

Student Complaint Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. 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.

This procedure aims to provide a clear, fair, and accessible process for students to raise concerns and complaints. It is designed to ensure that issues are dealt with constructively and promptly, 'without risk of disadvantage or recrimination'. Each case will be considered on its own merit and in accordance with the evidence and circumstances presented.

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

"An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something a provider has done or not done, 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 including those outlined in course/student handbooks.

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 quality of learning resources provided directly by the University of Essex Online.

- 1.4 This procedure is guided by the principles of accessibility, fairness, inclusivity, flexibility, and a commitment to improving the student experience.



2. Raising a Complaint

- 2.1 This procedure is intended to provide a timely, simple and streamlined process with a strong focus on early resolution. 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 13)** - seeking 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 15)** – 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.
- 2.2. **Internal Review (see section 21)** - 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 involve a reconsideration of the issues raised.
- 2.3. **External Review (see section 23)** – where the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can submit a request for review to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter issued by the University of Essex Online.
- 2.4. 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.



- 2.5. If a concern or complaint is made directly to the Managing Director or to our validating partner, the University of Essex, it will be passed to the University of Essex Online Appeals and Complaints team who will ensure that it is referred to the most appropriate person, in line with the published procedure.

3. Advice, Support and Guidance

- 3.1. The Student Support Team can provide advice and guidance regarding how to access and engage with the Complaints process. The procedure is an internal process and does not have the same degree of formality as a court of law. If you are invited to attend a meeting as part of the investigation, you have the right to be accompanied by a friend or colleague or another member of the University of Essex Online. However, anyone accompanying you cannot speak for you or attend in your place.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. 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 from the designated Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. Key support contact details:
University of Essex Online Student Advisers - + 44 (0)1206 417465 or individual Student Support Department email
University of Essex Online Student Welfare - studentwelfare@online.essex.ac.uk



4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1. **The Quality and Enhancement team** coordinates all aspects of the administration and delivery of this procedure.
- 4.2. **Complaints Investigators** are senior staff members responsible for the conduct of investigations and of all aspects of the response to Formal Complaints.
- 4.3. **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 External Review proceedings. Heads of Department are also responsible for making reasonable attempts at Early Resolution for any complaints referred to them.
- 4.4. **The Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee)** conducts 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.
- 4.5. **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.
- 4.6. **The Management Board and its sub-committees** 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.

5. Principles

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.

6. Confidentiality

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.

7. Managing unacceptable behaviour

- 7.1. 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



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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.

7.2. 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.
- Recording of meetings without the written permission of the participants.
- 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.

7.3. 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.

7.4. 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:



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- 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.
- 7.5. 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.
- 7.6. 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.
- 7.7. 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 10 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 10 days. Where the restriction is considered unreasonable the Director of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) may amend or rescind the restrictions.



- 7.8. 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.

8. Eligibility

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. Some issues may be more appropriately considered under processes other than this procedure. As such, this procedure will not normally cover:
- a. 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 Policy and Procedure, Academic Offences Procedures)
 - b. Complaints involving an allegation that a student has failed to meet their academic commitments (see the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure)
 - c. A concern about a decision made under other specific regulations such as Fitness to Study (see the Fitness to Study Policy)
 - d. Complaints regarding an admissions or readmission decision (see the Complaints and Appeals Policy for Applicants)
 - e. Complaints regarding the behaviour of another student, which should be submitted in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct Policy.



- 8.3. 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.

9. Concerns and complaints by third parties

Concerns and complaints submitted on behalf of students by 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, a 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.

10. Collective concerns and complaints

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.

11. Anonymous concerns and complaints

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.

12. Reclassification and suspension of proceedings

- 12.1. 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.



- 12.2. 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.

