

GUIDANCE FOR RESOLUTION OF YOUR COMPLAINT

Contents

When can I make a complaint?.....	2
Stage 0 Informal Resolution.....	2
Stage 1 Formal Resolution	2
Who can submit a complaint?	2
Group Complaints.....	2
Partner College Students	3
Higher or Degree Apprenticeship Students.....	3
When can't I submit a complaint?.....	3
What can I complain about?	3
What can't I use this procedure to complain about?.....	4
How do I try to settle my complaint informally (Stage 0)?	4
Who should I raise my concerns with?.....	4
When should I raise my concerns?	5
Tips for raising concerns.....	5
What if my complaint is not resolved at the informal stage?.....	5
How do I escalate my complaint to Stage 1 Formal Resolution?.....	5
What do I need to say on the Formal Complaint Form?	5
What happens next?	5
What will the response to the investigation say?.....	6
What if I don't like the Stage 1 outcome?.....	6
What happens next?	6
What can I expect from the Review Panel stage?	7
What will the University do if my case is upheld or partially upheld?	7
What can I expect at the end of the formal complaints procedure?	7
What can I do if I am unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 Review?	7
Vexatious complaints	8
Confidentiality.....	8
Advice and Support.....	8
Students' Union.....	8
Listening Ears	9
University Chaplaincy.....	9

When can I make a complaint?

Stage 0 Informal Resolution

You should start your informal complaint at the earliest opportunity after the initial cause for complaint has occurred, and we would advise making your complaint no more than **four weeks** after the incident so that the incident is fresh both in your mind and those who may be the subject of the complaint.

Stage 1 Formal Resolution

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the informal resolution offered at Stage 0, you will need to submit a Formal Complaint within **three calendar months** of the incident about which you are complaining. If the informal complaint has taken longer than expected, we may exceptionally consider complaints submitted outside of this time frame.

Who can submit a complaint?

All current registered students whose studies are based out of one of our campuses can submit a complaint. This means that will accept a complaint for consideration from you if you are registered on a taught undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme, or a postgraduate research programme.

You may also submit a complaint if you are on an approved leave of absence, for instance, you have currently interrupted your studies.

We will also accept formal complaints from graduates or former students as long as the issue that you are complaining took place within the three month deadline for formal complaints, and that you are submitting your complaint within three months of completing or formally ceasing your studies.

Group Complaints

If a group of students wants to make a collective complaint, the group should identify a single spokesperson. In agreeing to act as spokesperson the student accepts responsibility for representing the views of the entire group and to act as key contact in relation to the complaint including communication relating to the complaint outcome and decision of the group.

Each member of the group must provide their student ID number on the Formal Complaint Form and must be able to demonstrate that:

- a) they were personally affected by the matter of the complaint
- b) they understand and agree that they would be required to collectively agree whether or not they accept the complaint outcome including any proposed resolution

Once all students have agreed to be members of a group complaint, they cannot at any stage subsequently choose to withdraw from the group complaint and pursue an individual complaint in relation to the same issue, so please make sure that your concerns and the resolution that you are seeking are the same as the other group members.

If we discover that any member of the group has not been affected by all of the issues raised in the complaint, we reserve the right to exclude them from the group complaint and required them to submit a separate, individual complaint if they wish to pursue their concerns.

Partner College Students

If you are registered for a University award provided by collaborative partner colleges and are dissatisfied with the provision at your college, you must initially pursue your complaint through the college's complaint procedure. Further details can be found in Appendix A of the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

If you remain dissatisfied when you have received the outcome of the college's procedure, you are entitled to submit your complaint for further consideration under the [Final Review Procedure](#).

Higher or Degree Apprenticeship Students

If you are registered on a higher or degree apprenticeship you may use this procedure in relation to complaints about the delivery of the academic learning aspects, and related services, of your apprenticeship. Further details can be found in Appendix B of the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

When can't I submit a complaint?

There are some situations in which we are unable to consider a complaint. You cannot submit a complaint if:

- The issues in your complaint have already been considered as an academic appeal, fitness to practise or as a disciplinary matter, or where the police are dealing with the matter, until police procedures are complete.
- You have applied for admission to the university but have not yet been accepted and registered (you may be able to submit a complaint or appeal under the [Admissions Policy and Procedure](#)).
- You are a graduate or former student but did not lodge a complaint within three months of completing or formally ceasing your studies
- You are a postgraduate research student complaining about a role as an employee of the University – please contact Human Resources.
- You are submitting an anonymous complaint - it is usually impractical for us to investigate anonymous complaints as this can impede investigation and prevent a resolution, as well as potentially creating unfairness in relation to any allegations made in the complaint against other individuals.
- You have raised a third-party complaint on behalf of a student (unless they are incapacitated for medical reasons or have mental health issues or a registered disability). We will require consent from the student.

What can I complain about?

We will consider complaints about any academic or non-academic service provided by the University, including but not limited to:

- Failure to meet obligations including those outlined in module/student handbooks
- Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the University
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision or administration
- Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided by the us
- Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on our behalf

What can't I use this procedure to complain about?

