

CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY

STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

2015

What is the purpose of the Student Complaints Procedure?

- 1 The Student Complaints Procedure provides students with an opportunity to raise, individually or collectively, matters of proper concern to them without fear of disadvantage, and in the knowledge that privacy and confidentiality will be respected. The procedure applies to complaints received after 1 January 2015.

What is a Complaint?

- 2 A complaint is defined as any specific concern about the University, including provision of a programme of study or related academic or support service.

What is the Relationship with the University's Guide to Dealing with Bullying and Harassment?

- 3 The procedure also includes the investigation of those complaints made under the University's Guide to Dealing with Bullying and Harassment, which may involve other students.

What Complaints have special Procedures?

- 4 A complaint relating to decisions by academic bodies such as Boards of Examiners, Fitness to Practise Panels, Professional Suitability Panels, individuals and panels undertaking plagiarism investigations and review of extenuating circumstance requests is referred to as an 'Appeal'. There are separate arrangements for Appeals. Appeals are not addressed through the Complaints Procedure.
- 5 Research students with concerns about supervision or other matters of specific interest to research students should follow the procedures set out in the Graduate School Programme Handbook.

How does the University handle Complaints Relating to a Placement?

- 6 Complaints relating to a placement may be better resolved within the workplace if related to the working practices where the student is undertaking the placement, as any remedy may need to be brought about in the workplace. The student should use the complaints procedure of the placement provider. This includes employment matters, for example bullying and harassment, and the support agreed by the student with an employer, with or without the engagement of the University, in relation to any work-related learning including any release from employment for attendance at the University.

- 7 In the first instance, the student should raise the matter with the relevant supervisor or manager in the workplace.
- 8 Where the complaint relates to a specific concern about the provision of a programme the complaint should be made under the University procedures. This includes matters relating to placement allocations and arrangements, the learning experience on a placement and assessment of professional practice.
- 9 Those members of the University's staff responsible for arranging placements may be approached to give advice on the approach to take and where to seek assistance. This would enable the student to receive advice on the best means of seeking a resolution to the complaint, including the appropriate procedures to follow. In particular, students who are employed by the placement provider should seek advice on the appropriate procedures to follow.
- 10 An Investigator at the University who undertakes a Formal Investigation will work with the appropriate representatives from the placement to investigate the complaint. The Investigator is only able to consider complaints which relate to the work of the University. Where a complaint does not relate to the work of, and consequently cannot be resolved by University, the Investigator will inform the student how the complaint may be pursued outside University, including making use of any procedures of the placement provider.

What are the arrangements for Group Complaints?

- 11 Where the issues raised affect a number of students, those students may submit a complaint as a 'group complaint'. In such circumstances, in order to manage the progression of the complaint, the University will ask the group to nominate one student to act as group representative. In the handling of the group complaint the University will take reasonable steps to ensure that a collective complaint fairly represents the views of all members of the group. The arrangements for handling a group complaint will follow those for a complaint submitted by an individual, particularly in relation to informal resolution.

What are the Stages in the Complaints Process?

- 12 The Complaints Process follows the stages in the Framework for Student Procedures.
- 13 The University will seek to respond to complaints and, if substantiated, will take appropriate action to remedy the complaint. However, the student(s) concerned are seen as important partners in the resolution of complaints, and there is an expectation that there will be active participation. In particular, informal resolution of complaints is considered vital.
- 14 Since it is difficult to investigate complaints after a lapse of time, it is important to respect the timescales with the procedures. These time limits are intended to allow a sufficient period for matters to be resolved informally wherever possible.

What is the Role of Informal Resolution?

- 15 Most complaints should be capable of being resolved informally. This is because it is at the level of immediate contact that problems can most quickly be resolved.
- 16 A student should raise the matter informally within twenty working days of being aware of the issue with the member of staff concerned or that person's immediate supervisor or manager. The student may seek assistance from Student Support, Health and Wellbeing or the Students' Union to help bring about an informal resolution, including identifying the appropriate member of staff to approach.
- 17 Informal resolution is taken very seriously by the University. Before moving to Formal Investigation, the University will look at the means by which an informal resolution was attempted.
- 18 For informal complaints relating to the student's programme, the student should discuss the matter, in the first instance, with the Module Tutor or Programme Director/Leader, as appropriate.
- 19 For complaints relating to University services, the student should discuss the matter, in the first instance, with the person providing the service, or that member of staff's line manager or supervisor.

What is the Role of Formal Investigation?

