



European School  
of Osteopathy

**Integrated Master's Degree in  
Osteopathy**

**M.Ost**

**Student Complaints Policy &  
Procedure**

**September 2014**

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## Student Complaints Policy & Procedures

### Section A: Introduction Information to students

A complaint is defined as the expression of a specific concern about the provision of an academic or related service by the European School of Osteopathy (ESO). The procedures set out below can be used by students to complain about any service the ESO provides.

The ESO aims to deal openly, fairly and effectively with any comment or complaint about services, and to offer an appropriate remedy to any student who is adversely affected by a service which fails to deliver to the ESO's standards.

The complaints policy should not be used to appeal against decisions made by the Progression and Awards Board (PAB). To appeal academic decisions, you should refer to the Student Handbook and/or speak to the Academic Registrar (Exams Office).

The ESO will not penalise you for making a complaint about services, and nothing will appear on your academic record to indicate that a complaint has been made.

The Student Welfare Officer is able to provide advice on submitting a complaint. In all cases students are strongly encouraged to seek impartial advice concerning their complaint.

You should make every possible effort to resolve your complaint within the relevant department, module or course. The formal procedure can of necessity take some time and should be used only if the stages above have been exhausted. (See Resolving a complaint, page: 4)

There are separate procedures for the following:

- a) dealing with disciplinary offences including complaints by students about the behaviour of other students (Student Fitness to Practise and Behaviour Policy);
- b) informing the ESO of mitigating or extenuating circumstances in relation to assessments (See Student Handbook page 15)
- c) appealing against the outcome of academic decisions you should contact the Academic Registrar (Exams Office), who will be able to inform you of the University of Greenwich Regulations Governing Exclusion and Academic Appeals (University of Greenwich Academic Regulations for Taught Awards, Appendix E).
- d) making disclosures in the public interest, i.e. "Speaking up charter" (*to be published*)

The complaints procedures cannot be used for any of the above purposes, although in exceptional circumstances an academic appeal may follow a successful complaint (see paragraph 13 below and section D3).

The ESO does not normally deal with anonymous complaints, although it will consider the circumstances of any such anonymous submission and may, in exceptional circumstances, take forward the complaint.

If you have a particularly sensitive issue to raise, you can approach the Student Welfare Officer for help. The ESO will endeavour to make sure that such a complaint is known to the fewest staff needed to undertake a thorough investigation, and that staff deal with the complaint on a confidential basis.

A group of students affected by the same set of circumstances may wish to make a collective complaint through a single spokesperson. In such circumstances the spokesperson must at all times express the views of the group and relay and copy all correspondence to the group.

Each member of the group must provide their names and contact details in the initial submission.

It is important that any complaint is timely. The longer the delay, the less likely it is that the ESO will be able to investigate your complaint properly.

A complaint that leads you to request reconsideration of a Progression and Award Board decision and which falls within one of the categories defined within the Regulations Governing Exclusion and Academic Appeals, is an academic appeal and not a complaint.

In conducting the procedures to investigate complaints, the ESO may invite you to meet staff. At all such meetings you will be permitted to be accompanied by a friend: for example, your Student Year Representative, a fellow student, a member of academic staff, or a contact from outside the ESO such as a member of the family. The ESO must be notified of the name and affiliation of the person concerned in advance of the meeting.

If you intend bringing someone from outside the School to such meetings you must seek approval from the ESO in advance. It is not normally necessary to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, but if you do decide to seek approval to be accompanied by such a person, the ESO reserves the right to include a legally qualified colleague to participate in the meeting.

The accompanying person will not be permitted to present your case, but will be in attendance to support you and to clarify issues as appropriate.

The ESO constantly seeks to improve its services. The Academic Council monitors the complaints received and the effectiveness of these procedures in addressing them.

