

STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. The University values the views of its students highly, and therefore aims to manage complaints in a way that is sensitive to the needs of each specific case, and supportive of the University's goal of providing the best possible student experience. There are a number of informal channels through which it is hoped that most problems can be resolved. If, however, you need to pursue a complaint formally, the University will treat it seriously and impartially, on the basis set out in this document.
2. Advice on how to use the complaints procedure is available from a variety of sources, but in the first instance students are encouraged to consult the Leeds University Union (LUU) Student Advice Centre¹.

What kind of complaints can be considered?

3. Grounds for complaint might include:
 - ❑ Dissatisfaction with standards of **academic provision** (for example, the basic academic framework such as course design, content and structure; resources and facilities; arrangements for assessment; and information provided to you about your course).
 - ❑ Dissatisfaction with the **quality of supervision and tuition**.
 - ❑ **Failure to meet obligations** (such as those set out in the Prospectus, the Partnership Agreement, the Student Contract and the Equality and Diversity Policy – or assurances which may have been given to you on an individual basis).
 - ❑ **Deficiencies in standards of service** (which might include problems with *support* facilities such as accommodation or administrative services).
 - ❑ **Harassment, bullying and victimisation**.
 - ❑ **Other deficiencies** in the quality of your learning experience.
4. The complaints procedure only applies to complaints initiated and conducted by an individual student or group of students²; a complainant does, however, have the right to be accompanied and supported at any meeting (see paragraph 8, *below*) by a friend or adviser.

What kinds of complaints are excluded?

5. Appeals against academic judgement (the outcome of degree examinations or assessments) and appeals against disciplinary decisions are covered by separate procedures – these are set out in the Taught Students Guide³, the Research Students Handbook⁴, and in guidelines from the University's Office of Academic Appeals and Regulation⁵. Students may not use the complaints procedure to challenge the outcome of these processes, though a complaint about their administration would be legitimate.

¹ See: <http://www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/helpandadvice/howto/>

² A complainant should be a registered student of the University, although a student who has withdrawn or left the University can invoke the procedure within three months of their leaving.

³ see <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/qmeu/tsg/10appeals.htm>

⁴ Appendix XI, see <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rds/handbooks.html>

⁵ see <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/AAandR/procedures.htm>

How does the complaints procedure work?

Local resolution

6. Generally, complaints are most easily resolved if they are raised at the time the problem first occurs and with the person/s directly involved. Often, you will be able to resolve your complaint simply by discussing it with a relevant staff member, with your personal tutor, or an appropriate course representative⁶.
7. If you cannot, or feel unable to, resolve your concerns in this way, you should put your complaint in writing to the relevant head of school or service. The head, or a nominee, will seek to provide you with a response to your complaint within 15 working days⁷.

Central resolution

8. If you remain dissatisfied with the local response, or feel unable to resolve your complaint directly with the school or service concerned, you should put your concerns in writing to the University's Complaints Officer. Liaising with senior academic colleagues, the Complaints Officer – or his delegate – will investigate the matter formally. (The LUU Student Advice Centre can advise you on how to proceed.) The Complaints Officer must receive the complaint in writing before any action can be taken. However, following receipt, the Complaints Officer will be prepared to discuss the matter with you in person or over the phone, if this would be helpful. In the interests of transparency, fairness and integrity, the investigation will be conducted through a process of open correspondence, unless there are pressing reasons for any information or communications to remain confidential.
9. To assist the process, your written complaint should include the following information:
 - your name and student ID number
 - the name of your host school and details of the programme/course you are – or were – studying
 - details of the main issue of concern
 - an outline of any informal discussions which have already taken place to resolve the issue (including the names of any staff involved and any relevant dates)
 - a summary of the resolution/outcome you are seeking
 - any other supporting information (such as, for example, copies of correspondence which you feel illustrates your complaint)
10. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt by the Complaints Officer.
11. Following investigation, the Complaints Officer will either:
 - (a) seek to resolve the complaint informally (through mediation, or following further enquiries at a local level, for example);
 - (b) uphold the complaint as a whole or in part (and take action accordingly);
 - (c) dismiss the complaint if there is no case to answer; or
 - (d) dismiss the complaint if it is judged to be trivial, vexatious or malicious (and take further action if appropriate).
12. The Complaints Officer will aim to provide a response – a reasoned judgement – within 20 working days of receiving a complaint; however, complex cases will, unavoidably, take longer to investigate with due care and thoroughness. You will, in any event, be kept informed of the progress of any investigation.

