



University of the Arts London

Student Complaints procedures

Introduction

1. The University has clear procedures for dealing with student complaints which form part of its quality assurance system and reflect current best practice. Complaints from students are treated seriously without negatively affecting student rights or impartial judgement on academic progress or any other aspect of student life at the University.
2. These procedures are a means by which the University can resolve student complaints and address shortcomings. Through the procedures students enrolled or registered at the University may seek redress, wherever possible, for any disadvantage, injury, damage or distress caused by the University. The procedures are relevant to all categories of complaint and not only in relation to the University's requirement to provide teaching and facilitate learning.
3. **University Secretary and Registrar.** The complaints procedures are approved by the Academic Board and managed by the Office of the University Secretary and Registrar. It is the University Secretary and Registrar who has the final responsibility for the procedures together with the authority to adjudicate upon any questions raised by a student, the Students' Union or member of staff in relation to any aspect of the procedures. In all cases the decision of the University Secretary and Registrar shall be final.
4. **Student Complaints and Appeals Officers.** The Student Complaints Officers within each college and central support area have responsibility for the operation and management of the student complaints system at local level. It is the responsibility of Student Complaints Officers to manage, co-ordinate and monitor student complaints and ensure that the college or central support area implements the University Complaints procedures in full and liaises with the University Complaints Unit. The Student Complaints Officers shall provide the relevant Pro Vice Chancellor or Head of Service with a regular update of current cases.
5. **Students' Union.** A student complainant may obtain representation from the Students' Union. The Students' Union can also provide procedural advice to complainants.
6. **Disability.** Disabled students who require reasonable adjustments in order to undertake a complaint should contact the University Secretary and Registrar's Office directly. Reasonable adjustments will be arranged in consultation with the student and where necessary the Central Disability team, Mental Health Adviser or College Disability Officers. Students may be asked to provide a copy of their Needs Assessment Report in order to inform the process.

The Procedures

General Guidance

7. All students should feel that they can bring issues of concern, difficulties or differences of opinion to the attention of the University. Students have a right to expect that they will be listened to and that their concerns will be investigated properly and dealt with fairly without fear of recrimination or penalty.
8. The University will always try to deal with concerns quickly and informally in order to seek an appropriate resolution. Where this is not possible the concern or problem must be dealt with formally. In such cases the complaint has to be lodged in writing using the Student Complaint Form. Forms can be obtained from College/School Offices, from the Students' Union or on the intranet.
9. Complaints should be submitted as soon as possible and any delay in submitting a complaint will need to be fully explained and may be grounds for rejection.
10. A student may raise a matter on his/her own or as part of a group. If students wish to lodge a complaint as a group a spokesperson should be identified.
11. If a complaint is considered to be vexatious or without reasonable purpose then the complaint will be referred to the University Secretary and Registrar for review and a response to the student or students concerned. A Completion of Procedures letter will be sent to the complainant within 14 working days of the University Secretary and Registrar making his/her decision.
12. **Issues excluded from the procedures**
 - 12.1 Complaints raised anonymously are not considered under the procedures. *(In certain exceptional circumstances anonymous complaints may be investigated at the sole discretion of the University Secretary and Registrar).*
 - 12.2 Third party complaints.
 - 12.3 Complaints submitted by someone acting on behalf of the student unless the University Secretary and Registrar considers it fair and reasonable in all the circumstances.
 - 12.4 Complaints about any aspect of the admissions process should be raised under the Admissions Procedure.
 - 12.5 Complaints from former students should be raised with the University Secretary and Registrar's Office directly. All complaints must be raised within 3 months of a student leaving the University and complaints received after this time will not normally be

ual:

considered. Former students must provide good reasons for not raising the complaint whilst they were at the university. The University Secretary & Registrar has the sole discretion to consider complaints outside the time limit.

- 12.6 Complaints raised by students enrolled at another institution on a course leading to an award of the University. *(Except in circumstances where students who are enrolled at another institution have reached the end of that institution's procedures and demonstrate that there was a material or administrative or procedural error in the operation of the other institution's procedures and the University Secretary and Registrar considers it fair and reasonable in all the circumstances to permit a complaint.)*
- 12.7 Complaints in relation to the decisions of examination boards. Such matters are covered by the regulations for the review of and appeals against the decisions of an examination board.
- 12.8 Complaints in relation to the outcomes of student disciplinary hearings which are covered by the student conduct regulations. Students have a right of appeal against the findings of a disciplinary hearing through a separate procedure.
- 12.9 Complaints against fellow students unless those students are acting as agents or employees of the University or the Students' Union. Such matters can be addressed through the student conduct regulations.
- 12.10 Complaints against the Students' Union in relation to the Students' Union trading activities or its role as a licensee.
- 12.11 Complaints against the Students' Union in relation to the conduct of elections. Such complaints will be addressed by the University Secretary and Registrar in his/her capacity as Returning Officer.

