

Regent College London

Student Complaints Procedure

Purpose

1. This document describes the procedure the College will use to deal with complaints from students (including prospective students, current students and recent students) about something the College (or a member of College staff) has done or not done.
2. The primary audiences for this document are:
 - Students wishing to make a complaint (referred to in this document as ‘the complainant’);
 - College staff involved in the complaints procedure (including those who may be complained about).
3. This document has been developed by reference to the [Good Practice Framework for handling complaints and academic appeals](#) published by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

Advice and support

4. Students needing further advice about, or support with, making a complaint should contact their Customer Service Officer (CSO).

Who does this procedure apply to?

If you are...	Then...
A HND student on a programme leading to an award from Pearson	All parts of this procedure apply to you.
On a programme leading to an award from the University of Bolton	For complaints that relate to academic standards and quality, stages one and two of this procedure (paragraphs 16 to 43) apply to you but appeals after stage two should be directed to the University. Please see the University’s Policy Zone for more information. For complaints that do not relate to academic standards and quality, all parts of this procedure apply to you.
On a programme leading to an award from Buckinghamshire New University	Stages one and two of this procedure (paragraphs 16 to 43) apply to you but appeals after stage two should be directed to the University.
On a programme leading to an award From St. Mary’s University	This procedure applies to you apart from paragraph 44. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint, you can lodge a Stage

	2 complaint with the University, as set out in its Student Complaints Procedure .
On a programme leading to an award from Regent College	All parts of this procedure apply to you.

5. If you are not sure about who gives the award at the end of your programme, please contact your CSO.

What is a student complaint?

6. For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a student with any action of lack of action by the College, or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of, the College.

7. Examples of complaints include:

- a failure by the College to do the things we say we do in the Student Charter;
- poor quality of IT services by the College;
- misleading or incorrect information in a prospectus or programme handbook.

8. A complaint can be about the College or about a service provided by another organisation on the College's behalf, such as a work placement provider.

9. Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event or issue is being complained about. Normally, the College will not accept a complaint about an action or lack of action which took place more than a month before the complainant raises the issue with a member of Student Services or lodges a formal complaint.

What is not a student complaint?

10. This procedure is not meant to deal with:

- allegations or concerns about the behaviour of other students. These should be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Procedure or the Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedure;
- allegations or concerns about harassment, bullying or victimisation by staff. These should be dealt with through the Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedure (although they may be referred back to this procedure for investigation in some circumstances);
- dissatisfaction about grades or marks. These should be dealt with under the Consolidated Appeals Procedure;
- dissatisfaction with the outcome of another procedure, such as the Mitigating Circumstances procedure. These should also be dealt with under the Consolidated Appeals Procedure.

Who can make a student complaint?

11. A student complaint can be made by:

- a prospective student, defined as someone who is applying to be a student on a higher education course;
- a student enrolled on a higher education course;
- someone who was enrolled on a higher education course at the College within the last three months.

12. Subject to these criteria, a student complaint can be made by an individual student or group of students. In the case of a group complaint, the College will ask the group to nominate a group representative and communicate to the group through that representative.

Who cannot make a student complaint?

13. The College will not accept student complaints from third parties unless they are acting as the complainant's representative.

14. Normally, the College will not accept anonymous complaints unless there is a compelling case to investigate it supported by evidence.

15. Complainants may ask for their complaint, or elements of the complaint, to remain confidential to others involved in the procedure. An example might be where a student provides a witness statement from a fellow student about a member of staff and wishes for the identity of that fellow student not to be shown to the member of staff. However, requests for confidentiality such as this may limit the College's capacity to investigate the matter. Further information will be given to a complainant by the member of staff dealing with the case.

How the procedure works

Stage 1: early resolution

16. Early resolution is meant to address straightforward concerns quickly, without the need to enter the formal part of the procedure.

17. Students considering or wishing to make a complaint should raise the issue with their CSO. The CSO will then explore with the complainant the details of the underlying issue, what outcome the complainant is seeking or hoping for and the potential for achieving that through early resolution, such as by providing the complainant with further information, an alternative solution or an apology.

18. If the complainant does not feel comfortable raising the issue with their CSO (perhaps because the complaint is about the CSO), they should contact another member of the Student Services team, such as the Customer Service Manager.

19. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the CSO may suggest early resolution using conciliation. Conciliation is a voluntary process where an impartial, third party helps parties to resolve issues confidentially.

20. The College aims to complete the early resolution stage within 10 working days of the complainant raising the issue with the CSO (or other member of the Student Services team). At the end of an attempt at early resolution, the CSO (or another member of the Student Services team) will write to the complainant setting out the outcome.

Stage 2: formal complaint

21. The formal complaint process is initiated when:

- early resolution was attempted but failed to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction;
- the complainant wishes not to engage in early resolution;
- the issues raised in the complaint are complex, serious or contentious, and require to be formally investigated.

22. Complainants wishing to make a formal complaint should do so using the Student Complaints Form. This form asks for details about the action or lack of action giving rise to the complaint and how the complainant would like the complaint resolved. It also asks for evidence about the case, such as emails or other correspondence, documents published by the College or notes of conversations.

23. The completed Students Complaints Form should be submitted to Academic Quality (Academic.Quality@rcl.ac.uk).

24. If the form submitted does not provide enough information to determine whether the incident can and should be investigated as part of this procedure, the complainant may be asked to add more information and resubmit it. This may extend the time it takes to investigate the complaint.