13 The Complaints Procedure: Early Resolution

- 13.1. 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.
- 13.2. University of Essex Online provides a number of channels where students may raise concerns informally, these include:
- End of Module Surveys – students may respond anonymously or may leave their name to receive a personalised response, although this would be outside the timeframes of this policy and procedure.
 - Student Support Team – If students have concerns that require immediate attention they may raise them and discuss them informally with their dedicated Student Support Team.
- 13.3. Students' who experience a problem with their course or any other University of Essex Online service, should usually raise this with their dedicated Student Support Team in the first instance. If the Student Support Team are not able to resolve the issue, they can direct students to the most appropriate person or department.
- 13.4. To enable early resolution, concerns should normally be raised within one month of the actions or lack of actions which caused the issue. 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.
- 13.5. Staff who are dealing with concerns at this stage should, if possible, have a face-to-face discussion (via Teams or Zoom) with the party/parties concerned, to understand 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.



14 Early Resolution of Concerns

- 14.1. An early resolution should usually be completed within 14 working days. Resolution may be achieved by providing an apology and on-the-spot explanation of why the issue occurred 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.
- 14.2. Outcomes to an Early Resolution case may be given verbally but should also be confirmed via email to the complainant.
- 14.3. Where it has not been possible to resolve a matter through Early Resolution or where the complainant has not received a response within 14 working days, students may initiate a Formal Complaint.
- 14.4. It is also recognised that it may not be possible to resolve a concern informally, where this is the case, the student will be referred directly to the Formal Complaint stage.

15. The Complaints Procedure: Formal Complaint

- 15.1. Where it has not been possible to resolve the matter by Early Resolution or where the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of an 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**.
- 15.2. 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 the student was referred directly to the Formal Complaint Stage or there is good reason for the delay.



- 15.3. 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 timeframe being adhered to.
- 15.4. 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 email correspondence relating to the Early Resolution.
- 15.5. 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.
- 15.6. 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 we can reasonably provide or are not within our power to provide, they will be advised of this as soon as possible in writing.
- 15.7. 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**.
- 15.8. A complaint will not be investigated if the form is not completed in full or if it is anonymous.

16. What we will do when we receive a Formal Complaint



- 16.1. The Quality and Enhancement team will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receipt. All submitted complaint forms will be reviewed to establish whether they are eligible to be considered under this procedure.
- 16.2. We will endeavour to complete the processing of a formal complaint within 35 working days. The 35 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.
- 16.3. 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.

17. Investigating the Complaint

- 17.1. Eligible complaints will be forwarded to an 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.
- 17.2. Within five working days of being assigned the complaint, 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, Head of Service or their nominee(s) 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.
- 17.3. The Appeals and Complaints team will arrange a meeting between the Investigator, complainant(s) and staff members, due to the online nature of the provision the meeting will usually be via Zoom or Teams. It is important that meetings take place quickly and at a mutually



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convenient time. The complainant has the right to decline to attend the meeting or to request to conduct all communication via email. Investigative meetings are designed to clearly establish facts, not to apportion blame and they are not disciplinary interviews. In any meeting the complainant or member of staff has the right to be accompanied by a named person (or exceptionally persons) to support them through the procedure. The complainant or member of staff must notify the Appeals and Complaints team of the name of the individual and the nature of their relationship prior to the meeting taking place. The person is not permitted to speak for the complainant or answer questions on their behalf. If a complainant wishes to have legal representation at the meeting this would need to be notified to us in advance and would also mean that the University of Essex Online would also have legal representation present. Investigatory meetings will not usually be recorded but may be recorded with the permission of all attendees.

- 17.4. 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 by the complainant immediately.
- 17.5. 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.

18. Resolving a Formal Complaint

- 18.1. The Investigator will submit a written report at the end of the investigation to the Appeals and Complaints team, setting out clearly the process followed, the information and evidence which was considered, the conclusions drawn and any recommendations. The Appeals and Complaints team will prepare an outcome letter for the investigator to review.
- 18.2. Where a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the outcome 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



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that circumstances beyond the University of Essex Online's control may affect the level of service provided.

