

Student Complaints Policy

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1. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to provide an opportunity for anyone who is or was registered as a student at the University to resolve any complaint in respect of different aspects of his / her relationship with Regent's University London (Regent's). The term 'student' includes those who are or were enrolled or provisionally enrolled on a programme of study offered by Regent's as well as those who have left the University within the last three months.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that student complaints are dealt with fairly and appropriately, by providing clear and accessible information to staff and students on how the student(s) concerned can make his / her views known and receive an appropriate response. All complaints will be managed with a regard to confidentiality as appropriate and in accordance with data protection legislation and University policy on data. In addition, students and staff may access support for this process through the Student Support team. This policy is informed by the OIA good practice framework for handling complaints and appeals:

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers-and-good-practice/good-practice-framework/handling-complaints-and-academic-appeals.aspx>

2. Policy statement

Regent's aims to resolve quickly and fairly any complaint that a student may have about different aspects of his / her relationship with Regent's University London. These aspects include relationships with academic or professional staff, any complaints in respect of any services, such as Accommodation, Catering, Finance, and any complaints in respect of academic programmes or the delivery of such programmes.

Regent's is committed to managing complaints in a way that:

- Is timely and efficient, to facilitate a speedy resolution
- Is fair and transparent to all parties
- Promotes informal conciliation where appropriate
- Promotes feedback and best practice to inform departments, and programmes, and enhance the student experience

The Student Complaints Policy applies to any student who is or was enrolled or provisionally enrolled on a programme of study offered by Regent's University London. This includes programmes which are externally validated, as well as all programmes leading to a Regent's University London award.

A group of students may use the procedure outlined below to make a collective complaint provided that one student identifies themselves as the lead complainant and contact for purposes of communication. However, this does not mean that all students within the group of complainants will receive the same outcome as a result of the complaint.

Any student wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to do so personally. A complaint from a third party other than the student will be considered only if the student is incapacitated for medical reasons

or hospitalised. This may also be permitted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Head of Student Support or nominee.

Anonymous complaints will not be considered as it is not possible to investigate them fully.

3. Scope

The aim of this policy is to cover complaints relating to the quality of teaching or supervision, or other services or circumstances that relate to the delivery of a programme of study, or student experience at Regent's. This may include relationships with academic or administrative staff, or complaints in respect of any University services. Examples of such complaints can be found in Appendix 1.

The procedure to be followed under the Student Complaints Policy does **not** cover the following situations:

- i. Complaints about other students. These in the first instance should be directed to the Director of Content of the complaining student's programme of study.
- ii. Complaints about disciplinary matters or bullying and harassment from another student. These are covered under the University's Student Disciplinary Policy and Student Code of Conduct.
- iii. Extenuating circumstances applications.

If a student does not agree with a particular University policy or regulation but does not wish to dispute the fact that the policy or regulation has been fairly and correctly applied to them, the matter should be raised by the student with the relevant Student Council President, so that their concerns can be raised at the appropriate committee. The Student Complaints Procedure should not be used in these circumstances.

In the event of a set of circumstances legitimately giving rise to grounds for both an academic appeal and a formal complaint, the issue should be brought to the attention of the Head of Quality and Enhancement who shall determine, in consultation with the appellant/complainant, the process in which the matter shall be reviewed. The requirements of the respective regulations/procedures will be fully adhered to.

The Student Complaints Policy does not cover allegations of criminal activity or criminal intent.

These allegations will immediately be referred to the Head of Student Support and the Police.

a) Guiding principles

The Student Complaints Policy is concerned primarily with the student experience and ensuring that the appropriate frameworks are in place to achieve a high quality experience for Regent's students. It also seeks to aid staff by setting out clearly defined processes and procedures, which are both transparent and fair.

The University aims to balance the rights of the student complainant and those of any person complained against; all parties must be treated with dignity and respect. Where a complaint is made against a staff member, and there may be a conflict of interest for the staff member conducting the investigation, an independent investigator will be appointed. Students should not expect to suffer any disadvantage or reprisals for making a complaint in good faith, and any evidence of recrimination should be brought immediately to the attention of the Head of Student Support. If, however, a complaint is judged to be malicious or vexatious, the student concerned may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

If it is not possible and / or appropriate to deal with the issue at a local level then the member of staff to which the complaint is made may recommend that the complaint proceed directly to the formal stage of the complaints procedure (Stage 2) outlined below.