If your complaint is not based on the grounds specified in this Policy or accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence, the School will inform you that no action will be taken. You will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter and you may, if you so wish, pursue the matter further with the University or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

## **Section B: The student complaints policy and procedure**

### ***Introduction***

The ESO is committed to maintaining an effective procedure to allow all members of its community to make legitimate complaints. This document provides details of the School's complaints procedure for students who wish to make a complaint.

A complaint is defined as any specific concern about the provision of a programme of study or related academic or support service and may be made by a student or a group of students.

### **Resolving a complaint**

The School strongly encourages the informal resolution of complaints at the earliest opportunity and before this formal procedure is required. This initial informal stage should normally involve a discussion directly with the relevant member(s) of staff or with the most immediate supervisor or manager. Advice on how to approach and resolve the matter informally and directly with the member of staff can be obtained through the contact details provided in the *Guidance for Resolution of your Complaint*.

The student complainant should attempt to resolve the matter informally as soon as possible. Where no informal resolution can be achieved, the student complainant may choose to progress their complaint by using the Formal Complaints Procedure

### **Formal Complaints Procedure**

A formal complaint should be made using the Formal Complaints Form. A copy of the form can be found at the end of this document. Alternatively, you can contact the Academic Registrar who will be able to give you a form.

Complaints may relate to (though not be limited to):

1. the teaching and learning experience of the student, e.g. quality of teaching, teaching facilities, personal tutor support
2. academic services, e.g. computing and library services
3. administrative services, e.g. registry, finance office etc.

The Student Complaints Procedure excludes certain specific complaints where the ESO has separate policies to deal with these.

An Academic Appeal is defined as a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progression, assessment and awards. Academic Appeals should be dealt with under the Regulations Governing Exclusion and Academic Appeals Academic.

In certain circumstances, it will be necessary for the Academic Registrar to determine whether a complaint should proceed through the ESO's student complaints procedure or through an alternative process.

In all instances where a student is unsure as to how or where to raise their complaint they should seek advice from the Student Welfare Officer or the Academic Registrar.

The ESO will not consider unsubstantiated complaints that it regards as vexatious or malicious. Complaints of this nature may result in disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct.

A complaint by a student will not normally be investigated if a period of two months has elapsed since the alleged action which is the basis of the complaint occurred, although the Academic Registrar may exceptionally allow such a complaint to proceed.

Where complaints are received anonymously or from third parties, it will be at the discretion of the Academic Registrar, in consultation with the Head of Learning and Quality, to determine whether the complaint will be considered and, if so, how.

### ***Underlying Principles***

The Student Complaints Procedure has been established with the aim, where possible, of resolving complaints informally through negotiation between those individuals who are immediately concerned with the matter and where appropriate their immediate line management. The School recognises, however, that some issues cannot be resolved by informal means and may require the intervention of outside parties. The formal stages of the Student Complaints Procedure (Stages 2 and 3) are, therefore, available to students should informal pursuit of a complaint prove unsatisfactory.

The underlying principles of the ESO Student Complaints Procedures, which should be respected by all those involved in the procedure, are that:

- a) complaints will be treated seriously, fairly, as expeditiously as possible and in a consistent fashion;
- b) complaints will be treated in a rigorous and fair manner with sensitivity and with minimum stress to all parties concerned;
- c) confidentiality will be respected throughout;
- d) submission of a complaint will not lead to recrimination or adversely affect academic progression provided it is made in good faith and not maliciously or vexatiously;
- e) there is a right for any decision to be subject to further reference to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA);
- f) the use of the Student Complaints Procedure does not affect a student's right to pursue legal remedies outside the ESO.

### ***Complaints against Staff***

Any investigation that is conducted under the formal stages of the Student Complaints Procedures, and where an allegation against a member of staff is involved, must be conducted in accordance with principles that ensure a balance between the interests of the complainant and those of the member of staff involved. These principles include the expectation that there will be:

- a. an assumption of no fault until the balance of evidence from the investigation demonstrates otherwise;
- b. respect for the dignity of the individuals involved;
- c. the right of the member of staff to be told of the complaint and to know of the evidence presented by the complainant;
- d. the right of the member of staff to respond to the complaint and the evidence and to be accompanied by a colleague staff member in any investigatory meetings or at any stage of the Student Complaints Procedure;
- e. the right of the member of staff to know the outcome; and
- f. the right of the member of staff to have confidentiality preserved where there is any consequential action involving the employee.

