

GUIDANCE FOR STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS (V1)

Complaints Procedure Stages and Timeframes (Section 5: Complaints Procedure)

- 5.1 The procedure is divided into two parts, an Informal Procedure, which emphasises resolution at the 'local' point where the complaint arose, and a Formal Procedure, which involves the Registrar & University Secretary or their nominee as manager and facilitator of the Procedure. The role of the Registrar & University Secretary (or nominee) is to ensure that the Formal Procedure is operated according to proper process and within relevant timescales, aiming to resolve complaints within Stage 1 and Stage 2 as quickly as possible and to the satisfaction of the complainant. **Appendix D** presents this Complaints Procedure as a flowchart.
- 5.2 Staff and students are expected to take every opportunity to resolve a complaint before escalating the matter to the next stage of the process. Staff are encouraged to take immediate action wherever possible. Each stage of the process should be exhausted before moving on to the next stage, however, matters of a very serious or sensitive nature may be escalated to Stage 2 where appropriate. A student wishing a complaint to progress to Stage 2 should complete and submit the appropriate form (see guidance notes below for more information).

Stage 1: Local Resolution (Section 5.3: Complaints Procedure)

Complaints should normally be raised **within one calendar** month of the event which has given rise to the complaint or, if a series of events has given rise to a complaint, within one calendar month of the final event in the series.

Complaints will be dealt with initially at the level at which the event leading to the complaint occurred. This could be either to a module or course leader or personal tutor or within the relevant service department, for example. Wherever possible the student should address the complaint to the member of staff most directly involved in the event leading to the complaint, in order to give that person the opportunity to address the concerns.

If, for any reason, a complaint cannot be raised in this way, advice should be sought from the Student Union; or a senior academic (if the complaint relates to an academic matter) or the relevant head of service (if the complaint relates to a non-academic service) in order to identify an appropriate alternative means to achieve a resolution.

The member of staff receiving the complaint will make every effort to resolve the complaint simply and quickly. If necessary they may invite the student to a meeting to discuss the matter. If it is considered that immediate action will resolve the matter with meeting the student, staff are encouraged to facilitate such an early resolution wherever possible.

At the end of the informal stage the student will be provided with a written response to his/her complaint, which will either:-

- **Detail the proposed resolution; or**
- **If no resolution has been proposed, explain why.**

Any decision taken at any stage of dealing with a complaint should be reasonable and should be based upon the evidence available to the member of staff making the decision.

Informal complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. Where possible, immediate action should be taken to resolve but the informal stage should be **completed within one calendar month**, in any event. The University may need to extend the timescales for response if, for example, it becomes difficult to schedule meetings with the relevant individuals or if matters are complex and require additional time to fully investigate. These examples are not exhaustive and the University will inform students should it become necessary to extend.

Members of staff dealing with complaints under Stage 1 should log all complaints received and retain appropriate records of the investigation and outcome.