

Student Complaints Policy

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1. Purpose

- 1 The University of Bedfordshire is committed to maintaining an effective procedure to allow legitimate complaints to be made about services which fail to deliver to the University's standards. This Policy provides details of the University's Complaints Procedure for students who wish to make a Complaint.

2. Scope

- 2 The Student Complaints Policy has been established with the aim, where possible, of resolving complaints informally through negotiation between those immediately concerned with the matter and, where appropriate, their immediate line management. The University recognises, however, that some issues cannot be resolved through an informal process and may require the intervention of others. The formal stages of the Student Complaints Policy are therefore available to students, through Adjudication, should Informal pursuit of a Complaint not result in a satisfactory resolution.
- 3 The Complaints Policy covers all students of the University, taught and research

- 12 We recognise the sensitive nature of cases and privacy will be maintained wherever possible. We will only share the information and evidence submitted in a Complaint where it is strictly necessary in order to process, investigate, and consider the Complaint fully. All information received from a Complainant will be handled sensitively and in accordance with the principles of General Data Protection Regulations.
- 13 The University of Bedfordshire is a diverse, outward looking and inclusive place to study, live and work. We are committed to promoting dignity, respect, tolerance and inclusion in all our activities and we work to sustain an equal and safe environment in a culture of prevention of discrimination of any kind. No person (student, staff or visitor) shall be unlawfully discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of their perceived race, colour, ethnic or natural origin or nationality, religious or political beliefs, age, gender, transgender status, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, offending background, other personal characteristic or for any other reason.
- 14 We are here to support Complainants and if there is a particularly sensitive issue to raise, the Complainant can approach the Students' Union or Student Support for help. We will endeavour to make sure that any such Complaint is known to the smallest number of staff necessary to undertake a thorough investigation and that staff deal with the Complaint on a confidential basis.
- 15 The Adjudication Team will brief Investigators on the process and cases. All Investigators and Panel members will receive equality and diversity and/or other specialist training as required.
- 16 Students will be entitled to receive a Completion of Procedures letter to take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedures that have been applied to them.

Other Partners and Providers

- 17 Complaints by students who are taught at a partner institution, where the Complaint relates to that partner institution, should raise this initially in accordance with the partner institution's Complaints Procedure. This should be addressed to the partner institution's Registrar, or the Head of its Administration, and the Complaint will be conducted under that institution's own procedures.
- 18 If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, or the way in which their Complaint has been handled by the partner institution, they can make a Complaint under the University of Bedfordshire's Complaints Procedure. The student will need to provide evidence of their Complaint and the outcome they received from the partner institution. The Complaint will normally be raised at Formal Stage One of the University's Complaints Procedure.
- 19 Where a student who is taught at a partner institution raises a Complaint that relates to the actions of the University of Bedfordshire, it will be initiated under this Policy.

Placements

- 20 In certain circumstances, it will be necessary for the Registrar and Secretary to determine whether a Complaint should proceed through the University's Student Complaints Policy or through an alternative process (for example, where the Complaint relates to placement operations).
- 21 Students on work placement are expected to use the Complaints Procedure of the placement provider if the Complaint relates to issues within the placement itself and where the University cannot reasonably be expected to have had any involvement.
- 22 If the Complaint relates to issues where the University can reasonably be expected to have had some involvement, or the issues have impacted on the student's learning experience, the student should follow this Procedure.

Students' Union

- 23 Complaints from students who are dissatisfied in their dealing with the University of Bedfordshire Students' Union (Beds SU) will normally be dealt with under their own Complaints Procedure.

3. Policy and Procedure

Underlying Principles

- 24 The underlying principles of the University of Bedfordshire Student Complaints Policy, which should be respected by all those involved, are that:
- Complaints will be treated seriously, fairly, as quickly as possible and in a consistent fashion;
 - Complaints will be treated in a rigorous and fair manner with sensitivity and minimum stress to all parties concerned;
 - confidentiality will be respected throughout;
 - submission of a Complaint will not lead to recrimination or adversely affect academic progression provided it is made in good faith and not maliciously or vexatiously;
 - there is a right for any decision to be subject to further review, including at the final stage, and referral to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA);
 - the use of the Student Complaints Policy does not affect a student's right to pursue legal remedies outside of the University.
- 25 The University strongly encourages the informal resolution of complaints at the earliest opportunity, before the Formal process under this Policy is required.