Where a complaint involving an allegation of misconduct by a member of staff is upheld this may form the basis of further action under the Disciplinary and Disciplinary Dismissal Procedure (Employer Handbook).

Whilst the complainant has the right to be told of the outcome of the complaint and any compensatory decisions taken, the complainant has no right to be informed of action taken under the Disciplinary and Disciplinary Dismissal Procedure.

### ***Staff Involvement in Investigation and as Witnesses***

It is the expectation of the ESO that members of ESO staff will support the operation of this Procedure. It follows therefore that staff members who are called as witnesses to appear before the Student Complaints Review Panel, or who are involved at any stage in the investigative process, are required to co-operate fully with the process whether called on behalf of the ESO or by the person making the complaint.

In exceptional circumstances a staff member may request permission to be excluded from an investigation or not to be required to appear as a witness before the Student Complaints Review Panel.

Where it is the view of the responsible officer at Stage 3 that the evidence that can be provided by the staff member is more important to the resolution of the complaint than the objections of the staff member, then the staff member will be required to participate in this process. Failure to do so may constitute a disciplinary offence.

### ***Complaints Procedure***

The Complaints Procedure contains the following stages:

1. Stage 1 Informal discussion of the complaint with the individual(s) directly involved
2. Stage 2 Formal investigation by the Head of Learning and Quality
3. Stage 3 Review by the Student Complaints Review Panel

At any point prior to the completion of Stage 3 review a request for mediation made by a complainant can be instigated. Mediation will only occur with the agreement of all parties involved, and the formal complaints procedure will be suspended while mediation takes place.

## **Section C      The complaints process**

### ***Stage 1: Informal discussions***

The ESO expects students to seek to resolve their complaint informally at Stage 1 prior to making a formal complaint and that most complaints should be satisfactorily resolved at that level.

Therefore, in the first instance the complainant should normally seek to discuss their complaint with the person to whom the complaint relates or who is responsible for the matter that gives rise to the complaint.

In order to ensure that the complaint is raised at a mutually convenient time the complainant should try to arrange an appointment with the member of staff concerned. The complainant should make clear, when arranging the appointment, the matter that they wish to discuss and the nature of the complaint that they wish to raise. The member of staff may request the presence of a colleague and the complainant themselves may also be accompanied by a fellow student or their Student Year Representative.

It may be possible for the circumstances of the complaint to be fully addressed and resolved through a meeting between the parties concerned, or further enquiries may be required. In either circumstance the staff member should keep a written record of the meeting and/or of any further enquiries and an oral response will be provided to the student within ten working days of the complaint being raised, except where good reason can be demonstrated for requiring a longer period.

The student will be informed if their complaint is upheld and if any remedy is proposed or, if the complaint is not upheld, the student will also be informed of his/her right to proceed to Stage 2 of the Procedure.

A record of the circumstances of the complaint will be retained by the Academic Registrar or passed to the Academic Registrar in the case of a complaint against a Service. This record will indicate either any corrective or compensatory action to be taken as a form of redress or the

reason for the decision to reject the complaint. This record will be destroyed when the student graduates or otherwise ceases to be a student of the ESO.

Faculties/Services will keep basic details of all complaints resolved at this level, including details of the complainant, the nature of the complaint and the outcome.

A student may proceed to Stage 2 of the Procedure where it is not possible to achieve a timely or satisfactory resolution using Stage 1 of the Procedure.

### ***Stage 2: Formal investigation of written complaint***

At Stage 2 the intention of this procedure is to allow for the complaint to be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties through the intervention of the Head of Learning and Quality and formal investigation.

