

# Student Complaint Policy

## 1. Introduction

We welcome feedback from students because it is chiefly by listening to students' views that we can monitor the service we are providing and ensure that we continue to provide students with the high level of service that they expect, but also better enable us to improve that service.

We are a large online community and from time to time, a student may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of their dealings with us, and, when that happens, it is important that the issue is dealt with constructively and as quickly as possible 'without risk or disadvantage or recrimination'. Each case will be considered on its own merit and in accordance with the evidence and circumstances presented.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) define a complaint as:

"An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a provider's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider"

Examples of complaints include:

- Failure by the University of Essex Online to meet its obligations
- Misleading or incorrect information provided by the University of Essex Online (e.g. in prospectuses or promotional material)
- Concerns about the delivery of the programme, teaching or administration
- Poor learning resources provided directly by the University of Essex Online.

## Raising a Complaint

1. This procedure is intended to provide a timely, simple and streamlined process with a strong focus on early resolution.
2. Students wishing to raise a complaint should follow each stage of the complaint procedure and would not usually be permitted to skip a stage. The stages are:

- 2.1. Early Resolution (see section 4) - seeks to resolve concerns swiftly and effectively at the point at which the concern is raised, or as close to that point as possible, for example departmental level. In all cases, students will be directed to the next stage of the procedure if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Early Resolution stage.
- 2.2. Formal Complaint (see section 5) – is appropriate where a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the early resolution, or where early resolution is not possible. This will usually be investigated by an independent Complaint investigator appointed by the Quality and Enhancement team. This stage may include mediation or conciliation where appropriate.
- 2.3. Internal Review (see section 8) - provides an opportunity for a formal review, carried out by the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee), of the process of the formal complaint stage to ensure that appropriate procedures were followed; and/or that the outcome was reasonable. This stage does not usually require a reconsideration of the issues raised.
- 2.4. External Review (see section 9) – where the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can submit a request for review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter issued by the provider.
3. All concerns or complaints should be submitted as soon as possible after the events or actions which have prompted them, and usually within the timeframes outlined in these procedures. Students should be prepared to provide evidence to support their concerns or complaint and where required, students should use the relevant Complaint Form available on the Learning Platform or website.
4. If a concern or complaint is made directly to the Managing Director or to our awarding body, the University of Essex, it will be passed to the Quality and Enhancement team who will ensure that it is referred to the most appropriate person, in line with the published procedure.

## **Advice, Support and Guidance**

5. The Student Support Team can provide advice and guidance regarding how to access and engage with the Complaints process. Representatives are permitted to accompany students to meetings at any stage of the procedure. The procedure is an internal process and does not have the same degree of formality as a court of law. A student may not usually bring anyone

to a meeting that is not a member of the University of Essex Online unless it has been agreed as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010.

6. If a complainant appears unable to engage effectively with the procedure, it may be necessary to suspend consideration of their concern or complaint until they have accessed appropriate support.
7. We have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence, harassment and hate crime. Students that are the victim of harassment or bullying may submit a complaint and are encouraged to seek support via from the designated Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity.
8. Students may request reasonable adjustments to these procedures in line with the rights that students retain under the Equality Act 2010. Requests will be considered individually, and students will be notified of the adjustments that have been agreed in writing and at the earliest opportunity.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

9. **The Quality and Enhancement team** coordinates all aspects of the administration and delivery of this procedure.
10. **Complaints Investigators** are senior staff members responsible for the conduct of investigations and the coordination of all aspects of the response to Formal Complainants.
11. **Heads of Department** are responsible for ensuring staff employed in their area of responsibility are making reasonable attempts at resolving complaints initially raised with them, and are co-operating with the Formal Complaint, Internal Review and Internal Review and External Review proceedings. Heads of Department are also responsible for making reasonable attempts at Early Resolution for any complaints referred to them.
12. **The Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee)** conduct Internal Reviews. They will review the complaint, at the complainant's request, to consider whether any procedural irregularities occurred during the Formal Complaint, the reasonableness of the outcome and/or whether any further investigation is required.

