

Student Complaints Procedure

This procedure sets out how the [Student Complaints Policy](#) is applied across the University of Bath and explains the various steps which students can take to raise a complaint.

Advice and Support

We understand it can take courage to raise a complaint. There are several services that can support you before, during and after submitting a complaint.

The University's [Student Support Service](#) offers a range of support services that students can access if they need support and guidance, including emotional or wellbeing support, counselling and mental health, disability support, money management and international student advice. Student Support Advisors will be able to provide practical support and advice, and can help students access a range of services.

You can contact an [SU Advisor](#) in confidence who is separate to the University (suadvice@bath.ac.uk). An SU Advisor will listen non-judgementally to your situation, explain the process and offer impartial advice on your options. They will support you by providing 1:1 advice on written statements, joining you in meetings and helping you to understand an outcome.

Postgraduate Research students (PGRs) can contact the [PGR Independent Advisors](#), who are able to provide independent support to PGRs and assistance in navigating University processes.

Students will be offered the opportunity to bring a friend, family member or other support person to the Stage 2 meeting. The support person will be there to provide emotional support to the student and/or to help ensure the student correctly understands the content of the meeting but will not respond on the student's behalf.

We would normally only accept complaints submitted by the student themselves. In some cases, we may consider complaints submitted by a third party on behalf of the student, where the student has provided written consent to the Student Casework Team.

Students with a disability or any specific needs that require adjustments to this process are encouraged to email student-complaints@bath.ac.uk in order for arrangements to be made. Students with a disability can also be accompanied to the meeting by an adviser (or relevant disability support, e.g. BSL interpreter) if required.

The stages of a Student Complaint

There can be up to three stages to a Student Complaint:

- Stage 1 - Informal Resolution
- Stage 2 - Formal Resolution
- Stage 3 - Review by the Student Appeals Panel

Each stage is described in more detail below.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is expected that most complaints can be resolved at an early stage by discussing the matter informally at a local level. Therefore, where possible, a student should bring the matter to the attention of an appropriate member of staff, who will aim to resolve the matter by informal discussion.

Staff should aim to respond to the student/s within five working days of them raising the initial complaint regarding what steps (if any) will be taken to address the complaint and the expected timescale of the informal resolution.

Students are encouraged to raise concerns informally as soon as possible, to allow for prompt resolution before they develop into larger concerns.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

Students who have attempted to resolve the matter informally (including through the ResLife complaint process), but are not satisfied with the outcome, or who feel their concern is too complex or serious for informal resolution, may submit a formal complaint by completing a [Student Complaint Form](#) and emailing it to student-complaints@bath.ac.uk.

If applicable, students should submit their Complaint Form within 10 working days of the outcome of their informal complaint.

The Student Casework Team will acknowledge the receipt of a formal complaint within five working days.

The Investigation

The Head of the Department or Service of which the complaint is about will be responsible for allocating the complaint to an appropriate member of staff to investigate. They may choose to lead the investigation themselves or nominate a colleague to do so.

If the Head or the Department or Service is involved in the matters complained about or it is deemed appropriate to do so, the Student Casework Team will nominate another person to carry out the investigation or may seek advice from a different Head of Department or Service.

If the complaint directly involves the Deputy Director (Student Policy & Safeguarding) or the Head of Governance, a member of the University Executive Board will be assigned to oversee the investigation.

The Stage 2 Meeting

The Investigator will normally arrange to meet (in person or on videocall) with the student, who may choose to be accompanied by a friend or advisor, to discuss the complaint in detail. If a student is unable to attend the arranged meeting, the meeting will be rescheduled. If a student fails to attend both meetings, the investigation may be limited and may be concluded in the student's absence.

During the meeting, the student will be asked to explain their complaint and present any supporting evidence, with the assistance of their representative as necessary, following which they may be asked questions by the Head of Department or Service.

As part of the investigation, the Head may also contact other people relevant to the complaint.

The Investigation Report

The Investigator will produce a report which outlines the process followed, the information gathered, the conclusions drawn and any recommendations. This report will be sent to the Student Casework Team for quality assurance, who will then send the report onto the student.

This report should be sent to the student within 60 calendar days of the formal submission of their complaint. If this is not possible, the student will be informed in writing of the reasons for the delay of the outcome and given a revised timescale for completion.

The Complaint Outcome

- If the complaint is **upheld**, the student will be informed of the action taken to resolve or redress the complaint.
- If the complaint is **partially upheld**, the student will receive an explanation for the decision and be informed of any action taken to resolve or redress parts of the complaint.
- If the complaint is **not upheld**, the student will receive an explanation of the decision.

Student Complaints and Academic Appeal

Where a student raises a student complaint and an academic appeal, the academic appeal will usually be paused, so that the student complaint can be investigated first.

Following the completion of the student complaint investigation, a student may be permitted to request consideration to resume the Academic Appeal process where it was paused, whether at Stage 1 or Stage 2, in specific circumstances where the outcome of the investigation upholds (or partially upholds) elements deemed to have a bearing on the academic decision.