A complaint will proceed to Stage 2 where:

1. the complaint directly involves a Head of Department, M.Ost Programme Leader or a member of the senior management team. (In such cases, the student will write directly to the Principal who will nominate an appropriate officer to be responsible for Stages 2 and 3 of this process, and no Stage 1 process will be required.)
2. a student is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, or where a student can provide good reason why Stage 1 cannot be conducted, the student will raise the complaint in writing with the Head of Learning and Quality.

The request made to the Head of Learning and Quality must be made on the Formal Complaint Form (see appendix 1 below) and must include:

1. name of complainant(s)
2. a contact address (and preferably telephone and/or mobile number and email address)
3. programme/year group
4. the date(s) on which the problem arose
5. whether anyone else was affected, or saw what happened
6. any relevant documentary evidence
7. the response requested from the ESO.

The statement should also describe the steps he/she has taken to resolve the complaint informally or their reasons for not doing so.

The Formal Complaints Form must be submitted by hand or electronically to the Academic Registrar.

On receipt of the written complaint the Head of Learning and Quality will determine whether it is appropriate for the complaint to be considered under the Student Complaints Procedure and whether the nature of the complaint warrants its consideration under other procedures. He/she will inform the student of their decision within ten working days of receipt of the complaint.

Where the Head of Learning and Quality finds that the complaint is appropriate for processing at Stage 2 of this procedure, she/he will request a senior member of staff to

investigate the complaint in accordance with the guidelines laid out in Appendix 2. The person investigating must have had no prior direct involvement in the matter.

As part of the investigative process, the senior member of staff may need to conduct a meeting with the complainant, in which case a note of the meeting will be taken and the student will have the right to representation.

Following investigation of the complaint the senior member of staff will provide a written response to the Head of Learning and Quality.

The Head of Learning and Quality will respond to the student, and that response will be copied to the appropriate member(s) of staff concerned or responsible for the matter giving rise to the complaint.

This response will normally be provided within twenty working days of the complaint being lodged with the Head of Learning and Quality, except where good reason can be demonstrated for requiring a longer period, in which case the student will be notified of the delay and of an expected response date.

The response will indicate if your complaint is well founded or partially founded. If the complaint is either of these, you will be offered an apology, and the School will explain what measures they will be putting in place to ensure that the situation is not repeated. If your complaint is deemed not to be well founded a full explanation will be given. It will also notify you of your right to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure, where the complaint has not been upheld.

Where a complaint is deemed unfounded, the complainant will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter and may pursue the matter further with the University and finally the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

The Head of Learning and Quality will forward copies of the complaint and response including details of any corrective or compensatory action to the Academic Registrar.

### ***Stage 3: Review by the Student Complaints Review Panel***

Students will be entitled to seek a review by the Student Complaints Review Panel of the decision concerning their complaint, only where:

1. There is evidence that Stage 2 investigation did not include in its deliberations all relevant issues, and any relevant issues identified as not included at Stage 2 are material to the decision and do not constitute a new basis for complaint;
2. There is evidence that the Stage 2 investigation was not carried out in accordance with ESO policies.

This will be initiated by submitting a copy of the Formal Complaint Form to the Academic Registrar, normally within ten working days of having received the outcome of the investigation of the complaint at Stage 2 of this procedure.

The Formal Complaint Form will be accompanied by guidance notes (Appendix 3) giving details of what action has been taken to resolve the complaint at previous stages and why the student remains dissatisfied.

The Academic Registrar will record and acknowledge the request for a review by the Student Complaints Review Panel, normally within ten working days of receipt, and will inform the Principal of the complaint.

The Principal will nominate a Chair to convene a meeting of the Student Complaints Review Panel.

### ***The Panel***

The Panel will comprise three members of the Senior Management Team and/or senior faculty not involved in prior stages of this procedure, one of whom will be nominated by the Principal to act as Chair.

A Clerk to the Panel will be nominated by the Academic Registrar.