13. **The Director of Quality and Compliance** is responsible for ensuring that there are effective complaints handling procedures, with robust investigation processes which demonstrate that organisational learning is in place. The Director of Quality and Compliance also ensures that concerns and complaints are used to identify improvements to services and also deals with any unacceptable behaviour by complainants.
14. **Both Academic Board and Operations Management Board** receive an annual report on Formal Complaints and Internal Reviews in order to identify emerging issues and trends and recommend action that informs our practices, procedures and activities in order to enhance the quality of the student experience.

## 2. Principles

1. This procedure will:
  - Be fair and impartial
  - Be transparent and easy to access
  - Be flexible and timely, ensuring that concerns and complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible.
  - Clearly communicate processes, decision and the reasons behind decisions.
  - Ensure that decisions are taken without actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
  - Ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality
  - Include support for students
  - Use the information gathered to improve services for students and the student experience
  - Expect all involved to behave appropriately and not allow our procedures to be misused.

## **Confidentiality**

2. Complainants may expect concerns and complaints to be dealt with confidentially and that their privacy will be respected. However, any person who is the subject of a concern or a complaint will be advised, and an appropriately redacted copy of the concern or complaint and any associated evidence will normally be copied to them, in order that they are given the opportunity to respond. It may also be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the concern or complaint and, in these circumstances, the parties concerned will be informed of such a disclosure. An appropriately redacted copy of the investigator's report may be provided to the person who is the subject of a concern or complaint.
3. Where a concern or complaint has been raised against a member of staff and has been upheld, the student will be advised of this. However, specific details affecting individual staff members will not normally be shared, particularly where disciplinary action is subsequently taken

## **Managing unacceptable behaviour**

4. All individuals involved in a complaint are expected to act reasonably and fairly towards each other, treat the process itself with respect and not abuse it. It is recognised that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress, however, we also recognise our duty to ensure the safety and welfare of our staff and students. Consequently, we have a zero tolerance towards complainants whose behaviour is deemed to be unacceptable and action will be taken to protect staff. The term 'complainant' also includes anyone appointed as a third party to act on the complainant's behalf or anyone who contacts us in connection with a complaint.
5. Our definition of 'unacceptable behaviour' might include, but is not necessarily restricted to, cases in which there is clear evidence that the complainant has behaved in one or more of the following inappropriate ways or the complaint itself is considered to be frivolous, vexatious or motivated by malice:
  - Complaints which are obsessive, harassing or repetitive

- Communicating with us in an abusive, offensive, defamatory, distressing, aggressive, threatening, coercive or intimidating manner
  - Submitting a complaint containing materially inaccurate or false information or evidence
  - Insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes
  - Insistence on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
  - Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
  - Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value
6. When a complainant's behaviour, or the complaint itself, is considered to be unacceptable, as a first step, we will usually tell the complainant why their behaviour or complaint is considered to be unacceptable and will ask them to desist. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, we will take action to restrict contact with the us.
7. Any decision to restrict a student's access will be communicated to the student in writing by the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) and will be appropriate and proportionate. The options that we are most likely to consider are:
- Requesting contact in a particular form
  - Requiring contact to take place with a named officer of the University of Essex Online
  - Restricting telephone calls or emails to specified days and times
  - Asking the complainant to appoint a representative to correspond with us
  - Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct
8. Should the complainant not agree with the restriction, they should contest the decision in writing to the Director of Quality and Compliance within ten working days of its communication. The Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) will consider the student's representations and, where the restriction is considered unavoidable and

reasonable, the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) will confirm the terms of the restricted access to the student in writing.

9. In instances where a complaint is considered to be frivolous and/or vexatious, or where a complainant continues to behave in a way that is considered to be unacceptable, the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) may decide whether University of Essex Online disciplinary proceedings should be initiated in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct or whether to terminate contact with the complainant. In exceptional circumstances, this may mean that consideration of the complaint is also terminated, and a Completion of Procedures letter issued.
10. Should the complainant wish to appeal a decision to terminate contact or to dismiss a complaint, they should contest the decision in writing to the Director of Quality and Compliance within ten working days of its communication. The Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) will consider the student's representations and, where the restriction is considered reasonable, the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) will confirm the dismissal and issue the student with a Completion of Procedures letter within 28 days. Where the restriction is considered unreasonable the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) may amend or rescind the restrictions.
11. Where a complainant submits multiple complaints on substantially the same issue, we reserve the right to treat the matter as a single complaint and to decline to respond to each separate subsequent complaint.

