

Student Complaints Procedure

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Academic Board	1 August 2023	31 July 2026

Who needs to know about the Procedure?

All Academic and Professional Service Staff, all registered students, recent graduates, and the Students' Union.

Purpose of the Procedure

The Student Complaints Procedure outlines the University's approach to addressing Complaints raised by registered University students or recent graduates of the University. The Procedure informs students, staff, and the Student's Union of the Stages within the Procedures and how to submit a Complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator of Higher Education (OIA) following the completion of the internal Procedure, also known as a Completion of Procedures (CoP).

Contacts

The Directorate of Student Resolution and Student Protection is responsible for the operation and management of this Procedure. The team can be contacted by emailing: casehandling@canterbury.ac.uk

The Students' Union can provide support, advice, and advocacy for students at the University's home campuses that wish to make a Complaint. The Students' Union Advice Centre can be contacted by emailing: advice@ccsu.co.uk

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Part One – How to Raise a Complaint

1. Introduction and Definition

- 1.1 This Procedure sets out how the University will handle concerns and complaints that a student may wish to pursue.
- 1.2 There may be instances where students engaged in activities related to their University experience are dissatisfied with some aspects of the activities they engage with. Should this occur, it is important that concerns are raised as quickly as possible.
- 1.3 The University is committed to providing all students with a high-quality education and student experience. It is recognised that there may be instances when it is considered by the student that the University has not provided the quality of education or level of service that is expected from the University.
- 1.4 Students can raise concerns or express dissatisfaction without risk of disadvantage or recrimination. The Students' Union can advise students at the University's home campuses and offer support at each stage of the Student Complaints Procedure.
- 1.5 The University defines a Complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the action or omission of the University's teaching-related or service-related provision.
- 1.6 This Procedure allows for students to submit a Complaint relating to decisions made under the Code of Practice on the Freedom of Speech and External Speakers.
- 1.7 The University will process all information in accordance with its Privacy Notice and the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Complaints will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality, with information released only to those who need it for the purposes of considering the matters raised or responding to the Complaint. No third party should be told any more about the complaint than is necessary to obtain the information required from them.

2. Applicability

- 2.1 Any student registered on a course at the University, including higher or degree apprentices and students who are on approved periods of interruption, temporarily withdrawn, or temporarily suspended can submit a complaint under this Procedure.
- 2.2 Students studying at a Collaborative Partner should refer to Section 8.
- 2.3 Where a complaint relates to a Placement, students should refer to Section 9.

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- 2.4 Student Apprentices should refer to Section 10.
- 2.5 Students are encouraged and expected to raise concerns as soon as the action or omission occurs and no later than two months of the problem or issue occurring.
- 2.6 Delays in submitting a Stage 1 Complaint will need to be fully explained. Stage 1 Complaints submitted after two months from the action or omission arising, will not normally be considered, and deemed invalid unless there is good reason accompanied by supporting evidence for the delay in submitting the Stage 1 Complaint. Students will be provided with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter if the complaint is rejected because it has been submitted late.
- 2.7 Complaints from former students or recent graduates can be submitted within two months of the date of leaving the University or the conferred award in the case of recent graduates. Complaints received after this time will not usually be considered unless there is accompanying evidence to demonstrate the reasons for the delay in submitting a Stage 1 Complaint form.
- 2.8 Where a Stage 1 Complaint from a former student or recent graduate is submitted outside of the two month timeframe stipulated in paragraph 2.7, and the evidence does not demonstrate the reasons for the delay, the decision may be to reject the complaint. A Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be provided if the complaint is rejected if it has been submitted outside of the two-month timeframe.
- 2.9 Where a Stage 1 Complaint relates to an allegation regarding the conduct or behaviour of a staff member employed by the University, The Early Resolution & Case Handling Team may need to seek advice from the Human Resources (HR) team and liaise with the line manager of the staff member the allegation relates to.

3. Group Complaints Applicability

- 3.1 Students may submit a Complaint under this Procedure, individually or as part of a group. Complaints will be responded to individually and contact details for each student should be included on the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form. In these circumstances, the group should appoint a group representative (no more than two representatives) to facilitate communications for the purposes of the Stage 1 Complaint investigation.
- 3.2 Students are permitted to provide individual statements should they share the concerns of the group and in addition, want to raise individual concerns in relation to the complaint being raised.