### **Conduct of Proceedings**

#### ***Representation***

All students and staff members who are required to attend the meeting of the Student Complaints Review Panel will have the right to be accompanied by another individual as specified in this policy.

#### ***Documentation***

- 1) The documentation submitted to the Student Complaint Review Panel will normally consist of:
  - a. the Formal Complaint Form accompanied by guidance notes (appendix 3) submitted by the complainant;
  - b. details of witnesses to be called by both the complainant and the officer responsible for the investigation of the complaint at Stage 3 together with a brief statement giving the purpose of the attendance of the witnesses;
  - c. any other background documentation.
- 2) All documentation will require to be submitted by the complainant to the Clerk of the Panel not less than seven working days before the meeting of the Panel.
- 3) Papers will be circulated to Panel members, the complainant, and where appropriate the individuals against whom the complaint is being made, not less than five working days before the meeting of the Panel.
- 4) Following the hearing all documentation must be returned to the Clerk of the Panel to be destroyed and a single master set of documentation will be retained by the Academic Registrar under safe and secure conditions.
- 5) It is the responsibility of the complainant to ensure that any witnesses whom they wish to call in support of their complaint are available for the meeting of the Panel and are briefed on the arrangements for the Panel.
- 6) It is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar, through the Head of Learning and Quality, to ensure that those witnesses whom the ESO wishes to call in support of its decision on the complaint are available for the meeting of the Panel and are briefed on the arrangements for the Panel.

- 7) The Student Complaints Policy and Procedure sets out the expectations of the ESO in respect of staff participation in the complaints process.

### **Formal Hearing Meeting**

- 8) Non-attendance by either party will normally result in the hearing continuing in their absence and therefore being based only on the documentation previously submitted.
- 9) The proceedings of the Panel are at the discretion of the Chair but will normally be as follows:
- a. The Chair will open the proceedings by establishing that all parties have received full documentation.
  - b. The Chair will also have the opportunity to raise any questions of clarification in respect of the documents submitted.
  - c. Where details of witnesses have been provided by either party the Chair will have the discretion to decide not to hear any of the evidence to be provided by the witnesses, but will be required to give all parties details of the reasons for such a decision.
  - d. The complainant or his/her representative will be invited to outline the complaint briefly, making reference to previously submitted documentation, in support of their complaint. The complainant will also have the opportunity to call the witnesses that the/she has previously notified to the Committee to provide evidence in support of his complaint.
  - e. Any new evidence that has not been presented at previous stages of the Complaints Procedure may only be accepted at the discretion of the Chair.
  - f. The officer of the ESO responsible for Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure will have the opportunity to question the complainant and/or his/her representative and the witnesses called by the complainant.
  - g. The officer who conducted Stage 2 of the Procedure will then have an opportunity to state their reasons for having found against the complainant at Stage 2, making reference to previously submitted documentation. The officer will also have the opportunity to call witnesses whose details have previously been submitted, and the complainant and/or his/her representative will have an opportunity to question these witnesses.
  - h. Both parties will be provided with an opportunity to sum up their aspects of the case and at all points members of the Panel may choose to ask questions of any of the parties in order to seek clarification on points raised.
- 10) At the conclusion of the Hearing, the Panel will meet in private in order to make its decision. The decision will be notified in writing to all concerned by the Academic Registrar, normally within five working days.
- 11) The decision of the Student Complaints Review Panel will be final and will bring the ESO's investigation of student complaints to a close, and the complainant will receive a Completion of Procedures letter along with the Panel's response.
- 12) If the student remains dissatisfied with the School's response, they have the right to refer the ESO's decision to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Details are available at: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

## **Section D      Additional notes**

### ***How to make a comment or suggestion about a service***

If you have a general comment relating to a course, you may like to raise it directly with the specific Staff and Student Liaison Committee concerned through your student year representative.