Only complaints submitted using the **Student Complaints Form** will be dealt with as formal complaints.

Students are encouraged to seek advice from the Student Union or the Student Hub regarding the complaints process.

4. Key terms and definitions

Feedback

It is important to distinguish between a complaint and feedback. Regent's seeks and welcomes the views of its students. Any student may provide feedback which will be useful to the institute, department or service when reviewing its policies and operations, without invoking this policy. Students are encouraged to provide feedback at a local level to the appropriate programme, department or service provider in a prompt and constructive manner.

Complaint

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint may be defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a university's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the university." The expression of dissatisfaction may take the form of an informal complaint (verbal or written e.g. email) or a formal complaint made using the Student Complaints Form, available from on the Student Hub.

5. Responsibilities

All staff and students at Regent's are expected to be responsible for implementing this policy. This policy will be available to all staff, students and prospective students.

6. Process

a) Stages of complaint

Stage		Regent's will normally aim to resolve complaints within:
1	Informal level	2 working weeks
2	Formal review	5 working weeks
3	Appeal	3 working weeks

In exceptional circumstances the University may extend the deadlines outlined above provided that there are clear and justifiable reasons for doing so. In such cases the student will be notified of the extension in writing by the University which will provide a revised deadline for resolution. Regent's is committed to ensuring that all complaints are resolved to completion within 90 days of the initial complaint being received if all stages are required.

Complaints should always start at the informal level wherever possible. At all stages of the complaints process, students are encouraged to keep a record of action taken to resolve the complaint and keep copies of any relevant correspondence.

All complaints will be regarded as informal until a Student Complaints Form has been received by Student Support.

If a student making a complaint has a Student Support Agreement and requires any reasonable adjustments to be made during the complaints process, they should contact the Support & Welfare team.

b) Making a complaint

i. Stage 1: Informal Level

Students are expected to try to resolve complaints directly, informally, and quickly with the person concerned. In a minority of cases, it may be more appropriate for the student to contact their Director of Content, Course Leader, Module Leader, Academic Operations Officer or Student Support. In the case where a complaint relates to one student complaining about another, the complainant should approach the relevant Module Leader, Director of Content or the Head of Student Support (or nominee).

All complaints should be made within three working weeks of the perceived unsatisfactory circumstances occurring. The University reserves the right not to progress any complaint which is submitted outside of this deadline.

The student is expected to explain clearly what the problem is and what outcome they are seeking, and the member of staff is expected to listen to the complaint. Staff dealing with complaints are encouraged, whenever practical, to meet with the student to establish the precise cause of dissatisfaction, to explore the remedy sought by the student and to foster a mutual understanding of the issues involved. Complaints will, as far as is reasonable, be treated confidentially.

Although the complaint is considered to be informal at this stage, the member of staff will take reasonable action to address the cause of the complaint and prevent recurrence. It may be, however, that further discussion about the overarching principles of a complaint is required in meetings or committees before the matter can be resolved. Specific details of complaints or complainants will not be discussed at such meetings. Where appropriate, the complainant will be informed of the outcome of any University discussions relating to their complaint.

Regent's University London will not formally respond to informal complaints in writing but will keep the student informed of action taken to address the cause of the complaint via email. If their complaint is not upheld, or if the student feels that the resolution of their complaint is not satisfactory, they can move to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

It is expected that most complaints will be resolved at this informal level.

ii. **Stage 2: Formal Review**

Where the complaint has not been dealt with at Stage 1, or if Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Procedure does not provide a satisfactory outcome for the student, they can make a formal complaint within 20 working days.

In such cases, the student must complete a Student Complaints Form (available from the Student Hub) to set out:

- What their complaint is
- What the supporting evidence is
- Why informal resolution of the complaint was unsuccessful
- What outcome(s) they are hoping to achieve.

Supporting evidence must be submitted with every complaint form. This may include signed witness statements, letters, emails and any other relevant information.

Upon completion, the form should be submitted to the Student Support department via the following email address: studentcomplaints@regents.ac.uk

Student Services will only review complaints submitted using the Student Complaints Form, and the form should be submitted within 20 working days of notification of the outcome of Stage 1 of this procedure.

