

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 Leeds University Union (LUU) Help and Support (see <https://www.luu.org.uk/help-support/>).

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 and the Student Contract – 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 students¹; 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 guidelines from the Secretariat (see http://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/student_cases.html). Students may not use the complaints procedure to challenge the outcome of these processes, though a complaint about their administration would be legitimate.
6. Admissions-related complaints are reviewed in accordance with the procedure set out in the University's undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) admissions policies².

¹ 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.

² Undergraduate: www.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/128005/applying
Postgraduate taught: www.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/50/postgraduate_taught_admissions_policy
Postgraduate research: www.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/102000/research_degrees

How does the complaints procedure work?

Local resolution

7. 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 representative³.
8. 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 days⁴.

Central resolution

9. 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/her delegate – will investigate the matter formally. (LUU Help and Support 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.
10. To assist the process, your written complaint should include the following information:
 - your name and student ID number
 - the name of your parent 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)⁵
11. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt by the Complaints Officer.
12. Following investigation, the Complaints Officer will either:
 - seek to resolve the complaint informally (through mediation, or following further enquiries at a local level, for example);
 - uphold the complaint as a whole or in part (and take action accordingly);
 - dismiss the complaint if there is no case to answer; or
 - dismiss the complaint if it is judged to be trivial, vexatious or malicious (and take further action if appropriate)⁶.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Personal information about other people should not be submitted to the University as part of your complaint unless necessary. If personal information is included it must be accompanied by consent for us to process the data.

⁶ Trivial, vexatious or malicious complaints can be characterised in a number of ways:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- Insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- Insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;

13. 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.
14. If you remain dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Officer, you may request a final review by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Education (through the University Complaints Officer) within 20 working days from the date of the response. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or his/her nominee) will review the case.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will review the case on the following grounds only:

- (a) the procedure for handling your complaint was deficient in a way which materially prejudiced your case;
 - (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 unreasonable in the light of the evidence supplied.
15. The DVC (or his/her 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 Completion of Procedures (COP) letter advising that should you remain dissatisfied, you may contact the OIA to ask for a review of the case.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

16. 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 letter to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the letter, together with a completed copy of its Complaint Form (downloadable from its website), which it will use to assess whether your case is eligible for review under its Rules.
17. Further and specific details about the OIA can be obtained from the Complaints Officer or from the OIA's website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/> .

Notes on procedure

Access

18. If you require an adjustment to the way in which we communicate with you due to disability or accessibility need please contact us by emailing studentcases@leeds.ac.uk or calling 0113 343 1276.

Your data

19. Complaints submitted under this procedure are considered in confidence and information is disclosed only to who need to investigate it or respond to the issues raised. The University holds and retains information about your complaint in accordance with the University Student Privacy Notice. For more information see www.leeds.ac.uk/privacynotice.

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- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
 - Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value.

Vexatious complaints

20. 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, you might be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Your Behaviour

21. The University expects student complainants to treat other students and staff at the University with dignity and respect. The University reserves the right to suspend investigation of a complaint if there is a breach of expected standards, including where those investigating a case are subject to harassment, physical or verbal abuse. In these circumstances the complainant will be notified of the suspension and the reasons for it. If a complainant is judged to be in breach of University expectations of behaviour, the student might be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Supporters

22. A student may nominate a supporter. The University encourages students to be supported through the Procedure by LUU Help and Support. The University will copy a supporter into correspondence with a student, but a complainant cannot delegate the conduct of the complaint to a third party, including parents or legal representatives. The University reserves the right to ask a student to nominate a new supporter if a supporter is seen as obstructing the Procedure, or if the supporter does not treat other students and staff at the University with dignity and respect. In these circumstances the complainant will be notified.

Extraordinary changes of Procedure

23. The University reserves the right to make extraordinary changes to its procedures in certain circumstances, for example where there are high volumes of similar cases. The University will inform students in these circumstances of the changes to the Procedure.

Who to contact

24. The University's Complaints Officer is the Head of Student Cases, who can be contacted at: studentcomplaints@leeds.ac.uk
25. You may wish to speak to a member of staff at LUU Help and Support, located on the first floor of the Union building. Their website can be found at www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/helpandadvice
(☎ 0113 380 1290 or ✉ advice@luu.leeds.ac.uk)
26. If you have any other support or wellbeing concerns, the University has in place a number of teams that might be able to help you. Details of the services available can be found here:
http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10700/support_and_wellbeing/804/contacts_and_help
27. Further information can be obtained from:

Your Student Representatives. For information on how to contact your own rep(s), please call: ☎ 0113 380 1460 or visit <http://www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/haveyoursay>

Student Services Centre: ☎ 0113 343 8877 or http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10100/academic_life/875/student_services_centre_counter

Accommodation Services: ☎ 0113 343 7777 or ✉ accom@leeds.ac.uk or

<http://accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/>

University Library: ☎ 0113 343 5663 or
<https://library.leeds.ac.uk/enquiries>

The International Student Office: ☎ 0113 343 3930 or
http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10500/international_students/877/international_student_office

Document Control	
Document Title: Student Complaints Procedure	Document Owner: Secretariat
Version Number: v.4	Date of Version (RD): 24-11-2022