- 20 If it is established the matter cannot be resolved informally, the student may request a Formal Investigation by writing to Registry within twenty working days of the end of the attempt to resolve the matter informally.
- 21 The request for an investigation is to be in writing, and a form is available to assist students. The request should set out the following:
 - a. Explain the specific concern about the provision of a programme of study or the service provided.
 - b. Explain the informal approaches used and why they were not successful.
 - c. Indicate the outcome sought. However, it is important to note the eventual outcome may be different from the one sought.
- 22 An Investigator will be appointed to undertake a Formal Investigation and will seek appropriate evidence from the student and the department. In addition, the student will be invited to speak with the Investigator in person or at a distance, for instance over the telephone or by Skype.
- 23 At all times, the emphasis will be placed on seeking a resolution of the complaint.
- 24 It is aimed to complete the Formal Investigation stage within twenty working days of the appointment of the Investigator. The general exception is where notification is received outside the published term dates for the programme, when the aim is to complete the Formal Investigation stage within forty working days of the appointment of the Investigator.

How is the Student's Perspective considered?

- 25 The Investigator must ensure the student has an adequate opportunity to be heard.
- 26 The student has the right to request support in the preparation of the case from the University's Department of Student Support, Health and Wellbeing or from the Students' Union.
- 27 The student is to be given a copy of the evidence requested by and presented to the Investigator.
- 28 The student has the right to make personal statement in writing. The Investigator must consider all such statements presented by, or on the specific written authorisation of, the student. The Investigator is to be satisfied that any written statements made on behalf of the student have been made available to the student.
- 29 Where an Investigator upholds the position of the student based on a reading of the written case, and the student agrees the outcome, there is no requirement that the student is invited to talk with the Investigator.
- 30 Where a case requires further investigation, the Investigator must give the student the opportunity to be heard either in a face to face meeting or at a distance by making use of any appropriate means of telecommunication, including telephone and Skype.
- 31 When attending in person, the student has the right to be accompanied by a friend, defined as a registered student of Canterbury Christ Church University, a member from the same cohort as the student, a member of the Students' Union Council, an officer of the Students' Union or a current member of staff of the University. In all cases, the friend may speak on behalf of the student, and may with the written authorisation of the student attend in the student's place.
- 32 When a student declines to meet with the Investigator, the Formal Investigation will be concluded based on the evidence collected. The right to Representation to the Vice-Chancellor will be unaffected by non-attendance at a meeting.

What happens when a Complaint is upheld?

- 33 When the Investigator upholds a student complaint in whole or in part, the programme manager(s) concerned will draw up an action plan to address the issues that were upheld. This is to demonstrate how the decision of the Investigator is to be addressed.
- 34 The action plan is to be agreed with the student concerned, and a copy provided to the Investigator. The action plan is to be drawn up within twenty working days of the Investigator writing to the student and programme managers, and to be agreed with the student within forty working days of the notification. In the event of disagreement, the Investigator is to act as a conciliator and, should the need arise, issue a binding action plan.
- 35 The Investigator may extend the period for the completion of an Action Plan with the agreement of both the programme manager(s) and the student.

What are the Arrangements for Representation to the Vice-Chancellor?

- 36 The student may make a Representation in writing to the Vice-Chancellor within twenty working days of the date of the formal written response from the Investigator.
- 37 In exceptional circumstances, the Vice-Chancellor may extend the time allowed for submission of a Representation if satisfied there were valid reasons why the request was not submitted within twenty working days. Such circumstances might include, but are not limited to, the student being ill or having other pressing reasons.
- 38 The Vice-Chancellor will nominate a suitable individual to review the Representation. Normally, this will be the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience). The arrangements for delegation may include arrangements to cover any period of absence from the University.
- 39 The Vice-Chancellor's nominee is not limited in the means of seeking a resolution. The nominee may, for example, propose a particular course of action, recommend mediation be undertaken subject to the agreement of the student or determine that a further investigation is to be undertaken.
- 40 The outcome of the Review Stage may be a confirmation that the procedures were followed, the outcome was reasonable and there was no further action that the University should take.
- 41 It is aimed to complete the Review Stage within twenty working days of the Vice-Chancellor acknowledging the notification. The general exception is where the notification is received outside the published term dates, when the aim is to complete the Review Stage within forty working days of the notification being acknowledged.
- 42 The decision of the Vice-Chancellor's nominee represents the completion of the internal procedures of the University.

What are the arrangements for extending time scales?

- 43 The time scale for any stage may be extended on the request of, or with the agreement of, the student, particularly where it is agreed there should be any form of alternative dispute resolution.
- 44 Where necessary, the Investigator or the nominee of the Vice-Chancellor has the authority to extend a stage for good cause, but must inform the student in writing of the reason for, and the length of time of, the extension.

What happens after the Internal Procedures of the University are complete?

- 45 Once the student completes the internal procedures of the University but believes the issue has not been appropriately addressed, the student may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).