### ***Monitoring and Review of this Policy and Procedure***

- 1) The Head of Learning and Quality will be responsible for preparing an annual report to the Academic Board covering the operation of this procedure.
- 2) The Academic Registrar will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of remedies agreed under this procedure.

### ***Academic appeals***

- 3) Where the circumstances of a complaint are found to have impacted adversely on the academic performance of a student a summary of the findings and their impact will be passed by the Academic Registrar to the Chair of the Progression and Awards Board who will take action in line with the University's regulations.

**Appendix 1:**

PLEASE CONTACT US FOR ASSISTANCE IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE THIS FORM IN A DIFFERENT FORMAT

**Formal Complaints Form**

*We suggest your read the note for guidance before you complete this form.*

<b>FIRST NAME(S):</b>		<b>TITLE</b>
<b>FAMILY NAMES</b>		
<b>UNIVERSITY ID NUMBER</b>		
<b>YEAR/ACADEMIC STAGE</b>		
<b>ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDANCE (INCLUDING POSTCODE)</b>		
<b>DAYTIME PHONE:</b>		
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>		

## **YOUR COMPLAINT**

***Please set out below the key points of your complaint***

***NB: Your complaint must be summarised here even if you attach other documents***

***What documented evidence do you have to support your complaint? Please give details***

**Who did you approach to resolve your complaint informally? What action, if any, was taken to remedy your complaint?**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Action Taken</i>	<i>Approximate Date</i>

**What prevented the complaint being resolved informally?**

**Who else have you discussed this complaint with?**

**How do you propose that your complaint could be resolved to your satisfaction?**

**Declaration**

I declare that the information given in this Formal Complaints Form is a true statement of the facts and that I would be willing, if required, to answer further questions related to it.

I also agree (in accordance with the Data Protection Act) to this form being held on file by the Academic Registrar

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Completed form should be handed in or posted to the **Academic Registrar** where your form will be logged and a receipt issued. **Please ensure you keep a copy for your own records.**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Guidance for Resolving a Complaint**

The ESO is committed to providing high quality education and services to all its students. The School aims to provide a supportive environment for all students and to be responsive to student concerns when they are raised. The School views the Students Complaints Policy and Procedure as an opportunity to monitor its services and in the provision of feedback. There may be times when students feel that they have not received the high quality education or level of service that they are reasonably entitled to expect. The problems need addressing to ensure that normal high standards are maintained. These School undertakes to investigate all issues that are raised and deal with them through a process that is fair, consistent, timely and easy to follow.

#### **Whose complaint will be considered by the ESO?**

Any current student and recent graduate or withdrawn student can make a complaint within two months of the problem occurring.

#### **What can I complain about?**

The School will look at complaints about any aspects of its service. The complaints process will not look at matters of academic judgement or the professional conduct of students and faculty.

#### **When can I complain?**

You should start your informal complaint within twenty working days of the initial cause for complaint. If you are unhappy with the resolution offered at this stage, you may start the Formal Complaints procedure within two calendar months of the original event.

#### **Confidentiality**

This will be a confidential process but if the student is complaining about a member of staff, the student will be advised that this member of staff may be told of the issue. It may be impossible to reach a resolution, unless the subject is broached with the individual staff member. If you have concerns about what is communicated to the member of staff you may discuss this with the Academic Registrar.

#### **Anonymous Complaints**

It is usually very difficult to investigate a complaint that has been made anonymously but you may seek the advice of the Academic Registrar without giving your name.

#### **Third Party Complaints**

The School does not normally investigate complaints raised by a third party or a parent on behalf of a student. Occasionally a student who may be implicated may request that their nominee act on their behalf with the School.

#### **Those making complaints about other students**

On the whole, the Students Complaints Policy and Procedures is not designed to look at complaints against other students. Most of these complaints will be dealt with under the rules governing student conduct (see: Learning Zone > Student News & Information > Resources > Student code of Conduct)

### How should I complain?

Dealing with small problems or areas of concern as they arise will often lead to easy resolution. For this reason all students must first engage with the informal complaint process and only when this fails to reach agreement, embark on the second stage, that of making a formal complaint. In the first instance you should attempt to resolve your complaint informally.