4. Anonymous Complaints

- 4.1 Students can report concerns that they have either personally experienced or have witnessed regarding the action or omission of the University's teaching-related or service-related provision, defined as a complaint, for the purposes of this Procedure. Anonymous Complaints may be used to provide statistical information to inform proactive and preventative work, or to allow the University to monitor concerns across the University's teaching and service provisions. Choosing to complain anonymously means the scope of the complaint is limited and therefore, may not be able to be investigated or responded to by the University.

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5. Reasonable Adjustments

- 5.1 The University may make appropriate reasonable adjustments when operating this Procedure to take account of the requirements of individual students with disabilities. The student should inform the University about any reasonable adjustments that may be needed as part of the Student Complaints Procedure. Where appropriate, the Early Resolution & Case Handling Team may consult with Student Wellbeing Services.

6. Procedures

Early Resolution

- 6.1 Early Resolution provides the opportunity for students to raise concerns before escalating to a Stage 1 Complaint of this Procedure. Early Resolution is aimed at addressing concerns without the requirement of completing and submitting a Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form.
- 6.2 Any student can seek to resolve their concerns through Early Resolution. This can be raised with an appropriate member of University staff such as a Personal Academic Tutor, Course Director, Module Lead, or another member of staff from the area or the service that is being complained about. Students can also contact The Early Resolution & Case Handling Team should they wish to speak to a member of staff who is independent of the matter being raised. Students should raise their concerns as soon as is practicable by contacting The Early Resolution & Case Handling Team with an outline of their concerns.
- 6.3 If a student has raised a concern through Early Resolution, they will receive a response from the area and any measures that have been taken to address the matters raised. It is expected that Early Resolution will usually be completed in **10 working days** from the date the concern was raised with the relevant team the concern relates to.
- 6.4 Students will receive details of the next steps and their options relating to the concern(s) within **10 working days** from the date the initial concern was raised. Students can submit a Stage 1 Formal Complaint should they be dissatisfied with Early Resolution.
- 6.5 Students who wish to pursue a Stage 1 Formal Complaint after Early Resolution will be expected to complete a Stage 1 Complaint Form to proceed to Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1 Formal Complaint

- 6.6 The University encourages students to resolve concerns via Early Resolution. The University also recognises that students may wish to submit a Stage 1 Formal Complaint to address their concerns. The Stage 1 Complaint is available to any student.
- 6.7 Students should complete a Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form to initiate Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Procedure. Where a student chooses to submit a Stage 1 Formal Complaint, they must do so within two months of the act or omission arising. They should clearly state:

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- 6.7.1 The nature of the complaint on the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form.
- 6.7.2 The actions that have been taken to resolve the concerns, and details of Early Resolution, where relevant.
- 6.7.3 The resolution they are seeking from a Stage 1 Complaint.
- 6.8 Students should include all the evidence they wish to be considered as part of the Stage 1 Complaint and to confirm all relevant evidence has been submitted.
- 6.9 On receipt of a completed Stage 1 Formal Complaint form, the Early Resolution & Case Handling Team will confirm receipt of the complaint and students will be notified when they can expect to receive an outcome to the Stage 1 Complaint.
- 6.10 It is expected that Stage 1 of this Procedures shall be completed within 25 working days of receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form. In complex cases, Stage 1 may take longer, and, in such cases, the student will be notified of any delays and the timeframe that they are likely to receive the Stage 1 Formal Complaint outcome.
- 6.11 The Stage 1 Formal Complaint will be considered by a Student Case Handling Officer who has not previously been involved in the matter to avoid bias or the perception of bias.
- 6.12 On receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form, the Early Resolution & Case Handling Team shall determine whether:
 - 6.12.1 The complaint has been submitted within the relevant timeframes stipulated in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8.
 - 6.12.2 The Student Complaints Procedure is appropriate or whether the issue should be considered through another University Procedure for example, Exceptional Circumstances, Academic Appeals, Student Conduct, Fitness to Study, Low Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise. In such circumstances, the student will be informed of this in writing and details of the next steps required.
 - 6.12.3 The complaint is vexatious or without substance or merit. In such instances the assigned Student Case Handling Officer shall consult with the Head of Early Resolution & Case Handling (or nominee) and either, dismiss the Stage 1 Complaint, or consider the complaint. Where the decision is that the complaint is considered frivolous or vexatious, the Stage 1 Formal Complaint Procedure may be terminated, and the student shall receive a written outcome and Completion of Procedures (CoP).
- 6.13 Frivolous or vexatious complaints may include:
 - 6.13.1 obsessive, harassing, or repetitive complaints.
 - 6.13.2 insistence on pursuing unreasonable complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes.