Any consideration to re-open academic appeal procedures will be at the discretion of the Director of Academic Registry and will be carried out as a separate process to the student complaint process.

Process recommendations following Investigation Completion

Where departmental/service process recommendations result from a student complaint investigation, the relevant Head of Department/Service will be provided with access to the final investigation report. They will be responsible for assigning any resulting actions to the appropriate member(s) of staff for implementation and for confirming to the Student Casework Team once the recommendations have been actioned.

Financial and non-financial remedies

Any financial and/or non-financial remedies offered will be determined in accordance with the recommended outcomes of the investigation into the complaint and will be quality assessed by the Student Casework Team, overseen by the Deputy Director of Student Policy and Safeguarding. The approach taken to assess financial and non-financial remedies will be based on precedence and will be in line with current OIA guidelines.

Stage 3 - Review by the Student Appeals Panel

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 complaint, they can use the [Student Appeals Policy](#) to submit an appeal (within the bounds of that policy).

An appeal needs to be submitted within 10 working days of the receipt of the outcome of a Stage 2 complaint.

The decision of this stage shall be the final decision of the University and will be communicated to the student normally within 30 calendar days of the submission of their [Student Appeals Form](#).

A student currently registered on a programme of study at a franchised, validated or partner institution may be permitted to request a review of their student complaint under Stage 3 (where the complaint meets the definition within the Student Complaints policy and could not be resolved through the partner institution complaints policy.)

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

A student may pursue their complaint with the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education](#) if all stages of the University's internal procedures have been exhausted and they are not satisfied with the resolution.

Where a case is considered [eligible](#), the OIA will provide independent adjudication on the resolution of complaints.

Students who choose to ask the OIA to review their complaint must do so within 12 months of the date of their [Completion of Procedures Letter](#).

Completion of Procedures Letter

A Completion of Procedures Letter (COP) is a letter which the University sends to a student when they have reached the end of all available stages of our internal complaints process.

Where a student has completed all three stages of the complaint process and the complaint is not upheld, we will automatically issue a COP within 28 calendar days of the final outcome. If the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, but the student remains dissatisfied, they can request a COP within 28 calendar days of the final outcome.

Where a Stage 2 complaint has been completed but the student is out of time to submit an appeal, or the student feels that they do not have grounds for an appeal, they are able to request a COP within 28 calendar days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome. In this case the COP would be

issued by the Student Casework Team and explain that the student has not completed the internal procedure.

The student will also be issued with a COP where a complaint or an appeal is rejected (for example, if the University decides there is no grounds for it to be investigated at the next stage) within 28 calendar days of receiving this decision. The Student Casework Team will be responsible for issuing the COP letter where the complaint has not been accepted under Stage 2, and the Governance Team will be responsible for issuing the COP letter where the complaint has not been accepted under Stage 3 (appeal stage).

Providing Evidence

Students are encouraged to provide evidence to support their complaint. This may include (but is not limited to) witness statements, independent medical evidence, reports by professionals or financial information.

Students are strongly encouraged to provide evidence at the earliest stages of the complaint, to allow for a thorough investigation and avoid delays. Evidence which is presented at a later stage of the process, but was available at the outset and should have been provided then, may be questioned and may hinder the progress of the investigation. Evidence only available as the investigation progresses will be considered appropriately.

If the University has any doubt about the authenticity of the supporting evidence provided, steps may be taken to verify the evidence. If the evidence is found not to be genuine, the matter may be considered under our [Student Discipline Procedure](#).

Group Complaints

A group of students may use the University of Bath's Student Complaints Procedure to make a group complaint where there is a shared complaint against a service, facility or the academic provision of the University. The group may be asked to nominate one student to act as the group representative.

If issues have impacted students within the same group in different ways, it may be appropriate to handle some of the complaints individually.

It may be pragmatic to allocate such individual complaints to the same investigator as the group complaint, so the core issue of complaints may be investigated once, and the decisions can be made consistently, although the individual complaints may have different outcomes.

Support for Staff Connected to a Complaint

Where staff are connected to a student complaint, the process should not be directed at specific individuals, as responsibility is with the department or service.

Connected staff will be notified of the complaint, name of complainant and timescale of investigation and kept informed as they need to be. They will be provided with redacted copies of

the complaint to ensure confidentiality is maintained and will be sent a copy of the relevant sections in the final investigation report.

The investigator should consider the wellbeing of any connected staff member, recognising the impact a complaint may have on those involved. Staff should be encouraged to bring a colleague, friend or/and trade union representative to any investigation meetings for support and guidance, and should be reminded that they can access support from HR.

The Student Casework Team will provide guidance to investigators on how to inform staff likely to be interviewed as part of the investigation and will support them throughout the process.

If you have any queries about the Student Complaint Procedure, please contact the Student Casework Team at student-complaints@bath.ac.uk.

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