### **3. Eligibility**

1. This procedure is available to students registered on a programme of study at the University of Essex Online wishing to raise a concern or complaint regarding an issue by which they have been materially affected. The term 'student' includes those registered to study with the University of Essex Online or registered for its awards and those who have recently left. Those students who have recently left a programme of study may only raise issues of concern or complaint within three months after the conferral of an award or withdrawal from their programme. The Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) has discretion to

extend this three-month period where they consider that there are compelling reasons to do so.

2. Some issues may be more appropriately considered under processes other than this procedure. As such, this procedure will not normally cover:
  - Appeals relating to examinations or assessments or to academic progress or against a finding of guilt in relation to an academic offence (see the Academic Appeals Procedure, Academic Offences Procedure)
  - Complaints involving an allegation that a student has failed to meet their academic commitments (see the Academic Appeals Procedure)
  - A concern about a decision made under other specific regulations such as Fitness to Study (see the Fitness to Study procedure)
  - Complaints regarding an admissions or readmission decision.
  - Complaints regarding the behaviour of another student, which should be submitted in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct.
3. Students who are affected by a policy outcome but do not have the right to appeal may submit their concern or complaint through this procedure.

### **Concerns and complaints by third parties**

4. Concerns and complaints submitted via a third party will not normally be accepted. However, it is recognised that some individuals may be unable to raise a concern or make a complaint on their own. In these circumstances, concerns or complaints brought by permitted third parties (for example, family member) will only be accepted when the individual affected has completed a third-party authority form and the Director of Quality and Compliance has approved the request.



## Collective concerns and complaints

5. Where the issues raised affect a number of students, those students can submit a concern or complaint as a 'group concern/complaint'. In such circumstances, in order to manage the progression of the concern or complaint we will usually ask the group to nominate one student to act as a group representative. We will deal with the nominated representative only and will expect them to liaise with the other students.

## Anonymous concerns and complaints

6. Concerns and complaints received anonymously will not usually be accepted, except where there are compelling reasons, supported by evidence, for the matter to be investigated.

## Reclassification and suspension of proceedings

7. Where it is deemed that elements of the complaint raised should be handled under another of our procedures, then the student will be notified, and consideration of the complaint will be postponed until the other proceedings have resolved.
8. The procedure will usually be suspended where the complainant refers it to a court, tribunal or other external organisation until the outcome of the external process is known.

## The Complaints Procedure: Early Resolution

1. It is important to remember that many concerns raised by students can be resolved at the point of notification, often through offering an apology and taking immediate corrective action. Where an immediate resolution is not possible, for example when a more detailed investigation is needed, or when the action needed to resolve the complaint needs additional approval, a student may wish to use the Early resolution procedure. The purpose of the early resolution stage is to attempt to resolve concerns and complaints as quickly as possible. Students will be asked to complete a **Student Complaint - Early Resolution Form**.
2. The completed Early Resolution form will be submitted to **appealsandcomplaints@online.essex.ac.uk**. The Quality and Enhancement team will

acknowledge receipt of the Early resolution request within 5 days will allocate it to the appropriate Head of Department/Service for consideration.

3. Students' who experience a problem with their course or any other University of Essex Online service, should usually raise this with a relevant member of our staff involved with the service or matter, providing relevant details of the complaint and any remedy being sought. This would usually be the Student Support Team.
4. Complaints submitted for Early Resolution should normally be raised within 3 months after the event complained about unless there is good reason for the delay.
5. Where the student is uncomfortable about approaching the Student Support Team, or where they have not previously received a satisfactory response, they should contact the Head of Student Services.
6. Heads of Department investigating concerns at the Early Resolution stage should, if possible, have a face to face discussion (via zoom or skype) with the parties concerned, to come to an understanding of the exact nature of the student's dissatisfaction and to explore appropriate solutions. The meetings are designed to clearly establish the facts, not to apportion blame, and are not disciplinary investigations.