Raising a concern

13. Students have the opportunity to raise concerns without the requirement for submission of a formal complaint. If students wish to raise a concern they should contact their College Student Complaints and Appeals Officer (SCO)
14. The SCO shall acknowledge receipt of the concern and will take reasonable steps to address it by providing information or explanation, suggesting

ual:

solutions or contacting relevant members of staff. The SCO will keep a record of basic information on the concern such as the Student's name, ID number, course title and a brief summary of the issues raised.

15. The consideration and response to the concern should take no longer than 10 working days.
16. The student will receive a response to the concern they have raised, and they will be directed to submit a Formal Complaint if they are dissatisfied with the response.
17. Raising a concern is an optional stage of the procedure, and students may begin with the submission of a Formal Complaint if they consider this appropriate.

Making a Formal Complaint

Formal Complaint:

18. Students are required to complete a Student Complaint Form and submit it to the designated Student Complaints Officer (SCO), one of whom is located within each college and central service department.
19. The Formal Complaint will be considered by the Dean on behalf of the Head of College/Pro Vice Chancellor.
20. The SCO shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 7 working days.
21. If in the view of the SCO the complaint is vexatious or without substance or merit they shall consult with the University Complaints Unit (UCU) and either:
 - (i) Dismiss the complaint summarily; or,
 - (ii) Refer the complaint for investigation
22. In each instance in 20 above the SCO shall notify the complainant in writing of its decision within 14 working days of making the decision. If the UCU rejects the complaint then the complainant may proceed to Final Complaint Review.
23. Where the SCO believes there are reasonable grounds for investigation the SCO shall refer the complaint to a member of staff that the SCO decides is most appropriate for investigation of the complaint.
24. The investigating member of staff shall investigate the complaint and submit a written report for the consideration of the Dean in consultation with the SCO.

ual:

25. The student shall receive a response to their Formal Complaint within 28 working days of its submission.
26. If the complainant remains dissatisfied they may proceed to Final Complaint Review.

Final Complaint Review:

27. If the complainant wishes to proceed to Final Complaint Review they must write to the University Secretary and Registrar, or nominee, via the University Complaints Unit. The complainant must write to the University Secretary and Registrar, or nominee, within 28 working days of the date of their Formal Complaint Outcome. The student should clearly set out the areas of the Formal Complaint response with which there is dissatisfaction including the reasons why the response is not satisfactory and the desired remedy.
28. The University Secretary and Registrar, or nominee, shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 7 working days. An account of the complaint and the University's response to it to date shall be provided by the college or service area to the University Secretary and Registrar, or his nominee, within 14 working days of a request being submitted.
29. If in the view of the University Secretary and Registrar, or nominee, there has been an unreasonable delay in pursuing the complaint, or the matters being pursued are vexatious or without substance or merit he/she shall reject the complaint summarily, inform the complainant in writing and issue a Completion of Procedures letter within 28 working days from the date of receipt of the request for Final Complaint Review.
30. If in the view of the University Secretary and Registrar, or nominee, the complaint has been considered fairly at the Formal Complaint stage and there is no reason to suggest that a different decision would be reached upon further consideration, he/she shall terminate the procedures, inform the complainant in writing and issue a Completion of Procedures letter, which shall be sent within 28 working days of receipt of the request for Final Complaint Review.
31. If in the view of the University Secretary and Registrar, or nominee, the complaint warrants further investigation he/she shall refer the complaint to a specially convened Complaints Review Panel.
32. The Complaints Review Panel shall be chaired by a senior member of staff and comprise a dean or associate dean, head of service or deputy head of service and a student nominated by the President of the Students' Union.
33. The student will be invited to attend the Complaints Review Panel and to bring someone with them for support. This supporting person should be a friend, relative, or representative from the Students' Union.

ual:

34. The University Secretary and Registrar shall provide a member of staff to act as secretary to the Panel.
35. The Complaints Review Panel shall be conducted according to the guidance notes.
36. The Complaints Review Panel shall consider the complaint and make its decision within 30 working days of receipt of the request for Final Complaint Review.
37. The University Secretary and Registrar, or nominee, shall inform the complainant of the outcome of the review in writing in the form of a Completion of Procedures letter within 14 working days of the decision by the Panel.
38. Once the University Complaints procedure is complete the complainant has a right to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator which must be submitted within 12 months of the University's final decision.
39. If the complaint is related to advice received from Student Services regarding a debt the complainant may submit a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman <http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk/> following completion of the University's internal Complaints procedure.