



UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

Complaints Procedure for Students General Principles

Our Complaints Procedure for Students operates on the following general principles. These principles are to ensure fairness, reassurance, and confidence to all.

1. **Expectations:**

- 1.1. You will not be disadvantaged or subject to prejudice by making/pursuing a complaint. All complaints will be responded to professionally, sensitively and in a supportive manner.
- 1.2. All individuals interacting with this procedure are expected to conduct themselves courteously and respectfully, reflecting [dignity and respect](#).
- 1.3. All complaints and associated materials will be used in compliance with relevant legislation and for the purpose of the University's Complaints Procedure for Students. Information relating to individual complaints will be retained in accordance with the University's [Master Records Retention Schedule](#) and usually deleted six years after the last action on the complaint. Any personal data in complaints will be processed in line with the University's [Data Protection Policy](#). More general information about how the University uses personal data can be found in our Privacy Notice [here](#).

2. **Processing:**

- 2.1. If your complaint relates to an academic provision on a taught course, the University expects you to contact your course director or Director of Teaching & Learning in your school, in the first instance (Level 1).
- 2.2. During the investigation stage (Level 2), a sufficient level of detail is required to enable a focused and meaningful investigation to take place. When this is not present, the University will place your complaint on hold until the required level of articulation is provided. The University reserves the right to suspend further steps until/unless a statement of complaint is forthcoming which can serve as a basis for investigation.
- 2.3. Multi-issue complaints. This is a complaint that may fall within the remit of more than one procedure. If this does occur, we will inform you of what issues cannot be considered under the Complaints Procedure for Students and will direct you to the appropriate procedure(s). The University reserves the right to determine, in any given case, which

internal procedure is the most appropriate. Our decision is final.

2.4. A group complaint. This is when an issue is raised that affects more than one student. It may be more practical for the concern to be considered as a group. A complaint can be considered as a group complaint in the following circumstances:

- i) Each member of the group unanimously nominates a 'group representative' to act on their behalf. The group representative is to liaise and act on behalf of the group.
- ii) Each member of the group provides written consent to the University that the group representative is to act on their behalf.
- iii) Each member of the group confirms that the proposed group complaint is a full and complete articulation of their complaint. This includes the details, impact and proposed outcome.
- iv) Each member of the group confirms agreement to all evidence submitted by the group representative; and
- v) The group representative consents to the University that they will act in this capacity and agrees to liaise with group members throughout the process.

2.5. You will not be able to be a member of a group complaint if you do not meet all the criteria outlined in section [2.4]. In such circumstances, you are advised to submit an individual complaint.

2.6. The University reserves the right to refuse to accept or progress a group complaint. A typical example of a refusal of a group complaint occurs when there is insufficient common ground between the proposed group complaint members. In such circumstances, you are advised to submit an individual complaint.

2.7. If you are a former student and submit your complaint outside our prescribed time-period, you may still be considered via our complaints procedure for the public. Alternatively, you will be issued a Completion of Procedure Letter confirming your complaint is out of time. Our decision is final.

3. Support:

3.1. Seeking advice. You can obtain advice and support for your complaint. This can be obtained from:

- A member of the Students' Union Advice and Representation Centre, part of the University of Sussex Students' Union.
- Advisory staff within the Student Experience Directorate, such as the Student Life Centre.

3.2. To be accompanied. You can be accompanied during any aspect of this procedure where appropriate. A person accompanying you is not permitted to make any representations, respond on your behalf, or attend in a legal capacity. An individual who may accompany you is:

- A fellow student

- A member of the Students' Union Advice and Representation Centre, part of the University of Sussex Students' Union.
- 3.3. Representation. This is an internal procedure and therefore it is appropriate for students to represent themselves. A third party can only represent you if there is a compelling reason for this to take place, for example a reasonable adjustment. In such circumstances, agreement must be obtained in advance by the University.
- 3.4. Legal Representation at any stage of the process may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and if considered necessary by the University. The University's decision is final. The University reserves the right to place a complaint on hold if legal proceedings are to take place.

4. Restrictions:

- 4.1. We are unable to accept the following complaints:
- i) matters concerning University policy, procedures and/or management. These elements are under the active oversight of the University's properly constituted governance bodies. You can raise any such concerns by contacting your Students' Union representatives. Your Students' Union representative represents you on University governance bodies, including the most senior body (University Council).
 - ii) a decision of academic judgement and or of an academic body (e.g. Examination Board). This is defined as an Academic Appeal and is dealt with under the separate Academic Appeals Procedure.
 - iii) a complaint against another student. This is dealt with under the separate [Student Disciplinary Procedures](#).
 - iv) To challenge a decision relating to admission or student fee status matters. Both have their own dedicated complaints/appeal routes. You are to refer to the [admissions appeals and complaints](#), or, [fee status appeals](#) for further information.
 - v) complaints which are considered frivolous (unfounded, trivial) or malicious (with vindictive motivation). Our decision on this matter is final.
- 4.2. We are unable to accept anonymous complaints in the interest of ensuring appropriate information is collated to inform a complaint investigation. The University reserves the right to how anonymous complaints are responded to.
- 4.3. No reimbursement of expenses incurred from submitting a complaint will be made.