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- 6.13.3 Insistence on pursuing reasonable complaints in an unreasonable manner or by the adoption of unreasonable behaviour.
- 6.13.4 Complaints designed to cause disruption or annoyance or demands for resolution lacking any serious purpose or value.
- 6.14 The Student Case Handling Officer shall consider the evidence and documentation that has been submitted with the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form and determine the next steps based on the information and evidence provided. The student will be provided with an outcome at Stage 1 within 25 working days of receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form.
- 6.15 Where the decision of the Student Case Handling Officer is to reject the Stage 1 Complaint, the student may proceed to a Stage 2 Complaint Review within 10 working days from the date of the outcome.
- 6.16 A Stage 1 outcome shall provide the findings of the complaint, the decision in relation to the issues raised and any resolution and actions that will be taken. The outcome will also inform the student of their options should they be dissatisfied with the outcome and requesting a Stage 2 Complaint Review.
- 6.17 Where the matters raised in the Stage 1 Complaint requires further investigation, for instance when a case is considered complex or may spans across one or more matters and/or the matter spans across one or more Faculties, Schools and/or Departments, the Stage 1 Complaint will be referred to the Student Investigations Team. When a complaint is referred to the Student Investigations Team, the Student Case Handling Officer shall write to the student to inform them of the next steps.
- 6.18 The Student Case Handling Officer shall consider the evidence and documentation that has been submitted with the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form and determine the next steps based on the information and evidence provided. The student will be provided with an outcome at Stage 1 within 25 working days of receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form.
- 6.19 Where the decision of the Student Case Handling Officer is to reject the Stage 1 Complaint, the student may proceed to a Stage 2 Complaint Review within 10 working days from the date of the outcome.
- 6.20 A Stage 1 outcome shall provide the findings of the complaint, the decision in relation to the issues raised and any resolution and actions that will be taken. The outcome will also inform the student of their options should they be dissatisfied with the outcome and requesting a Stage 2 Complaint Review.
- 6.21 Where the matters raised in the Stage 1 Complaint requires further investigation, for instance when a case is considered complex or may spans across one or more matters and/or the matter spans across one or more Faculties, Schools and/or Departments, the Stage 1 Complaint will be referred to the Student Investigations Team. When a complaint is referred to the Student Investigations Team, the Student Case Handling Officer shall write to the student to inform them of the next steps.

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Stage 2 Complaint Review

- 6.22 A complaint must have been considered at the Stage 1 Formal Complaint stage before it can be escalated to the Stage 2 Complaint Review.
- 6.23 The purpose of the Review stage is not to reinvestigate the complaint itself, but to address concerns about the decision, on the ground(s) set out in paragraphs 6.29.1 to 6.29.3.
- 6.24 The Stage 2 Complaint Review shall be made by submitting a Stage 2 Complaint Review form within 10 working days of having received an outcome under Stage 1 of this Procedure.
- 6.25 When submitting a Stage 2 Complaint Review, the student shall clearly identify the ground(s) upon which they are requesting a Review.
- 6.26 The Stage 2 Complaint Review will be considered by the Head of Early Resolution & Case Handling (or nominee) on the following grounds:
- 6.26.1 There has been a procedural error or other irregularity in applying the Procedure when the Complaint was considered under Stage 1.
- 6.26.2 There is new evidence that could not be made available when the Stage 1 Complaint was submitted that could have affected the outcome of the complaint.
- 6.26.3 The outcome decision was upheld or partially upheld but the decision or the proposed remedy was unreasonable or disproportionate.
- 6.27 Stage 2 Complaint Review will be considered by the Head of Early Resolution & Case Handling (or nominee) within **25 working days**. The Head of Early Resolution & Case Handling (or nominee) shall either:
- 6.27.1 Reject and uphold the original Stage 1 Complaint decision at the review stage. Students will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter.
- 6.27.2 Uphold or partially uphold the complaint review submitted and propose a resolution or a revised resolution.
- 6.27.3 Uphold and overturn the Formal complaint outcome decision. Recommendations will be made to the Faculty, School, or Professional Service Area for reconsideration.
- 6.28 The Stage 2 Complaint Review Outcome will be communicated to the student in writing within **25 working days** of receipt of the Stage 2 Complaint Review form submission. Where the Stage 2 Complaint Review cannot be completed by the expected date, the Head of Early Resolution & Case Handling (or nominee) will inform the student of the reason and give an indication of when the expected outcome is likely to be received.