⁶ While there is no strict time limit for making a complaint in the case of registered students, the University would not, ordinarily, consider complaints more than 12 months after the relevant issues or events first arising.

⁷ If the University cannot meet this or any of the other deadlines set out in this procedure, the complainant will be kept fully informed of the reasons why.

13. The Complaints Officer's response will also inform you of the University's intention to issue a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter, in accordance with the provisions of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), unless you respond to the Complaints Officer within 20 working days of the date of his letter to appeal against the University's decision on one or more of the following grounds:
- (a) any procedural irregularity which has materially disadvantaged you;
 - (b) the emergence of new and relevant material that was not available at the time the complaint was first submitted;
 - (c) evidence that the judgement of the Complaints Officer was perverse.
14. Should you decide to appeal, the Complaints Officer will refer your submission to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Education. The PVC (or their nominee) will aim to reach a decision within one calendar month, which will be the final decision of the University and will, therefore, be accompanied by a COP letter advising that should you remain dissatisfied, you may contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator to ask for a review of the case.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

15. To seek an OIA review of your case, you should first ensure that the Complaints Officer has sent you a COP letter, which the OIA requires as proof that you have exhausted the University's procedures. You must send the COP to the OIA within 3 months of the date of the letter, together with a completed copy of its Scheme Application Form (downloadable from its website), which it will use to assess whether your case is eligible for review under its Rules.
16. Further and specific details about the OIA can be obtained from the Complaints Officer or from the its website:
- <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

Note on Procedure

17. The University aims to balance the rights of the student complainant and those of any person complained against; all parties must be treated with dignity and respect. A student should not expect to suffer any reprisals for making a complaint in good faith, and any evidence of recrimination should be brought immediately to the attention of the University's Complaints Officer. If, however, a complaint is judged to be malicious or vexatious, the student concerned might be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Who to contact

18. The University's Complaints Officer is David Wardle, who can be contacted at:

The Secretariat
Level 11, EC Stoner Building
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

✉ d.wardle@adm.leeds.ac.uk
☎ 0113 343 4452

19. He is supported by Catherine Cho and Oliver Mansell. They can also be contacted at the Secretariat and on:

✉ c.l.cho@adm.leeds.ac.uk or ☎ 0113 343 4054

✉ o.j.mansell@adm.leeds.ac.uk or ☎ 0113 343 3404

20. You may wish to speak to a member of staff at the LUU Student Advice Centre, located on the first floor of the Union building. They can also be contacted on: ☎ 0113 380 1290 or ✉ advice@luu.leeds.ac.uk or 🌐 www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/helpandadvice

21. If you have any other personal concerns, the Student Counselling Centre may be able to help you. The Centre is located at 19 Clarendon Place.
(☎ 0113 343 4107 or ✉ stucouns@adm.leeds.ac.uk or 🌐 www.leeds.ac.uk/studentcounselling)

22. Further information can be obtained from:

Your Course/Faculty Representatives. For information on how to contact your own rep(s), please call

☎ 0113 380 1495 or go to 🌐 <http://www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/haveyoursay>

Taught Student Administration

☎ 0113 343 8877 or 🌐 <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/studentservicescentre/index.htm>

Research Student Administration

☎ 0113 343 4003 or 🌐 <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa>

Accommodation Services

☎ 0870 1200 189 / 0113 343 7777 or ✉ accom@leeds.ac.uk or

🌐 <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/accommodation/contact.html>

University Library

☎ 0113 343 5663 or 🌐 http://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/200173/contacts/116/contact_the_library

Disability Team (part of the University's Equality Service)

☎ 0113 343 3927 or 🌐 <http://www.equality.leeds.ac.uk/about-us/>

The International Student Office

☎ 0113 343 3930 or 🌐 <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/international/aboutiso.htm>