- 18.3. 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 Investigator's 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.
- 18.4. Should the student remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they are entitled to submit a request for an Internal Review within 10 working days of communication of the outcome of the formal stage (see Section 21).
- 18.5. The University of Essex Online will consider that the student accepts the outcome of the Formal Complaint unless the student submits a request for an Internal Review within the above timeframe. The outcome of the complaint and any recommendations will be shared with the relevant Head of Department and their Director who will consider the recommendations and provide a response to the Appeals and Complaints team.

19. The Complaints Procedure: Complaints about Members of Staff

- 19.1. A student's complaint may be in relation to the actions of a member of staff employed by/contracted to the University of Essex Online. 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.
- 19.2. Upon receipt of a formal complaint about a member of staff/contractor, if the nature and content of the complaint suggests that the member of staff should be investigated in according with the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, the Quality and Enhancement team will notify the relevant Head of Department and Director/Deputy Director and seek guidance from the Human Resources Department. Based on those discussions:



- a) 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.
- b) If the nature and content of the complaint does not give reason to initiate the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure the Formal Complaint will proceed as outlined in this Procedure.

- 19.3. If the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure is initiated, the student will be notified when the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure has been completed.
- 19.4. The student that has raised the concern will not be provided with any details of any actions taken under the Disciplinary Procedures for Staff.
- 19.5. Students do not have the right of appeal against any decision taken under the Disciplinary Procedures for Staff.
- 19.6. Consideration of the Formal Complaint will normally be suspended until after the staff procedures have been completed, however Departments can continue to organise and implement any interim arrangements that are deemed appropriate for students.
- 19.7. Any subsequent consideration or review under the Student Complaint Policy and Procedure will not consider the conduct of individual staff members/contractors. However, the findings from the disciplinary procedures may be made available to the Investigator on a case-by-case basis, who can consider alternative resolutions for the student(s).

20. Representation for Staff

- 20.1. 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. The staff member should inform the Appeals and Complaints



team of the name of the individual accompanying them and the nature of their relationship prior to meetings taking place.

- 20.2. The person is not permitted to speak for the complainant or answer questions on their behalf. If a complainant wishes to have legal representation at the meeting this would need to be notified to us in advance and would also mean that the University of Essex Online would also have legal representation present. Investigatory meetings will not usually be recorded but may be recorded with the permission of all attendees.

21. Internal Review

- 21.1. 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 10 working days of the date of the letter containing the outcome of the Formal Complaint.
- 21.2. A request for an Internal Review may be made on limited grounds, including but not limited to:
- I. A review of the procedures that have previously been followed.
 - II. A consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable in all the circumstances.
 - III. New material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons to provide earlier in the process.
- 21.3. 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.
- 21.4. 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.



22. What we will do when we receive a request for review

- 22.1. 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.
- 22.2. 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.
- 22.3. We will endeavour to complete the processing of an Internal Review within 15 working days. The 15-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.
- 22.4. 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.
- 22.5. 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.
- 22.6. Students are entitled to a Completion of Procedures letter when the Internal Review has been completed and a final decision issued.

23. External Review

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- 23.1 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for higher education runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. If students remain dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint they may be able to ask the OIA to review the complaint. More information about the OIA, what it can and cannot look at and what it can do to put things right is available on the **OIA website**.
- 23.2 Students usually need to have completed this procedure before they can complain to the OIA.
- 23.3 All applications to the OIA must be made within 12 months of the date of the outcome letter issued to students.
- 23.4 The OIA's Scheme Rules and guidelines are available on its website: **www.oiahe.org.uk**.

Responsible Manager(s)		Related Policies and Procedures
Carol Dadd	Director of Quality and Compliance	<u>Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures</u> <u>Complaints and Appeals Policy for Applicants</u> <u>Academic Offences Policy and Procedure</u> <u>Student Code of Conduct Policy</u>
Date	August 2025	