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6.29 The Stage 2 Complaint Review outcome is considered as a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. Details on next steps and submitting a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education will be provided. At this point, students have completed the University's internal procedures. Students who remain dissatisfied with the outcome have the right to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education. A complaint must be submitted to the OIA within 12 months of the date the Completion of Procedures (CoP).

7. Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

7.1 On receipt of a Completion of Procedures (CoP), students who remain dissatisfied with the outcome, may submit a complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#). A complaint must be submitted to the OIA within 12 months of the University's final decision. Further details of how to submit a complaint to the OIA will be provided in the Completion of Procedures or Stage 2 Complaint Review Outcome. The OIA will normally only consider complaints after the University's internal Procedures have been completed.

Part 2 – General Provisions

8. Complaints by Students at a Collaborative Partner

- 8.1 Students at a Collaborative Partner should read the [Procedure for Dealing with Complaints at Partner Institutions](#).
- 8.2 Students studying at a Partner Institutions should submit a complaint to their Partner Institution in the first instance, using the Partner's Complaints Procedure.
- 8.3 Where the nature of the complaint relates to a service under the primary responsibility of the University, the student should raise it directly with the University by following the Student Complaints Procedure. Examples of services which are the primary responsibility of the University include, certificate, Higher Education Achievement Records (HEARs), registration processes, student record concerns, transcripts (including interim transcripts).
- 8.4 Where the responsibility and resolution rest solely with the University and it concludes that a part or the whole of a complaint requires investigation by the University, the Collaborative Partner may refer the matter to the University.
- 8.5 Where the complaint is referred to the University by the Collaborative Partner, the complaint shall be considered under Stage 1 of this Procedure.

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9. Students on Placements

- 9.1 Concerns relating to placement provision or a student on placement may either fall under the jurisdiction of the University or the Placement Provider.
- 9.2 In the first instance, students are directed to raise their concerns with the appropriate member of staff or the Placement Supervisor. Students are expected to raise their concerns through the mechanism that exist with their Faculty or School such as the Alert form process to inform the University of their concerns to enable the matters raised to be resolved with the Placement Provider.
- 9.3 Where the student is dissatisfied and wishes to make a Stage 1 Formal Complaint, the matter can be raised by submitting a Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form.

10. Apprentices

- 10.1 Concerns relating to Apprenticeship Training Providers or an apprentice's experience may fall under the remit of the University or the Placement provider.
- 10.2 This Procedure applies when the concerns raised relate to the administration or management of the Apprenticeship by the University.
- 10.3 Working practices arising from the Apprenticeship Training Provider fall outside the scope of this Procedure. These concerns are expected to be raised directly with the Apprenticeship provider. Apprentices can also inform a relevant member of staff at the University of their intention to raise concerns with their Apprenticeship Training Provider.

11. Records, Monitoring and Confidentiality

- 11.1 The University is committed to continuous improvement and welcomes feedback on teaching and service provision.
- 11.2 The Directorate of Student Resolution and Student Protection monitors complaints (on an anonymised basis) to identify trends, areas of good practice and improvements to our practices.
- 11.3 The University will process all information in accordance with the Data Protection Act and UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. Further information on how the University collects, processes and stores personal data in the University Privacy Policy. The Directorate will retain information related to any complaint matter in accordance with the Retention Schedule.
- 11.4 The Senior Management Team and relevant committees such as Academic Board are provided with anonymised data and reports concerning complaint considered with under this Procedure

Student Complaints Procedure

Document Information	Description of Document Information
Document Title	Student Complaints Procedure
Department Owner	Directorate of Student Resolution and Student Protection
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Document Owner	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Document Manager	Head of Early Resolution & Case Handling
Related University Policies	Low Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise Policy Supporting Student Teachers and Professional Suitability Policy (Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Education)
Related University Procedures	Procedures at University Examinations Procedure for Dealing with Complaints by University Registered Students at Partner Institutions Student Academic Appeals Procedure Student Conduct Procedure
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