What is a Complaint?

- 26 A Complaint is defined as the expression of a specific concern about the provision of an academic or related service by the University relating to:
- The teaching and learning experience of the student, eg quality of teaching, facilities, personal tutor support.
 - Academic services eg computer and library services.
 - Administrative services, eg Registry, Finance, etc.
- This list is not exhaustive and other areas may be considered under this Policy which the University considers as a Complaint.
- 27 The University reserves the right to re-direct Formal Complaints into alternative policies and procedures as it sees fit.
- 28 If a Complaint is not based on the grounds specified in this Policy or accompanied by appropriate supporting

- 33 Where a Complainant does not give permission for disclosure of their identity, this may result in the case being closed as it may be impossible to investigate the case without disclosing or alluding to their identity.
- 34 If a Complainant makes an allegation that they believe to be true, which is not supported by evidence nor found to be true by a subsequent Investigation, no further action will be taken and the case will be filed as having no case to answer. The University will not consider unsubstantiated reports that it regards as vexatious or malicious. If, however, on the balance of probabilities, it is determined that a Complainant knowingly raised false or untrue allegations, then the University may consider disciplinary action against the Complainant themselves under the Student Code of Conduct (Disciplinary Policy).
- 35 A group of students may use this procedure to make a collective Complaint. A group representative must be identified with whom the University will liaise. All students must give their written consent to the Adjudication Team for this nominated person to act on their behalf.

Academic Matters

- 36 A Complaint that leads a student to request re-consideration of an Examination Board decision, and which falls within one of the categories defined within the Academic Appeals Policy, will be considered an Academic Appeal and not a Complaint - see section 2 of the Academic Appeals Policy.
- 37 Where the circumstances of a Complaint are found to have impacted adversely on the academic performance of a student, in line with the University's Academic Appeals Policy, a summary of the findings and their impact will be passed by the Registrar and University Secretary to the Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience, who will take Chair's Action in lieu of Stage 2 of the Academic Appeals process.

Complaints against Staff

- 38 Any Investigation that is conducted under the formal stages of the Student Complaints Policy, and where an allegation against a member of staff is involved, must be conducted in accordance with principles that ensure a balance between the interests of the Complainant and those of the member of staff involved. These principles include the expectation that there will be:
- an assumption of no fault until the balance of evidence from the Investigation demonstrates otherwise;
 - respect for the dignity of the individuals involved;
 - the right of the member of staff to be told of the Complaint and to know of the evidence presented by the Complainant;
 - the right of the member of staff to respond to the Complaint and the evidence and to be accompanied by a colleague staff member in any Investigatory meetings or at any stage of the process;
 - the right of the member of staff to know the outcome;
 - the right of the member of staff to have confidentiality preserved where there is any consequential action involving the employee.
- 39 Where a Complaint involving an allegation of misconduct by a member of staff is upheld this may form the basis of further action under the Staff Disciplinary Procedure. Whilst the Complainant has the right to be told that the appropriate course of action has been followed, details of the outcome will be only disclosed as deemed appropriate and relevant.

Timescales

- 40 A Complaint will not normally be investigated if a period of three months has elapsed since the alleged action that is the basis of the Complaint. The Head of Adjudication may exceptionally allow such a Complaint to proceed, but the student will need to provide a valid reason, with formal evidence, for not being able to make a Complaint within the relevant timeframe.
- 41 At the Informal stage, if a meeting is arranged, the student should receive at least two clear working days' notice to attend. The written or oral response will be provided to the student within 10 working days of the Complaint being raised, except where good reason can be demonstrated for requiring a longer period. At this point, the student has 10 working days from when the Informal Outcome is received to submit a Formal Complaint. This timeframe may exceptionally be waived where the student has a valid reason, with formal evidence as to why they were unable to submit the Formal Complaint on time.

Where a student fails to attend an Interview or Hearing, or seeks to defer the meeting unreasonably, the University may proceed in their absence.

another School or equivalent, and a Chair appointed by the Vice Chancellor from among the senior staff of the University not previously involved in the Complaint.