### **Resolving the Concern at Early Resolution**

7. Early Resolution Investigations should usually be completed within 14 working days. Resolution may be achieved by providing an on-the-spot explanation of why the issue occurred and/or an apology and, where possible, what will be done to prevent this from happening in the future. It is important to remember that complaints may not always produce the outcome preferred by the complainant. There may be a number of reasons for this, including lack of evidence to substantiate the complaint or the fact that circumstances beyond our control may affect the level of service provided.
8. Outcomes to an Early Resolution case should be detailed on the Early Resolution form and sent to the complainant for signature. The Head of Department should send the completed Early Resolution form to the Quality and Enhancement team, who will keep a central record.

Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome the Head of Department should direct them to the Formal Complaint process.

## 5. The Complaints Procedure: Formal Complaint

1. Where it has not been possible to resolve the matter by Early Resolution, the complainant may initiate a Formal Complaint by completing a **Student Complaint-Formal Complaint Form** which will be submitted to **[appealsandcomplaints@online.essex.ac.uk](mailto:appealsandcomplaints@online.essex.ac.uk)**.
2. Complaints submitted as a Formal Complaint should normally be raised after attempts at Early Resolution have been completed, and no later than 3 months after the events complained about OR 1 month after the attempts at Early Resolution have concluded (whichever is later) unless there is good reason for the delay.
3. The Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) has absolute discretion to extend this deadline, providing that the complainant is able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) that circumstances beyond their control prevented the standard time frame being adhered to.
4. Students are required to set out their complaint clearly and succinctly and to provide evidence to substantiate the issues raised where it is reasonable to expect them to have gathered and provided it. This may include medical evidence such as letters confirming attendance or treatment at a GP surgery or hospital or counselling service, reports by professionals such as psychologists or disability advisers, police crime numbers in the case of reported incidents, financial information such as evidence of lost income (where relevant to the complaint), bank statements or receipts or statements of witnesses to incidents where it is safe and helpful to provide these.
5. Complainants should take care to raise all matters of complaint and put forward all supporting evidence as they will not be able to raise new matters or provide any additional evidence to an Internal Review unless they can show good reason why the new evidence/information was not available to them to put forward as part of the Formal Complaint and is essential to the complaint.

6. Complainants are encouraged to consider resolutions and are able to suggest an appropriate resolution. If at any time the complainant's expectations appear to be beyond what the University can reasonably provide or are not within the University's power to provide, they will be advised of this as soon as possible in writing.

A **Student Complaint - Formal Complaint Form** should be completed, setting out clearly the nature and origin of the complaint detailing what steps have been taken to resolve it informally and explaining why the outcome of the informal procedure is not considered appropriate or satisfactory. The **Student Complaint - Formal Complaint Form** can be completed online and will be submitted to **[appealsandcomplaints@online.essex.ac.uk](mailto:appealsandcomplaints@online.essex.ac.uk)**.

7. Students are required to set out their concerns clearly and succinctly and to provide evidence to substantiate the issues raised where it is reasonable to expect them to have gathered and provided it. This may include medical evidence such as letters confirming attendance or treatment at a GP surgery or hospital or counselling service, reports by professionals such as psychologists or disability advisers, police crime numbers in the case of reported incidents, financial information such as evidence of lost income (where relevant to the complaint), bank statements or receipts or statements of witnesses to incidents where it is safe and helpful to provide these. Students should take care to raise all matters of complaint and put forward all supporting evidence at Stage Two, as they will not be able to raise new matters at Stage Three and additional evidence will not be permitted unless they can show good reason why the new evidence/information was not available to them to put forward at Stage Two and it is essential to the complaint. Students are encouraged to consider resolutions and be able to suggest an appropriate resolution. If at any time the student's expectations appear to be beyond what the University of Essex Online can reasonably provide or are not within the University of Essex Online's power to provide, they will be advised of this as soon as possible in writing.

A complaint will not be investigated if the form is not completed in full or if it is anonymous.