There are some circumstances and issues that we are unable to consider under this procedure, but there may be another policy or procedure that you can use to address your concerns:

We cannot consider complaints about	Alternative process where relevant
Other students – although you may complain about our handling of your complaint against another student.	In the first instance please speak to your Programme Leader. Serious concerns may lead to consideration under the Student Disciplinary Procedure .
Bullying or harassment	Bullying and Harassment at University Policy and Procedure .
Marks or results	These should be addressed via the University's Academic Appeals Procedure (Taught) or Academic Appeals Procedure (Research)
Greenwich Students' Union	The GSU has its own policy and procedures for dealing with complaints
Applications to the University	There is a Complaints and Appeals section in the Admissions Policy and Procedure .

How do I try to settle my complaint informally (Stage 0)?

We believe that a complaint should be addressed as quickly as possible, and that the best way to achieve this is to raise issues or concerns directly with the appropriate member of staff best able to deal with it as soon as possible.

Dealing with small problems or areas of concern as they arise will often lead to an early resolution, which is why we ask you to first engage with the informal complaint stage.

Who should I raise my concerns with?

You can raise a complaint with any relevant member of staff who works in the area the issue arose - this could be in person, by phone or via email.

If your complaint is about academic-related issues, this may be the Module Tutor or Programme Leader, your Research Supervisor, or an appropriate member of staff in the relevant Faculty.

If your complaint is about a University service, then you should talk to an appropriate member of staff from that service. If you are unsure who to contact, or if you would feel more comfortable, the Head of the relevant Professional Services Department should be contacted.

Please contact one of the Advice and Support contacts detailed at the end of this document for further information and guidance if you are uncertain who to raise your concerns with.

When should I raise my concerns?

To give us the opportunity to respond promptly, you should raise your concerns as soon as possible after the initial cause for complaint has occurred. We would advise making your complaint no later than four weeks after the incident so that it is fresh both in your mind and in those who may be the subject of the complaint.

You also need to remember that, should you be unhappy with the resolution offered at the informal stage, you must escalate your complaint to the next stage no later than 3 months after the initial cause for complaint has occurred.

Tips for raising concerns

When raising a complaint try to ensure that you;

- Avoid being personal, using offensive language or acting in an inappropriate way
- Present your concerns in a positive and constructive way
- Be firm and polite, try to avoid seeming aggressive or rude
- Be calm and concise
- Provide any evidence if needed and appropriate

What if my complaint is not resolved at the informal stage?

Sometimes the resolution you want might not be feasible or appropriate, or we may not be able to make changes straight away. If you would like to pursue your complaint, you may escalate it to Stage 1 Formal Resolution.

How do I escalate my complaint to Stage 1 Formal Resolution?

You need to complete and submit a Formal Complaint Form **within 3 months of the date of the incident about which you are complaining.**

What do I need to say on the Formal Complaint Form?

You need to give full details of your complaint, the date(s) when the incident happened, the people you spoke to and support these with documentary evidence, such as emails or meeting notes. You are also expected to say what you would like to happen to resolve your complaint.

Full details of how to fill out the form can be found in the guidance notes included on the [Formal Complaint Form and Guidance Notes](#).

What happens next?

You will receive a letter of acknowledgment from the Academic Registry casework team and, if your complaint has been accepted as submitted within the three-month deadline, you will be informed that the investigation into your complaint will start.

A copy of your Formal Complaint Form and any accompanying documentation will be sent to a senior member of staff in the relevant Faculty or Directorate, who will act as the Investigating Officer to undertake the initial consideration of your Formal Complaint.

The Investigating Officer may ask to interview you and/or other parties named in your complaint. If they do want to meet with you, they will contact you to arrange an appropriate date and time. You will be offered the opportunity to bring a supporter to this meeting. A record of any interviews that take place will form part of the complaint file.

The investigation should take no longer than 28 calendar days (4 weeks), if there are any delays you will be kept informed and told when the outcome is expected.

What will the response to the investigation say?

You will receive a letter and an investigation report explaining the investigator's decision on each aspect of your complaint in the following terms: upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

In the case of upheld and partially upheld complaints, the response will detail what resolution we are offering to correct the situation. If appropriate, you might be offered an apology or other redress and an explanation of the measures to be put in place to ensure the situation is not repeated.

Where the complaint is not upheld, a full explanation will be provided.

You will then be asked to respond to the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation. If you are satisfied with the resolution offered, the complaint is deemed to be resolved.

What if I don't like the Stage 1 outcome?

If you are unhappy with the outcome, you can request a review of the decision.

Your request must be submitted within 14 calendar days (2 weeks) of the outcome notification from Stage 1 using the [Stage 1 Outcome Review Form](#), and must be based on one or more of the permitted grounds:

- a) There is new evidence that would have significantly affected the outcome and could not reasonably have been made available when the complaint was made;
- b) There is evidence that not all of the relevant information was considered at Stage 1;
- c) That the decision is unreasonable given the facts of the case;
- d) That the complaint was upheld but the proposed remedy is inappropriate.