If the form does not set out clearly and with reasonable brevity the points indicated above, or is submitted without appropriate evidence, the student will be asked to resubmit the form within 5 working days, in a manner that enables proper consideration of the complaint to take place. If the form is not resubmitted within 5 working days, the formal complaint may be dismissed on the grounds that proper consideration cannot take place.

Student Support or nominee will acknowledge receipt of the Student Complaints Form normally within 5 working days. Student Support will then review the form to determine whether the issue identified by the complainant is covered by the Student Complaints Policy, or whether the student should be referred to a different policy or procedure.

If Student Support believe that the student has valid grounds for a complaint and has submitted appropriate supporting evidence, the complaint will be added to the Complaints Log, and a record

stored of the complaint. A complaint without adequate grounds will be dismissed and the student informed. A complaint without adequate evidence will be referred back to the student for resubmission within 5 working days. If the complaint is not resubmitted, or is resubmitted without adequate evidence, the formal complaint may be dismissed.

Once the complaint has been added to the Complaints Log, the Head of Student Support or nominee will refer the complaint to a trained Complaints Officer who is not connected to the programme, department, or service area to which the complaint relates, who will then investigate the matter. The complainant will be notified that their complaint has been referred to a Complaints Officer and will be provided with their name.

The Complaints Officer will make reasonable inquiries to establish the facts of the case. Prior to any investigative meetings, it will be made clear to any person whose co-operation is sought that questions, answers, comments, or the production of documents, relate to an investigation into a formal complaint. Any student or member of staff participating in an investigation arising under this procedure has the right to be accompanied by:

- Students - Student Union representative, parent, friend or disability advocate
- Staff - Trade Union or professional association representative or work colleague. The Complaints Officer must keep the Head of Student Support or nominee updated at all stages of the investigation.

The Complaints Officer will be advised through the process by a member of the Registry.

If the complaint is about the Head of Student Support, the complaint will be reviewed by the Head of Registry or a nominee.

The investigation and its outcome will be fair and reasonable.

If the investigator decides to uphold the student's complaint, they will confirm this with their investigation report to the Student Complaints Panel who will then decide any action they deem reasonable and appropriate to resolve the complaint, bearing in mind the outcome(s) sought by the student. The Chair of the Student Complaints Panel will write to the complainant to confirm the outcome of the investigation and inform the Student Support department, where the outcome can be logged.

The Complaints Panel will be chaired by the Head of Student Support or their delegate and have the following membership (all members will be independent and have not been involved in the complaint being considered):

- Head of Student Support (Chair)
- Senior academic member of staff
- Senior manager from Professional Services
- Student representative
- Secretary from Registry or nominee

Where the upheld complaint either expressly or by implication infers incompetence or misconduct by a member of staff, then the matter may be referred to the Human

Resources department for investigation. Under the staff disciplinary procedure, the findings of the complaint investigation will not constitute incontrovertible statements of fact, but merely evidence in that investigation.

The student will be informed of the next stage of the Student Complaints Procedure if their complaint is not upheld or if the student feels that the resolution of their complaint is not satisfactory.

The written reply will be sent by Chair of the Complaints Panel within 5 working weeks of receipt of the Student Complaints Form. In exceptional circumstances, if it is envisaged that the investigation will take no longer than 5 working weeks, the student will be informed by the Complaints Officer of the reason and an expected date of response.

Complainants, and individuals named in complaints, can request an update of the progress of the complaint at all stages by contacting the Complaints Officer who is leading the investigation.

iii. Stage 3: Appeal

Where a student believes that the student complaint procedures have not been followed correctly or new evidence has been produced that was not considered as part of the original complaint or their complaint has not been appropriately addressed, or the decision regarding the outcome of their complaint is unreasonable they have the right to appeal against the decision of the Stage 2 investigator or the Complaints Panel. New evidence may be considered at the discretion of the University provided that there is a justified reason as to why the evidence was not provided at the beginning of the formal investigation stage.

In such cases, the '[Appeals Form: Student Complaints](#)' must be sent with full supporting evidence to the Quality Office (QualityOffice@regents.ac.uk) within 10 working days of the date the outcome of the Stage 2 process is communicated to the student. The Quality Office will acknowledge receipt of the appeals form within 5 working days.

The Quality Office will review the appeal form and decide whether there is any new evidence that has come to light or whether the Student Complaints Procedure has not been followed correctly.

