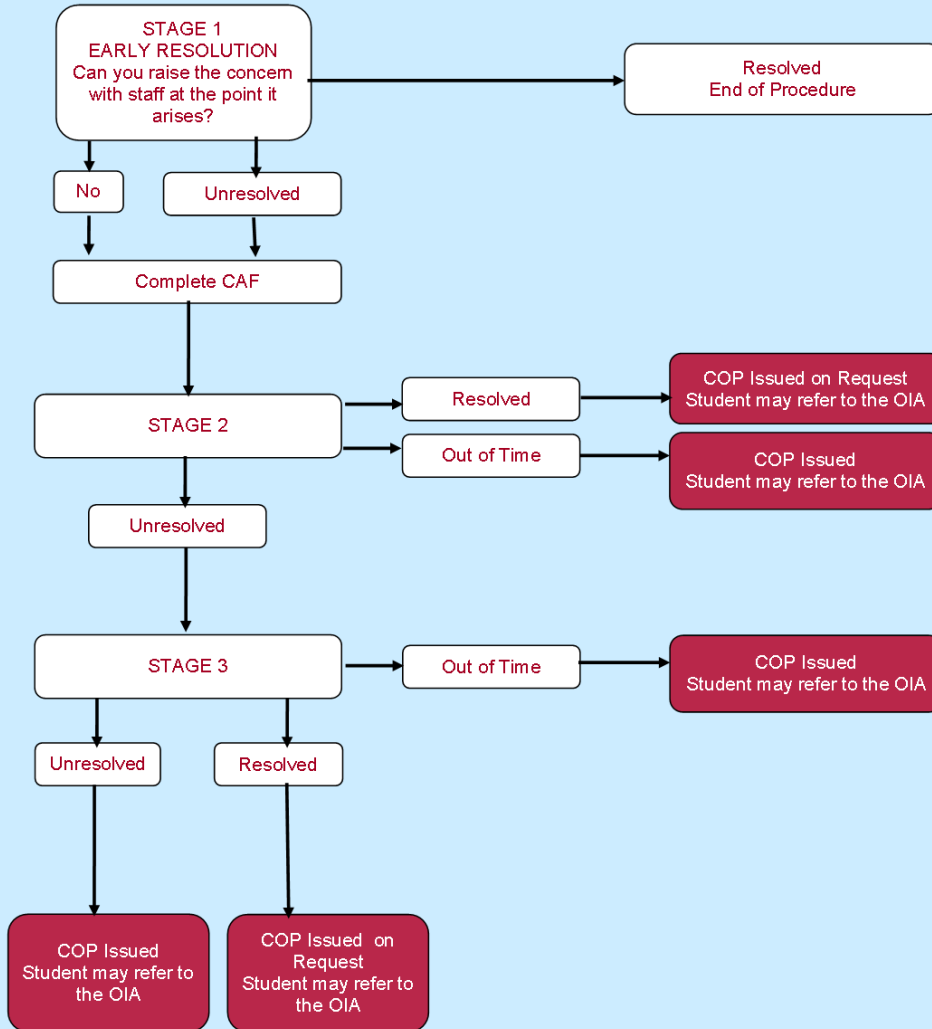
6.1.1 there has been a material procedural irregularity which has demonstrably affected the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint;

- 6.1.2 the outcome at Stage 2 is unreasonable given the facts of the case;
- 6.1.3 there is material new evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide when the Stage 2 complaint was made and which would have significantly affected the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint.
- 6.2 **The Stage 3 complaint should be made in writing and submitted within 14 days of the date of the letter of outcome of the Stage 2 complaint from the Student Complaints Officer.** A Stage 3 complaint will be dismissed and not considered if it is not submitted within this time without good reason. Stage 2 must be completed before a complaint can be submitted at Stage 3.
- 6.3 The Stage 3 complaint should identify the ground(s) for review (see paragraph 6.1 above), and provide a clear explanation of why the ground for review applies and the evidence in support. The Stage 3 complaint should be sent to the Chief Student & Staff Services Officer at COOcomplaints@brunel.ac.uk with the following:
- 6.3.1 a copy of the Stage 2 complaint and evidence;
- 6.3.2 a copy of the letter of outcome from the Student Complaints Officer;
- 6.3.3 evidence to demonstrate the grounds of review set out in paragraph 6.1 above.
- 6.4 The Chief Student & Staff Services Officer will acknowledge the Stage 3 complaint and may then need to contact the student again to clarify matters or obtain further information.
- 6.5 The Chief Student & Staff Services Officer will not normally reconsider or reinvestigate the Stage 2 complaint issues. The Chief Student & Staff Services Officer will decide if the grounds for review have been established and whether further action needs to be taken by the University. Further action could include referring the matter back to Stage 2 for reconsideration and / or overturning the outcome at Stage 2. The Chief Student & Staff Services Officer may make additional enquiries with other staff members, but will not normally consider new complaints which do not fall within the Stage 3 grounds for review.
- 6.6 **The Chief Student & Staff Services Officer will normally complete the investigation of the Stage 3 complaint and respond to the student within 14 days of receiving it.** The written response will give reasons for the decision made. If additional time is required, the student will be kept informed about the progress of the review, and he/she will be given a revised date for response.
- 6.7 If the Chief Student & Staff Services Officer finds that no further action should be taken by the University, a Completion of Procedures Letter will be issued. The Completion of Procedures Letter will confirm that the University's internal complaints procedure has been exhausted.

7. External Review: Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

- 7.1 Under the Higher Education Act 2004 the University subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint he/she may be able to apply for a review of the complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, \(OIA\)](#) providing that the complaint is eligible under its Rules.
- 7.2 The OIA's leaflet, An Introduction to the OIA for Students can be downloaded from http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/34396/oia_intro_leaflet.pdf. A student will usually require a Completion of Procedures Letter confirming the completion of the University's internal procedures when submitting a complaint to the OIA.
- 7.3 **Should a student decide to make a complaint to the OIA, then his/her OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA by the date set out in the Completion of Procedures letter (for Completion of Procedures letters issued after 9 July 2015, this is date is 12 months from the date of the Completion of Procedures letter).**
- 7.3 Further guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>. Students may also wish to seek advice from [the ARC](#) about taking a complaint to the OIA.
- 7.4 More details about the OIA, including full information about how to apply and downloadable application forms can be found at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.
- 7.5 Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the University's internal procedures.

FLOW DIAGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



MEDIATION

KEY

CAF = COMPLAINT ACTION FORM

COP = COMPLETION OF PROCEDURES LETTER

OIA = OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION