

# Guidance for Students Making a Complaint



[www.bath.ac.uk/guides/student-complaints-policy-and-procedure](http://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/student-complaints-policy-and-procedure)

Every effort is made to ensure that all students have a positive experience during their time at The University of Bath. However, students can make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with an aspect of their experience. The University is committed to ensuring that students can raise matters of concern knowing that these will be looked at carefully and dealt with fairly. In this guidance we set out what can be dealt with under this procedure and how matters will be taken forward for you.

## Seeking Advice and Support

The University recognises that making a complaint can be stressful. You may find it helpful to speak to a member of the Wellbeing Service for emotional or wellbeing support. Alternatively, you can speak to an advisor at the SU's Advice and Support Centre for advice and support. The SU is independent of the University. You can receive impartial support throughout the process with either of these services. You can access these support services before, during and after the complaints process.

You can also contact the Student Complaints Manager for advice about the Complaints Procedure by emailing: [student-complaints@bath.ac.uk](mailto:student-complaints@bath.ac.uk)

You will be treated fairly and offered advice and support.

## Representation during the Complaints Process

We strongly recommend that you bring a friend or advisor to any meeting which you are invited to attend. Any other parties to the complaint will also have this option. The SU can provide an independent advisor to support you during complaints process. You can contact the SU Advice and Support Team by emailing [suadvice@bath.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@bath.ac.uk), calling **01225 386906**, or dropping in to the office at

Level 2 of the SU.

<p><b>What is a complaint?</b></p>	<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University. This can include things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A University service, academic or non-academic</li> <li>• Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration of a course</li> <li>• Misleading or incorrect information about academic programmes</li> <li>• Poor quality facilities, resources or services provided by the University</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who can make a complaint?</b></p>	<p>Any student can make a complaint. For the purpose of this procedure a student is defined as a person who has been accepted to study at the University, a student registered for an award of the University, or a former student who has left the University within the last four calendar months.</p>
<p><b>When can I make a complaint?</b></p>	<p>You may make a complaint about an issue or event(s) which occur(s) while you are enrolled as a student at the University.</p> <p>Whether you are a current or former student, you must submit your complaint as soon as possible and no later than four months after the event occurs. This will ensure it is fresh in everyone's minds and the University will be able to help put things right as soon as possible.</p>
<p><b>How long will this take?</b></p>	<p>We aim to resolve all complaints within 90 days of submission. In practice this timeline could vary depending on the complexity of the complaint and the number of people that need to be consulted in the investigation. We will keep you informed of your complaints progress and you will be notified if it is likely to take longer than anticipated.</p>
<p><b>How do I use the procedure?</b></p>	<p>The procedure consists of three stages which are described below. The purpose of the procedure is to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage and to implement remedies promptly.</p>



## Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

If you are experiencing a problem, you can contact your department, or the manager of the service first to try and resolve things informally. Questions to consider in attempting to early resolution might include:

- What specifically is the concern about and which area(s) of the University is/are involved?
- What outcome are you hoping for and how can it be achieved?
- Is the concern straightforward and likely to be resolved with little or no investigation?
- Can it be resolved on the spot by providing an explanation, an alternative solution or an apology?

This could be resolved by:

- Giving more information
- Providing an explanation
- Suggesting solutions
- Being empathetic and understanding where there is no apparent solution
- Give an apology where it seems appropriate to do so

Whatever early resolution mechanism we might use, you should be able to air your concerns and feel that they have been listened to.

If it is clear that the concern will need to be considered at the formal stage, you will be directed to complete the Student Complaint Form. You can complain directly to Stage 2, if you feel the concern is too complex or serious for informal resolution.

If you are dissatisfied with the response to the complaint at Stage 1, you can submit a formal complaint, using the Student Complaint Form, within 14 days of receiving the outcome.

Download the form at: [www.bath.ac.uk/publications/student-complaints-form](http://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/student-complaints-form)

## Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

This is the formal complaint, initiated when:

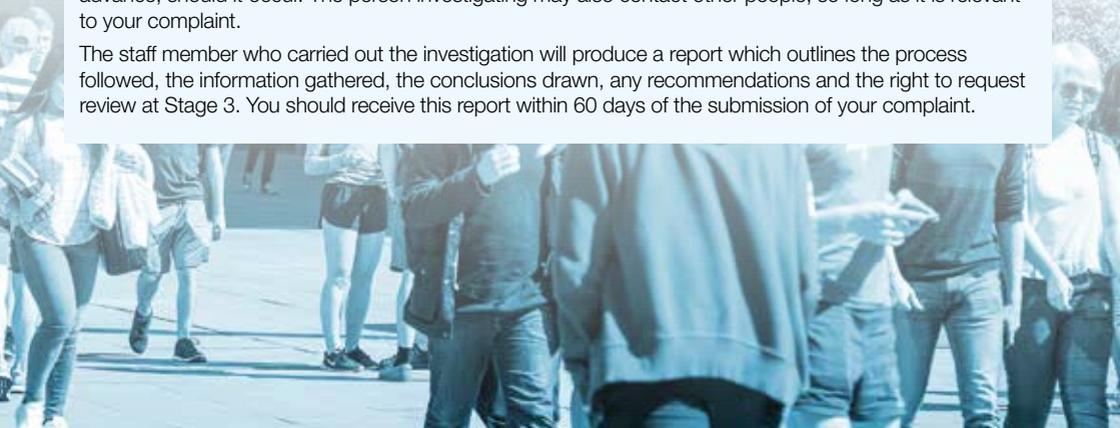
- You decided that early resolution was not appropriate;
- Early resolution was attempted, but the you remain dissatisfied
- The issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation

In order to submit a Stage 2 complaint, you must fill out a Student Complaint Form, setting out your complaint in full, attaching any relevant evidence and sending it to [student-complaints@bath.ac.uk](mailto:student-complaints@bath.ac.uk) copying in the relevant Head of Department or Service if known.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days of submission and the relevant Head of Department or Service will be asked to investigate. If the HoD/S has already been involved or is the subject of the complaint, an alternative member of staff will be identified.

After the complaint has been submitted, you may be contacted for further information. It will be best practice for the person investigating to meet with you to discuss your complaint, and you are able to be accompanied to this meeting by a friend or advisor. More details of the meeting will be given to you in advance, should it occur. The person investigating may also contact other people, so long as it is relevant to your complaint.

The staff member who carried out the investigation will produce a report which outlines the process followed, the information gathered, the conclusions drawn, any recommendations and the right to request review at Stage 3. You should receive this report within 60 days of the submission of your complaint.



## Stage 3 – Review

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, you may submit a request that the outcome of your complaint is reviewed. You must lodge this request for review, using the **Student Request for Review Form**, within 14 calendar days of being notified of the Stage 2 outcome and sending it to **student-complaints-review@bath.ac.uk**. If you don't submit an appeal within the timeframe, you will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter within 28 days.

A request for review can only be considered if it is based on one or more of the following grounds:

- There was procedural error in the conduct of the investigation of such a nature as to cause doubt as to the determination reached;
- New evidence has been made available which could not reasonably have been provided during the investigatory process;
- That the finding of the investigation was inappropriate in light of the evidence.

Using the **Student Request for Review Form**, set out your concerns clearly and provide evidence to support (where possible).

Download the form at: [www.bath.ac.uk/publications/student-complaints-form](http://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/student-complaints-form)

The key questions that will be considered are:

- Were the relevant procedures followed during the formal stage?
- If new material evidence has been provided, have you given valid reasons for not supplying this earlier? (We will not always be able to consider evidence that is provided after the investigation has been completed).
- Was the outcome reasonable in all the circumstances?
- Have you received clear reasons why the complaint was rejected at the formal stage?

A complaint must have been considered at Stage 2 before it can be escalated to the review stage. When undertaking a review, the procedure allows for the decision to overturn any outcome made under Stage 2.

The grounds for review will be determined and undertaken by the Deputy Director (Academic Governance & Compliance) or nominee. Alternatively, if they feel it necessary, a Review Panel will be established.

The decision of this stage shall be the final decision of The University and will be communicated to you, normally within 30 days of the submission of your Request for Review form.

If the complaint is upheld you will be informed of any action to be taken to resolve the matter. If the complaint is not upheld, you will be informed of the reason for this decision, and the University will also issue a Completion of Procedures letter to you stating that the University's internal complaints procedures have been exhausted.

## OIA

Once Stage 3 has been completed, and within twelve months of the date of your Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter, you are entitled to ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to review the University's handling of your complaint under this procedure. The details of this will be given to you on your CoP letter, or alternatively you can seek guidance from their website [www.oiahe.org.uk/students/](http://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/)