

Procedure 2.5 Complaints					
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1 Background

The Academy welcomes comments and suggestions from students about the services it provides. Students wishing to make a suggestion or comment about the Academy's policies or services, either academic or non-academic, can do so informally:

- at the point where the service is provided
- by contacting the person in charge of the relevant area
- by raising the matter with the student representative on the appropriate Academy committee or with their lecturer.

Occasionally, however, students may wish to make a complaint about the services they receive. This document sets out the procedure for making a complaint to the Academy. The Academy recognises that it has a duty to provide fair and objective procedures for examining and resolving complaints, and to ensure that its procedures are free from partiality arising from personal or institutional conflict of interest or other sources of bias. No student will be disadvantaged by having raised a complaint, but the Academy also expects that students will not make frivolous, vexatious or malicious complaints.

This document covers complaints from students only in areas that are fully within the control of the Academy. The Academy is responsible for all the services it provides for students, and comments or complaints about these should follow the procedures outlined in this document. This includes student-to-student complaints if these cannot be sorted out informally by the students themselves or by the Welfare Officer, who may be consulted for advice and support.

2 Academic matters

For academic matters, responsibility for dealing with complaints about academic matters lies with the Academic Head. If students have any comments or complaints relating to supervision, these should be addressed either to the programme coordinator or lecturer concerned or to the Academic Head. If they wish to make comments about lectures, seminars, etc, organised by curriculum teams, they should raise the issue with the Academic Head.

The Academy expects that complaints will normally be dealt with informally in the first instance. It should be possible to resolve most problems quite quickly in this way, avoiding

stress and saving time. Students with a complaint should seek to bring it to the attention of the Academy as soon as possible following the occurrence of the problem, and ideally within one month. Many complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively in this manner, without recourse to formal procedure. At the outset a student with a complaint to make will be invited to suggest the remedy they are seeking, without prejudice to the outcome.

3 Confidentiality

Every attempt will be made to maintain the confidentiality of a complainant. However, where a complaint is of a personal nature against an individual, it is likely that the complainant's identity would have to be revealed at some stage in all but the most exceptional cases in order for there to be a fair investigation. For example, where a complaint is made against an individual, that person has the right to know who is complaining against them and what the nature of the complaint is. The Academy will endeavor to inform an individual complainant of the extent to which their identity is likely to be revealed at each stage of the procedure.

4 Informal complaints procedure

Students who experience a problem with any service provided by the Academy or anything else within the control of the Academy can, under the informal procedure, raise the matter in a number of ways.

They can raise the matter directly with the individual who has given cause for complaint. If informal discussion does not resolve the situation satisfactorily the person responsible for the area to which the complaint relates can be approached. If that still does not resolve the issue then students should consult their programme coordinator.

If the matter relates to a student-to-student complaint, a similar course of action can be followed. The matter can be raised directly with the student who is giving cause for complaint. If informal discussion does not resolve the issue then the matter can be raised with either the Welfare Officer or with the class representative or Academy student representative and if that still does not resolve the issue the student should consult their lecturer and the complaint is formally raised.

The complaints procedure aims to resolve complaints at an "informal" stage; however, if the matter cannot be resolved the formal complaints procedure is activated.

5 Formal complaints procedure

Stage One

If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, the complaint should be made in writing to the Head of Academic Administration, who will acknowledge receipt and ensure that the matter is looked into as soon as possible. An initial response to any complaint can be expected within seven (7) days of its receipt, and a considered response to the complaint should be received within a further three weeks, with any subsequent remedy implemented with minimum delay.

In some cases, the informal procedure set out above may have already involved the Head of Academic Administration. In that case, or if the complaint is against the Head of Academic

Administration, the complaint should be put in writing to the Academic Head, who will appoint the programme coordinator.

Stage Two

It is hoped that very few complaints would remain unresolved after this stage. However should this be the case, Head of Academic Administration refers the matter to the Academic Head, who will arrange for the programme coordinator to undertake an independent assessment of the case and come to a conclusion on the matter. A full and considered response to the complaint should be completed within six weeks and any subsequent remedy implemented with minimum delay.

If a student is required to attend in person as part of the investigation into a complaint, they are entitled to be accompanied at any stage by a member of the Academy: this could be a lecturer or other senior member, or a student including a class representative or Academy student representative.

Throughout the formal complaints procedure a written record of the complaint will be taken and made available on request to anyone involved in the matter (subject to the protocols on confidentiality noted in 3 above). At Stage 1 the written record will be maintained by the Academic Administration Department; at Stage 2 it will be the responsibility of the Academic Head to keep a written record and to send a copy to the CEO / Principal.

Stage 3

6 The Visitor

The Academy rules provide for an independent review of appeals and complaints through a nominated Visitor. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, having followed all the appropriate appeal or complaints procedures, it may be open to them ultimately to refer the matter to the nominated Visitor and OIA. Advice on the appropriate procedures may be obtained from the CEO / Principal.

7 Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and other complain routes

The Academy is a member of OIA and abides by OIA guidance in its complaint-handling processes.

The students are informed during their induction process that they are able to raise complaints through OIA, Pearson, BAC (British Accreditation Council and partner college USP)

OIA → <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>

BAC → <https://www.the-bac.org/bac-complaints-procedure/>

Pearson → <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints.html>

USP College → <https://www.uspcollege.ac.uk/media/1281/complaints-flowchart.pdf>