

Making a non-academic complaint

Union Advice Centre

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GENERAL ADVICE

Complaints Procedure

Any student has the right to submit a complaint about the University. A complaint can be made about any non-academic service; for example, catering, accommodation or learning support. Academic services are excluded from this procedure as there is a separate Academic Complaints procedure to deal with academic facilities such as the library or computer facilities. Please see our leaflet 'Making an Academic Complaint'.

Informal Resolution

The Complaints procedure encourages you to try to resolve your complaint informally before beginning the formal procedure. This can be done by approaching the person(s) most directly involved; for example, your Academic Adviser or supervisor, the Accommodation Office or your Learning Enhancement Tutor. Trying to resolve your complaint informally will not prejudice your case if you choose to use the formal procedure later on.

The Formal Procedure - Stage 1

If you have not been able to resolve your complaint informally, or you do not feel comfortable approaching those most directly involved, you can start the formal procedure. You will need to complete a Complaints form which is available from the Union Advice Centre or on-line at ueastudent.com/advice/forms

This is a short form which asks you to give details of your complaint and how you would like it resolved. You can submit evidence with your form but evidence submitted cannot be anonymous. Your complaint should be sent to the Dean of Students (DoS).

The Dean of Students will look at the complaint and check which procedure to follow. If the service area operates a local procedure for complaints then this will be used and you will be informed. If the Dean of Students is involved in the complaint or there is a conflict of interest, the complaint should be submitted to the Registrar and Secretary and they will appoint an alternative person to respond.

If your complaint is accepted under this procedure the Dean

of Students will appoint an Investigating Officer who will gather evidence about your complaint. This could include interviewing those involved and looking at any written evidence. The Investigating Officer will then prepare a written report for the Dean of Students.

The Dean of Students will consider the report and may investigate further which could involve discussing the complaint with you. If the DoS decides that the complaint has substance, they will write to the relevant Head of School/Service with recommendations for remedial action. The Head of School/Service should respond to the recommendations within 10 working days. You should receive a letter informing you of the Dean of Students' decision regarding your complaint within 20 working days of you submitting it.

If you are not satisfied with the decision the next step is lodging a Stage 2 Complaint. You can request a copy of the evidence considered by writing to the Dean of Students.

Stage 2

Under the Stage 2 procedure you have 20 working days from receipt of the notification of the Stage 1 decision to appeal to the Registrar and Secretary. You will need to complete and submit a Stage 2 Complaints form. These are available from the Union Advice Centre or on-line at ueastudent.com/advice/forms

You should include all supporting evidence with the form and your reasons for pursuing the complaint further.

Your complaint, together with all the evidence you have submitted, and your reasons for pursuing the complaint to a Stage 2 will be considered by the Registrar and Secretary. They will also consider the letter sent to you by the Dean of Students giving the outcome of Stage 1. The Registrar and Secretary will either accept or reject your Stage 2 Complaint and you should be notified of the decision within 10 working days.

If your Stage 2 Complaint is rejected the decision is final and

there is no further right to complain within the University.

If your Stage 2 Complaint is accepted the Registrar and Secretary will choose the member(s) of the Executive Team (made up of the Vice-Chancellor, the two Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the four Deans of Faculty and the Registrar and Secretary) and/or Senior Officers who shall consider the complaint. They will be known as "the designated officer" and will send a copy of the complaint form and other supporting evidence to the person most directly involved in the complaint and to the Dean of Students who acted under Stage 1. The Head of School/Service and the Dean of Students will be asked to provide a written response to your Stage 2 Complaint within 15 working days.

The designated officer can investigate further if they feel this is necessary. The Dean of Students, the Head of School/Service and you may be invited to a meeting and may be called on to give evidence. You may be accompanied by a friend whom you may wish to be an Advice Worker. If a meeting is called you will be given a copy of the written response of the Head of School/Service and Dean of Students 5 working days before the meeting date.

The investigation of the Stage 2 Complaint should be completed within 30 days of the date the complaint was accepted, if possible.

If the designated officer decides that your complaint is upheld and remedial action is required, the Registrar and Secretary will write to the Head of School/Service to instruct them on the action to be taken. You should hear what the outcome of this investigation is in writing within 5 days of the decision being reached, and a full and clear explanation should be provided. This response should specify what actions need to be taken both to remedy the situation and to prevent it happening in future (as far as reasonably possible).

If the designated officer decides that remedial action is not warranted the Registrar and Secretary will write to you to inform you the complaint has been rejected within 5 working days of the decision being taken.

The decision from the Stage 2 Complaint is final and there is no further right to complaint within the University.

Beyond Internal Complaints

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your Stage 2 Complaint, or your complaint was rejected without an investigation at Stage 2, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA),

Fifth Floor, Thames Tower, Station Road, Reading. RG1 1LX may be able to consider your case. Details can be found on their website: www.oiahe.org.uk.

Notes

The full Complaints Procedure can be found at ueastudent.com/advice/forms

Remember that the Union Advice Centre can offer guidance at every stage of the complaints procedure. Don't hesitate to drop in.

Other useful Union Advice Centre leaflets:

'Appealing Against A Mark Or An Exam Result'

'Making An Academic Complaint'

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