### Who should I see to settle my complaint informally?

Informal complaints can be raised with any members of staff in authority; for example your year tutor, a member of the academic staff, Academic Registrar, Assistant Heads of Clinic or the Head of Clinic. You can also contact the Student Welfare Officer for advice.

Name	Title	Email address	Site
Erica Bell	Academic Registrar	ericabell@eso.ac.uk	Boxley
Jacqui White	Student Welfare Officer	jacquiwhite@eso.ac.uk	Boxley
Helen Jenkins	Head of Clinic	helenjenkins@eso.ac.uk	Clinic
Claudia Knox	Assistant Head of Clinic	claudiaknox@eso.ac.uk	Clinic
Anna-Liza Bailey	Assistant Head of Clinic	annabailey@eso.ac.uk	Clinic

### What if my complaint is not resolved at the informal stage?

If you would like to pursue your complaint you may make it formal. You will need to fill out a Formal Complaints form and hand it in or email it with your documentary evidence to the Academic Registrar where it will be received. You should include evidence of how you tried to resolve your complaint informally.

### What do I need to say in the Formal Complaints form?

You need to give full details of your complaint, the dates things happened, the people you spoke to and support these with documentary evidence like letter, emails and notes. You are also expected to say what you would like to happen to resolve your complaint. How to fill out the form is covered in more detail in the *Notes for Guidance on How to Complete the Formal Complaints Form* (Appendix 3).

### What will happen next?

You will receive a letter of acknowledgment and you will be informed that the investigation into your complaint will be about to start. An investigator will be appointed and you will be notified who the investigator is and if they are likely to need to contact you.

### **Will I be notified of the outcome?**

You will receive a letter explaining the results of the investigation. If your complaint is well founded or partially founded, you will be offered an apology, and the School will explain what measures they will be putting in place to ensure that the situation is not repeated. If your complaint is deemed not to be well founded a full explanation will be given. You will get the results in writing by letter from the Academic Registrar.

### **What if I don't like the result?**

You must give sound reasons as to why you think the investigation has been unfair or inadequate. Sometimes not liking the result of the investigation will not be sufficient reason for the complaint to go forward. If you have sufficient evidence that the investigation did not include all relevant issues relating to your complaint or there was an error in the processing of your complaint, you can progress to Stage 3 "Review by the Student Complaints Review Panel"

### **Who is on the Student Complaints Review Panel?**

The panel will comprise of three senior management team members and/or senior faculty. The members of this panel must not have been involved in any of the previous stages of this complaint. The Chair of the panel will be nominated by the Principal.

### **What will the panel do?**

The panel will review all the evidence and are at liberty to question the complainant and anyone who has been involved in the complaint.

### **What can I expect from the panel stage?**

You will be entitled to bring a companion with you, a colleague, friend or parent, providing this person is not connected to the complaint but this may not be a legal professional. If you do wish to bring a companion, the School has final approval and must be notified of the companion, one week in advance of the review panel.

### **What if my case is well founded can I expect the School to do?**

The School will apologise for any mistake that it has made and try to ensure that this does not happen in future. Each case will be looked at on its merits and a range of outcomes is possible but the School will always try to achieve resolution.

### **What can I expect at the end of the Formal Complaints Procedure?**

You will get a letter, Completion of Procedure letter, summarising the outcome of the formal complaints process. This could be at one of the several above stages depending on the finding or how far you choose to take your complaint.

## **The Office of Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**

After you receive your Completion of Procedure letter from the School you may wish to further your complaint with the OIA, the independent body set up by the government to adjudicate on disputes in higher education institutions. You will be given details as to how to do this in the Completion of Procedures letter.

## **Involvement of the police or solicitors**

If, at any point, the subject of the complaint becomes part of a police investigation, the complaints process will be suspended until such time as the police have completed their process. If a student employs solicitors to act on his/her behalf with regard to an on-going complaint, the School will cease to deal with the complaint under its procedures.