- 67 The mediation procedure may be invoked or rejected by either the student or the University.
- 68 The key features of the mediation procedure are that it provides a forum for the discussion of key issues contributing to the case, and that members agree at the outset to abide by the outcomes of the discussion. From the University's perspective, the outcome of the mediation forum concludes the Complaints Procedure.

The Complaints Process

- 69 The Complaints Policy contains the following stages:
- a) Informal discussion of the Complaint with the individual(s) directly involved, led by the student.
 - b) Formal Investigation of the Complaint (Stage One).
 - c) Formal Review at a Student Complaint Review Hearing (Stage Two).

Student-Led Informal Discussion

- 70 The University expects students to try to resolve their Complaint informally, at a local level, in the first instance. The student should contact the member(s) of staff or Department(s) concerned to raise their concerns either in writing or as part of a discussion, making clear the matter that they wish to discuss and the nature of the Complaint that they wish to raise. If a meeting is arranged, the student should receive at least two clear working days' notice to attend. The member(s) of staff conducting the meeting may request the presence of a colleague and the student may also be accompanied by a fellow student or a representative of the University of Bedfordshire Students' Union.
- 71 The staff member(s) should keep a written record of the meeting and/or written correspondence. The written or oral response will be provided to the student within 10 working days of the Complaint being raised, except where good reason can be demonstrated for requiring a longer period.
- 72 The student will be informed of the outcome of their Complaint and if any remedy is proposed. The student will also be informed of their right to proceed to the Formal stage of the process should they not be satisfied with the outcome of the Informal stage.

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- 94 Documentation for the Review Hearing should be submitted to those attending, and will normally consist of:
- a) the Formal Complaint Form accompanied by Supplementary Sheet submitted by the Complainant;
 - b)

OIA must receive a completed Scheme Application Form within twelve months of the date of the Completion

Safeguarding

<https://in.beds.ac.uk/media/kynnv411/safeguarding-policy.pdf>

Public Interest Disclosure – Whistleblowing

<https://in.beds.ac.uk/media/macpz5y4/whistleblowing-policy.pdf>

GDPR

<https://www.beds.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/public-information/gdpr/>

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

Adjudication

adjudication@beds.ac.uk

Admissions

admissions@beds.ac.uk

Human Resources

uob.hr@beds.ac.uk

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Formal Student Complaint Form: Stage One

Appendix 1a: Formal Student Complaint Form - Supplementary Sheet: Stage Two

Appendix 1: Stage One – Formal Student Complaint Form

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE Formal Student Complaint Form – Stage One

Please read the [Student Complaints Policy](#) before completing this form. If you need help completing the form, you should contact the Students' Union Welfare and Advice team on help@bedssu.co.uk

All sections of this form must be completed in full and official supporting evidence must be provided. Please sign and date the form and return to I60 Td

5. Please explain how you have attempted to resolve your Complaint so far, including the details of the Student-Led Informal Discussion. Please include the name of the person(s) you have dealt with and why you remain dissatisfied:

Appendix 1a: Stage Two – Supplementary Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE Formal Student Complaint Form Supplementary Sheet – Stage Two

Please read the [Student Complaints Policy](#) before completing this form. If you need help completing the form, you should contact the Students’ Union Welfare and Advice team on help@bedssu.co.uk

All sections of this form must be completed in full and should be submitted to the Adjudication Team along with a copy of the original Formal Student Complaint Form (Appendix 1) to provide additional information for consideration of a Complaint at Stage Two.

Please sign and date the form and send it to the Adjudication Team (adjudication@beds.ac.uk).

Your Details

Student number		Name	
Course title		Email address(es)	
Phone number(s)		Address for correspondence	

1. Has this Complaint already been considered at Stage One?	YES (go to 2.) NO (go to 3.)
2. If NO, please provide details as to why the Complaint has not been considered at Stage One, together with a completed Formal Complaint Form (Appendix 1)	

3. If YES, please indicate why you are not satisfied with the response to your Complaint at Stage One and what you would like to happen to resolve your Complaint (please refer to the criteria specified for a Stage Two Complaint)

DECLARATION

By submitting this form to the Adjudication Team I confirm that:

- I have read the Student Complaints Policy and understand that my Complaint will only be considered within the terms of this Policy and the University Regulations.
- The information I have provided on this form is true to the best of my knowledge;
- I understand that if any information I have provided is found to be false I may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.
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