## **6. What we will do when we receive a Formal Complaint**

1. The Quality and Enhancement team will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receipt and the student will be informed about who will be dealing with the complaint.
2. We will endeavour to complete the processing of a formal complaint within 40 working days. The 40 working day timeframe requires students to meet any deadlines for submission of material. There will occasionally be circumstances when, for good reason, we will need to extend the timeframe. Where this is the case we will notify the student and keep them regularly informed of progress. While every effort will be made to comply with the time limits set out above if a time limit is exceeded it shall not invalidate the outcome of the complaint proceedings.
3. Where a formal complaint has been received, the Quality and Enhancement will inform the relevant Head of Department and thereafter keep them informed of progress.

### **Investigating the Complaint**

4. Eligible complaints will be forwarded to the investigator who will be independent of the source of the complaint, and who has not been involved in the Early Resolution stage. The purpose of conducting an investigation is to establish all of the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to provide a full, objective and proportionate response to the complainant. A list of Complaints Investigators will be kept centrally by the Quality and Enhancement team.
5. Within five working days, the appointed investigator will write to the complainant, clarifying how the complaint will be investigated. The Complaints Investigator will usually consult the relevant Head of Department or their nominee and also seek to gather information as necessary from anyone else likely to be helpful in resolving the matter, including the complainant and the subject(s) of the complaint. Information may be sought in writing, via oral interview or both.

6. The Investigator will contact complainants and staff members directly to invite them to attend investigative meetings which, due to the online nature of the provision will usually be via Zoom or Skype. It is important that meetings take place quickly and at a mutually convenient time and location. The complainant has the right to decline or to request a discussion by telephone, or to meet in person if they are able to travel to the University of Essex Online offices. Investigative meetings are designed to clearly establish facts, not to apportion blame and they are not disciplinary interviews. In any meeting involving the complainant or a member of staff, they have the right to be accompanied by a student, an employee of the University of Essex Online or a trade Union representative.
7. The Investigator will be responsible for keeping records of their investigation. During discussions and meetings, a note of the main points of the discussion will be taken and shared with interviewees after each meeting. Any factual inaccuracies should be highlighted immediately.
8. If, at any time the complainant's expectations appear to be beyond what we can reasonably provide or are not within our power to provide, they will be advised of this as soon as possible in writing.

## **Mediation**

9. The Complaints Investigator may consider whether the complaint or appeal is amenable to mediation at this stage.
10. Mediation and conciliation are voluntary processes where an impartial independent third party helps the parties involved in a dispute to resolve issues confidentially. Using media can help both parties to understand what is driving the complaint and may be more likely to result in a swift and mutually satisfactory conclusion being reached. Mediation and conciliation can be used to 'stop the clock' on the formal process which may be restarted if agreement cannot be reached.
11. Where both the University of Essex Online and the student agreed to mediation or conciliation, revised timescales will be agreed between the parties and confirmed in writing. All parties should understand how the arrangement fits with the more formal procedures, the

scope of the mediation or conciliation process and whether its use is subject to the parties agreeing in advance to accept the solution offered and the findings reached.

## **Resolving a Formal Complaint**

12. Where both the University of Essex Online and the student agreed to mediation or conciliation, revised timescales will be agreed between the parties and confirmed in writing.
13. The Investigator will provide a written report at the end of the investigation, setting out clearly the process followed, the information gathered, the conclusions drawn and any recommendations. This will form the basis of the formal outcome letter. The outcome and recommendations will also be shared with relevant Heads of Department.
14. Where a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the outcome of the letter will also detail how and when the University of Essex Online will implement the outcome. It is important to remember that complaints may not always produce the outcome preferred by the complainant. There may be a number of reasons for this, including lack of evidence to substantiate the complaint or the fact that circumstances beyond the University of Essex Online's control may affect the level of service provided.
15. If a complaint about a member of staff is upheld or partially upheld it might be recommended that the University of Essex Online considers whether any disciplinary action needs to be taken against the staff member. In these cases, the staff member's line manager and Human Resources will also receive a copy of the report for their joint consideration. Details affecting individual staff members will not be shared with complainants, particularly where they may relate to any subsequent disciplinary actions that is taken.
16. Should the student remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they should submit a request for review within one month of communication of the outcome of the formal stage (see Section 8).