What happens next?

Within 21 calendar days of you submitting your Stage 1 Outcome Review Form, the Head of Academic Registry (or their nominee) will consider your review request. You may be asked for further evidence at this stage.

Following the initial consideration, you will be advised that either:

- a) There are no grounds for taking the matter further. You will be informed of the outcome and issued with a Completion of Procedures letter including details of the OIA Scheme (see [What can I do if I am unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 Review?](#) for further details); or

- b) There are grounds for further investigation. If this is the case, a Stage 2 Review Panel will be convened to undertake a final review of your complaint.

What can I expect from the Review Panel stage?

You will be given at least 14 calendar days' notice of the date and time of the meeting, which may be on campus or via video conferencing, and will also include copies of all documentation to be used in consideration of your case.

The panel will consist of:

- Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee (Chair)
- A member of the Student Experience Committee or a senior member of staff from a non-related faculty or directorate
- A Students' Union Sabbatical Officer or nominee

You are allowed to bring a friend or supporter of your choice or a representative of the Students' Union.

We expect you to present your own case and you can also invite any witnesses to the incident so long as you let us know in advance. A representative from the Faculty or Directorate concerned will also be invited to attend to respond to the issues raised in your review request.

The review stage will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve further investigation. However, in the case that new evidence has been submitted and accepted, additional investigation may be required.

You will be notified in writing within 14 calendar days of the decision of the Panel. This will include the reasons for their decision.

What will the University do if my case is upheld or partially upheld?

If the Review Panel decide that your complaint is upheld or partially upheld, they will consider and recommend suitable redress. Each case will be looked at on its merits and a range of outcomes is possible, but the University will always try to achieve resolution.

What can I expect at the end of the formal complaints procedure?

The outcome letter from the Stage 2 Review Panel marks the end of the University's consideration of your complaint. This letter will contain a Completion of Procedures statement including details of the OIA Scheme (see below).

What can I do if I am unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 Review?

When you have received an outcome letter containing a Completion of Procedures statement, you can take your case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) - the independent body set up by the government to adjudicate on disputes in higher education institutions.

Students studying for a higher or degree apprenticeship can request the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to review whether the degree apprenticeship provider has properly investigated their original complaint in line with its procedures.

Full details of how to raise your case with either of the above bodies will be included in your final outcome letter.

Vexatious complaints

We understand that if you make a complaint, then it is a concern to you, whatever others might think. We are committed to dealing with all complaints transparently and fairly and in line with published procedures. However, we reserve the right to consider a complaint vexatious for the reasons set out below (this list is not exhaustive):

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, or repetitious
- Insistence in pursuing a complaint that is malicious or has no basis
- Insistence in pursuing an unrealistic complaint outcome
- Insistence in pursuing a valid complaint in an unreasonable manner
- Complaints which are designed solely to cause disruption or annoyance

In deciding whether a complaint is vexatious, we will take into account all the circumstances of the case and consider both the contents of the complaint and your behaviour in relation to the complaint before reaching a decision.

If you have been found to have submitted a vexatious complaint, you may be referred under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#) or, where relevant, the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#).

If your behaviour is a cause for concern and we consider that there may be an underlying problem, you may be referred under the [Fitness to Study Procedure](#). You should never raise allegations which are malicious or without basis. If you raise a concern and we find out during our investigations that you have not been truthful, we may refer you to an investigation under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).

Confidentiality

As far as possible, matters raised as a complaint will remain confidential to those directly involved in investigating the complaint, providing a response to it and communicating with you, unless there is a serious risk of harm to any parties.

However, in the interests of natural justice, any staff members mentioned in a complaint have the right to know the full details of the complaint or, in exceptional circumstances, only those details which need to be shared to enable a proper response to be made. It can be very difficult to reach resolution if the concerns are not raised with the individual staff member.

If you have concerns about what is communicated to the member of staff, please contact the [Academic Registry casework team](#) who will advise you further.

Advice and Support

Students' Union

Free independent advice and advocacy is available from the Greenwich Students' Union at any stage of your complaint:

Greenwich Students' Union:

Email: suadvice@gre.ac.uk

Web: www.greenwichsu.co.uk/advice

Online contact form: www.greenwichsu.co.uk/advice/triageform

For students at Medway, please visit: www.greenwichsu.co.uk/medway/advice

You can also seek support from the Listening Ears Network and from our Chaplaincy service, both of which are based at all three campuses.

Listening Ears

Listening Ears provide confidential support to students across the university. They provide a point of contact, informal and confidential support services and referrals to relevant services as appropriate. Further information on this service can be found on the university website [here](#).

To make an appointment with a listening ear, please email listening@greenwich.ac.uk.

University Chaplaincy

Our [university chaplains](#) are appointed by faith communities to work at the university to care for students and staff of all religions and beliefs, and also for those who do not have a faith background. They're here to listen to you about anything that matters to you, and for those who would like it they can provide faith related guidance and support.

You can contact the chaplains by dropping in at one of their [regular events](#), or by emailing them on chaplaincy@gre.ac.uk.