## **Vexatious Complaints**

A very few students make complaints that are vexatious, in that they persist unreasonably with their complaint or make complaints in order to make life difficult for the School rather than genuinely to resolve a grievance. This may involve making serial complaints about different matters, or continuing to raise the same or similar matters over and over again. Malicious and vexatious complainants will be written to by the School and informed that the correspondence is at an end.

If a complainant persistently telephones or sends multiple e-mails to the School, it could be appropriate for the School to ask the complainant to communicate only by letter.

## **Trivial Complaints**

Other complaints, after careful scrutiny, are deemed frivolous or trivial. Students making frivolous or trivial complaints will be written to and advised that the complaint is not serious enough to be investigated by the School.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Notes for Guidance on how to complete the Formal Complaints Form.**

This guidance is to support you in completing the Formal Complaints Form (Appendix 1). You should ensure that you have read and understood the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures before completing the Formal Complaints Form.

Included in this document, Student Complaints Policy and Procedures document, there are guidelines to resolve your complaint before proceeding with the formal complaint route. You should attempt to resolve the complaint informally first.

#### **THE FORM**

The Form must be completed fully. All fields must be filled in. If you have difficulty with the form or do not understand the procedures, you may ask a Listening Ear or a Students Union Advisor to help you.

#### **YOUR DETAILS:**

##### **FIRST NAME/S AND FAMILY NAME**

Please give your first name and family name as shown on your University ID Card.

##### **TITLE**

Use the title you like to be called by, eg Mr, Mrs, Miss, Dr, Rev

##### **UNIVERSITY ID NUMBER**

Your University ID number is also shown on your University ID Card.

##### **YEAR/ACADEMIC STAGE**

This is the year you are in or the stage you are studying at.

##### **ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE**

Please give the address you would like us to send all correspondence relating to your complaint. Bear in mind where you will be over the vacation if your complaint is made at the end of an academic term. Remember to tell us if you move when we are investigating your complaint.

##### **DAYTIME PHONE**

Please give a phone number where you can be reached during the day.

##### **E-MAIL ADDRESS**

Your e-mail address should be the one that you use for all your ESO messages and you should check this at least once every day so that the mail box does not get overly full.

#### **YOUR COMPLAINT**

You should provide full details of the issues you wish to raise here. Include the dates when these events took place.

#### **Documentary Evidence**

It is very important to attach to your complaint, letters, e-mails, notes, minutes and other written evidence you may have of what has happened. Include copies of what you have sent and any replies that you have had. This will make it easier to investigate your complaint. You

could ask someone else to give you a supporting statement if appropriate. If you are not sure what to provide, again discuss it with the Academic Registrar or Student Welfare Officer.

### **Attempts at settling your complaint informally**

Tell us what you did to try to achieve an informal resolution of your complaint. Who did you see? What did you discuss? What was the outcome? When was this? Include any correspondence that you have from this process.

We cannot investigate your complaint formally until we are sure you have attempted to settle things informally.

Step 1 might be to raise things directly with your tutor or member of staff directly where the problem has occurred.

Step 2 might be to talk to that person's line manager.

### **What prevented the complaint being resolved informally?**

Indicate what you think prevented an informal resolution of your complaint.

### **Who else have you discussed this complaint with?**

List anyone else you have talked to and it is useful for us to know what their job title is, for instance, Helen Jenkins, Head of Clinic. Summarise what you discussed and what advice you were given.

### **What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint?**

Be realistic but say how you think the complaint could be resolved so that you would be happy with the outcome. This lets us know what you would like. What we offer to do will depend on the investigation of the complaint and the response of the School.

## **DECLARATION**

You must sign the form.

### **And finally**

You must post or hand in the form to the Academic Registrar where you will be given a receipt. Please ensure you keep a copy of the form for your records.

Summary of procedure