## **7. The Complaints Procedure: Complaints about Members of Staff**

1. A student's complaint may be in relation to the actions of a member of staff that the student is dissatisfied with. As with all complaints, it is important that students have the opportunity to raise concerns without risk of disadvantage or recrimination, whilst members of staff should have the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised.
2. Students may raise a Formal Complaint where attempts at Early Resolution have not been successful. Upon receipt of a formal complaint, if the nature and content of the complaint suggests that the member of staff should be investigated in accordance with the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, the Quality and Enhancement team will seek guidance from the Human Resources Department. Based on those discussions:
  - If the decision is taken that the staff member should be investigated in accordance with the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, the Quality and Enhancement team will notify the student that the Formal Complaint will be suspended until the staff Disciplinary Procedures have been completed.
  - If the nature and content of the complaint does not give reason to initiate the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, or that the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure have previously been completed in relation to the complaint. As such, the Formal Complaint will proceed as outlined in this Procedure.
3. A Complaint Investigator will not have the authority to directly enact or overturn a decision previously taken under the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure but will be able to take into account the findings of the Disciplinary Procedures and consider this as part of their investigation.
4. If the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure is initiated, the student will be notified when the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure has been completed.
5. Should a Formal Complaint investigation establish any new evidence or information that may relate to staff conduct that has not previously been considered, then the Complaints



Investigator should notify Human Resources immediately and the Formal Complaint will be suspended until it is confirmed that any disciplinary action has been dealt with.

## **Representation for Staff**

6. Any member of staff directly affected by a concern or a complaint from a student may seek support from Human Resources or their trade union. Staff required to attend any meetings in relation to a student concern or complaint have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union Representative.

## **8. Internal Review**

1. If the student believes their complaint has not been handled properly or fairly according to these procedures they may request an Internal Review of the complaint within four weeks of the date of the letter containing the outcome of the Formal Complaint.
2. A request for an Internal Review may be made on limited grounds, including but not confined to:
  - A review of the procedures that have previously been followed
  - A consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable in all the circumstances
  - New material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons to provide earlier in the process.
3. The Internal Review will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation. The complaint must have been considered as a Formal Complaint before it is eligible for an Internal Review.
4. In order to request an Internal Review of the complaint, students must complete an Internal Review Form. The form can be completed and submitted by a third party where appropriate written consent is provided. Students are expected to set out their complaint clearly and succinctly and provide evidence to substantiate the issues raised where possible.

## **What we will do when we receive a request for review**

5. Students can expect to receive written acknowledgement of the request for an Internal Review within five working days. We will then pass the request for review to the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) for consideration.
6. If, at any time, the student's expectations appear to exceed the scope of an Internal Review, they will be advised of this as soon as possible in writing.
7. We will endeavour to complete the processing of an Internal Review within 20 working days. The 20-working day timeframe requires students to meet any deadlines for submission of material. There will occasionally be circumstances when, for good reason, we will need to extend the timeframe. Where this is the case, we will notify students and keep them regularly informed of progress. While every effort will be made to comply with the time limits set out above, if a time limit is exceeded it shall not invalidate the outcome of the complaint proceedings.
8. The decision of the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) will be final. If the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) determines that the request for an Internal Review is not well-founded, then they will dismiss the case and will formally issue the student with a Completion of Procedures letter, explaining the reasons for their findings.
9. If the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) determines that the request for an Internal Review is well-founded, then they will initiate a review of the case and then issue the student with an outcome letter, containing details of their findings and what the outcome will be. Where a complaint is upheld, the letter will also detail how and when any remedy will be implemented.

## **9. External Review**

1. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for higher education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint you may be able to ask the OIA to review your complaint. You can find out more

about how to make a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at, and what it can do to put things right by **visiting the OIA Website**.

You normally need to have completed this procedure before you can complain to the OIA.

2. Students will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter when the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) has completed the Internal Review and reached a final decision.
3. All applications to the OIA must be made within 12 months of the date of the outcome letter issued to the student.
4. The OIA's Scheme Rules and guidelines are available on **the OIA website**.

<b>Responsible Manager(s)</b>	<b>Title(s)</b>	<b>Related Policies and Procedures</b>
Carol Dadd	Director of Quality and Compliance	<p><b><u>Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Complaints and Appeals Policy for Applicants</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Academic Offences Policy and Procedure</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Student Code of Conduct Policy</u></b></p>