All appeal forms should be submitted within 10 working days of notification of the outcome of Stage 2 of the student complaints procedure. The University reserves the right not to progress any appeal which is submitted outside of this deadline. An appeal form submitted without adequate grounds and/or evidence will be dismissed and the appellant informed. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued to confirm that the University's internal processes have been exhausted.

If, after reviewing the appeals form, it is judged that the student has grounds for appeal and has provided sufficient evidence the case will progress to an Appeal Panel. The Quality Office will inform the Head of Students Support and the Complaints Log will be updated.

iv. Membership of the Appeal Panel

- An independent Director of Content or Director of People
- Head of Registry
- Three members of academic or academic-related University Staff

- Invited parties (e.g. staff or students)
- Secretary from Registry or nominee

The panel will have the following options available to them:

- to dismiss the appeal; – in which case the student will receive a written response giving reasons, and a "Completion of Procedures" letter will be issued to the complainant;
- to uphold the appeal and require a new Student Complaints Panel to re-hear the case including any new evidence submitted as part of the appeal, in which case, both the student and the Stage 2 investigator will receive a written explanation of the decision. A "Completion of Procedures" letter will also be issued to the complainant;
- Uphold part, but not all, of the appeal and decide upon an appropriate resolution – in which case, both the student and the Stage 2 investigator will receive a written explanation of the decision. A "Completion of Procedures" letter will also be issued to the complainant.

The University aims to resolve an appeal within 3 weeks of submission. In exceptional circumstances the University may extend the deadlines outlined above, provided that there are clear and justifiable reasons for doing so. In such cases the student will be notified of the extension in writing by the Quality Officer, and the University should provide a revised deadline for resolution. The complainant will be notified in writing of the Appeals Panel's decision within ten working days of the panel meeting. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

Where the upheld appeal either expressly or by implication infers incompetence or misconduct by a member of staff, then the matter may be referred to the Human Resources department for investigation. Under the staff disciplinary procedure, the findings of the complaint investigation will not constitute incontrovertible statements of fact, but merely evidence in that investigation.

c) Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Once a formal "Completion of Procedures" letter has been issued, if the student feels their complaint is still not resolved or that the outcome is unreasonable in relation to the evidence, they may raise their complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

The OIA is an independent body that operates externally to the University. It will not normally look at a complaint until all relevant internal complaints procedures have been exhausted. It should be noted that the role of the OIA is to review the final decision of the University; it is not to re-investigate the complaint. Further information is available from the OIA website <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

The Head of Student Support will be notified by the Registry of all Completion of Procedures letter issued in regard to Appeals related to Formal Complaints. The Head of Student Support or nominee will update the Complaints Log and record accordingly.

Where students are enrolled on a programme that is validated by an awarding body other than Regent's University London, the awarding body's regulations will apply. Once the University's internal processes are complete, the Registrar/Head of Student Support, or nominee, will provide a letter of final decision for complaints and appeals, advising the student of their right to appeal to the awarding body.

7. Monitoring and review of the policy

Monitoring of this policy is conducted throughout the year as part of the University's normal business processes

The annual number of complaints and appeals reaching stages two and three of the Student Complaints Process will be used as a measure of the policy's success.

The Head of Student Support will maintain a Complaints Log of all cases brought under stage 2 and 3 of the Complaints Policy. The Head of Student Support will file an annual report to the Academic Committee, on:

- a) the number, type (stage 2 or 3) and the programme or service the complaint is about;
- b) the outcomes of the complaints;
- c) any recommendations for amendment to the policy and procedures.

The Academic Committee will oversee the effectiveness of this policy and recommend the terms of a review where required.

8. Dependencies

None

9. Related documents

Regent's University London Student Charter
Regent's University London Academic Regulations
Regent's University London Code of Conduct for Students
Regent's University London Disciplinary Policy
Regent's University London Fitness to Study Policy
Regent's University London Under 18s Safeguarding Policy
Regent's University London Halls Code of Conduct
Regent's University London IT Acceptable Use Policy

10. APPENDIX 1

Examples of student complaints

All student complaints should initially be addressed under the informal stage of the Student Complaints Procedure. The following are examples of complaints that may need to move to the formal stage of the procedure:

- failure by the University to meet obligations including those outlined in course/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 or administration including, where applicable, that provided by a partner institution
- poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the University
- complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the University.
- A student with an identified disability is not offered appropriate alternative assessments.