25. If the completed form describes a matter which cannot be investigated under this procedure, Academic Quality may refer some or all of it to a different procedure or reject it entirely. If it is rejected, the complainant will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter explaining the rejection and details of how the complainant may apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education for an external review.

26. If the completed form describes a complaint which can be investigated under this procedure, Academic Quality will commission a senior member of College staff with no prior knowledge of the case to investigate it. The complainant will be told who that member of staff is, so that they may raise any objections (for example, because of a perception of bias).

27. The member of staff investigating the complaint may talk to other staff and students and consider documents and other evidence. They will then produce a report of their investigation describing the process they followed, the information they considered, the conclusions they have drawn and any recommendations for remedial action by the College.

28. The written report will be considered by the Director of Academic Quality, who will then write to the complainant setting out the outcome of the investigation.

29. Where the investigation finds the complaint is unfounded, the outcome will be that the complaint is rejected, and the complainant will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter explaining the rejection and details of how the complainant may apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education for an external review.

30. Where the investigation finds the complaint is wholly or partly substantiated, the outcome will be:

- to suggest a resolution of the complaint through conciliation (where conciliation has not been tried before); or,
- an explanation or offer of remedial action or redress by the College. This might be an apology to the complainant, a description of the changes the College is making to ensure the action does not happen again and/or an offer of compensation; or,
- the convening of a formal hearing to consider the complaint in more detail. This may happen where the issues or events giving rise to the complaint are contested and/or involve several other people.

31. The complainant should receive the outcome of the investigation within one month of lodging the formal complaint with Academic Quality.

Formal hearing

32. Where the outcome of the investigation is a formal hearing, the hearing shall be organised and serviced by a member of the Academic Quality team. Its membership shall be two members of senior staff (at Dean of School level or above) with no prior involvement in the case, one of whom shall be designated as the Chair.

33. A complainant whose complaint is to be considered by in a formal hearing will be notified in writing, a minimum of 10 working days prior to the date of the hearing, of the following:

- the membership of the Panel and their right to object to a Panel member;
- their right to be accompanied/represented at the hearing by a friend or representative (but normally not a legal representative);
- the names of any witnesses called by the College;
- their right to call witnesses and the arrangements for doing that;
- their right to question any witnesses through the Chair;
- their right to submit documentary evidence prior to the hearing and the time limits for doing that;
- the content of any documentation intended to be used or referred to in the meeting or as part of the meeting.

34. The complainant will have the right to object to a Panel member, for example on the grounds of bias. If an objection is made, it must be done no later than five days prior to the Panel hearing, with supporting information as to why the Panel member is considered by the complainant to be unsuitable. The Head of Academic Quality will consider whether the complainant's representation is valid, whether an alternative Panel member can be allocated in sufficient time for the meeting to continue as scheduled, or whether the meeting may need to be postponed pending further consideration.

35. The complainant will have the right to submit documentary evidence to the Panel. This must be done no later than five days prior to the hearing.

36. The complainant will have the right to call witnesses to appear at the hearing. The complainant must inform the Panel about any witnesses they are calling no later than five days prior to the Panel hearing. It is the complainant's responsibility to inform any witnesses they are calling about the time and venue of the Panel hearing. Should any witnesses called by the complainant not appear at the hearing, the panel may proceed to hear the case.

37. If further evidence comes to light, prior to or at the Panel meeting, which the complainant or the College has not already had access to, the evidence will be provided to both parties and the Chair will consider how or whether to proceed with the Panel meeting.

38. If the complainant does not appear before the panel, the panel may proceed to hear the case if it is satisfied that proper notice of the hearing has been given to the complainant, and there are no grounds for believing that the complainant might have good and proper reasons for not attending. Otherwise, the hearing may be adjourned, usually on one occasion only, for the service of further notice to the complainant. If it is decided to deal with the case in the absence of the complainant, no matter shall be introduced which is not contained or referred to in the particulars notified to the complainant.

39. Witnesses may be called to give evidence either by the complainant or by the Panel. Witnesses may be questioned. All questions will be put through the Panel Chair. Students who appear as witnesses shall have the right to be accompanied by a friend or representative.

40. A member of the Academic Quality team will attend the hearing to advise on regulatory and procedural matters and shall be responsible for the official record, a copy of which shall be sent to the complainant and Chair of the Panel.

41. The outcomes available to the panel are the same as those described in paragraph 30.

42. The outcome determined by the Panel must be sent to the complainant in a written report normally within seven days of the panel meeting.

43. The College aims to complete the formal complaint process within 60 days of receiving the Students Complaints Form from the complainant. Completion is defined as sending the complainant written confirmation of the outcome of the complaint, including where a formal hearing is held.

Stage 3: appeals

44. Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint may appeal using the relevant part of the Consolidated Appeals Procedure within 14 days of receiving the outcome.

Analysis of complaints

45. The College keeps records of all complaints and provides Academic Council with an annual report on complaints so that Academic Council may be assured that the College is handling

complaints according to this procedure. The annual report also allows Academic Council to reflect on complaints received and their outcomes in the context of its oversight of academic standards and quality.

<i>Version number</i>	<i>3.11</i>
<i>Approved by</i>	<i>Academic Council</i>
<i>Approval date</i>	<i>July 2024</i>
<i>Next review date</i>	<i>July 2025</i>
<i>Policy owner</i>	<i>Academic Quality</i>