

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

STUDENT COMPLAINTS SYSTEM: PRINCIPLES & PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

The University is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that students may have complaints relating to their course or the services and facilities provided by the University. There may also be times when an issue may arise with other students or members of staff. The University takes such complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination and in a confidential manner. The University is committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints, taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved by the informal process.

PRINCIPLES

This complaints system is designed for **all** our students, including those in collaborative provision, post graduates and recent graduates.

A complaint, under this system, is defined as ***the expression of concern or dissatisfaction with a service provided by the University, the provision of a course or related academic service.*** The system does not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist –

- i. *Academic Appeals – An Appeal against the decision of an Award Assessment Board must be made through the Appeals Procedure. [Available at www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs]*
- ii. *Allegations of harassment or bullying are handled through a separate procedure and overseen by the Equality & Diversity Unit. [Details are available at www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs]*
- iii. *The Complaints procedure cannot be used to appeal against a decision of a University Disciplinary Hearing. [See the separate procedure on the University website at www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs]*
- iv. *Complaints about the Students' Union should be made directly to the President of the Students' Union. [Contact Information is available at www.wolvesunion.org]*
- v. *Also see the Code of practice for postgraduate research programmes, as relevant. Copies are available on-line at www.wlv.ac.uk/gradschool*

HELP & GUIDANCE

Students are encouraged to seek help and guidance before and during the complaints procedure. The Students' Union operates an independent Advice & Support Centre where expert, professional staff and elected sabbatical officers are available to give impartial advice on the type of complaint, where to go for help and what to do next.

[Contact Information is available at www.wolvesunion.org/advice]

University Staff members are also available for advice, help and guidance, both in regard to the complaints procedure and who to complain to – and also in providing solutions and informal resolutions to particular problems.

Where to go for help and guidance –

<p>Student Offices: Located at each campus with direct contact information and on-line help available through e:Vision.</p>	<p>For advice and information relating to the organisation and management of your course. www.wlv.ac.uk/evision</p>
<p>By Academic School: Contact Information is available on line at www.wlv.ac.uk/currentstudents [or follow link from home page to Schools and Service Departments for your School]</p>	<p>To contact your school office, personal tutors, module leaders and school support offices – for advice and information specific to your School or Course, or with other academic matters.</p>
<p>The Graduate School: Contact Information is available at – www.wlv.ac.uk/gradschool gradschool@wlv.ac.uk</p>	<p>Advice for postgraduate students, on taught and research programmes, on how to contact the most appropriate staff member.</p>
<p>Student Gateway: Contact Information is available at – www.wlv.ac.uk/gateway 01902 321020 gateway@wlv.ac.uk</p>	<p>For access to student support services including – Counselling Services Student Enabling Centre (for students with disabilities) Student Financial Support Unit Careers advice and information</p>
<p>University of Wolverhampton Students' Union: www.wolvesunion.org 01902 322021 info@wolvesunion.org</p>	<p>Including the Students' Union Advice & Support Centre. www.wolvesunion.org/advice 01902 322038 advice@wolvesunion.org</p>
<p>Equality & Diversity Unit: E&D Manager, Berry Dicker – 01902 321197 b.j.dicker@wlv.ac.uk</p>	<p>Advice and guidance relating to equality and diversity issues, including – unfair treatment, bullying, racial, sexual or any other harassment.</p>
<p>Learning Centres: For information about our Learning Centres Services www.wlv.ac.uk/lib</p>	<p>You can call <i>Learning Centre Direct</i> on 01902 321333, or our new UK local call rate number 0845 408 1631, 24 hours a day for renewals and information.</p>

The Informal Procedure

If the complaint is related to an academic issue, in the first instance a student should discuss the matter with their Personal Tutor, Postgraduate Tutor, Module Leader or Supervisor. The student may then be referred to the Course Leader or the appropriate senior academic staff member / Dean of School.

If the matter relates to a service department (for example, Learning Centres or Facilities, including Catering or Intersite transport) then it should be discussed with the appropriate manager. If a student is in doubt as to whom to refer their complaint, they should seek advice from any member of staff within that service or the Students' Union. The Students' Union may contact the relevant University staff on their behalf.

Student Representatives - the University fully supports a wide ranging system of student representation at all levels within the University. An effective and proactive way of addressing informal complaints and concerns may be to raise these with a nominated student representative. Student representatives can most effectively raise the shared concerns of students on a range of issues (informally, anonymously and collectively). Student representatives have regular access to senior staff members through Student Staff Liaison Committees (or similar), School Councils or (in the case of Postgraduate-research students) Student Management Boards. The Student Voice (through student representatives) is carefully considered, reviewed and listened to within the University. For further information about how to contact the most appropriate nominated student representative you should contact the Students' Union.

Informal Complaint Resolution - most complaints can be resolved informally, and as close to the origin of the complaint as possible. A constructive approach by all parties will most often provide a corrective/preventative solution or an explanation of what has happened and why further action is not appropriate.

In most cases a personal response to the complaint, by staff, may be adequate. But if appropriate, or where requested, a written response (by e-mail or letter) may be provided.

If, having followed the informal route the complainant believes that their concerns have not been properly addressed or where the complaint is particularly serious or confidential then the formal procedure set out below should be followed.

The Formal Procedure

Complaints should be raised by the student rather than by any third party. Where exceptionally a student wishes to raise a complaint through a third party the University will require a signed written statement to that effect from the student. The University will not accept anonymous complaints as the formal procedure provides for independent investigation of the substance of any claims, where the complainant will be protected by the University from any recrimination or victimisation.

The University will not tolerate complaints that, upon investigation, are interpreted as malicious, vexatious, deliberately misleading or frivolous. Under such circumstances complainants may be referred to the student disciplinary procedure.

Stage One

The complaint should be set down in writing on the formal complaints form, available from Student Offices and on-line at www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs.

The completed form should only be submitted to the Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit and an acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within 7 working days.

Letters of complaint (not using the complaints form) that arrive at any other point, should be forwarded to the Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit only – where they will be treated as a formal complaint at stage one.

The complainant will normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days. This length of time may be necessary to enable the Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit to investigate the matter with appropriate colleagues. This may take longer during vacation periods. The student may be asked to discuss the matter in person but will always receive a written response. If after this stage the complaint still remains unresolved to their satisfaction, the student may decide to move on to stage two (review) of the procedure.

The student must notify the Dean of Students, in writing, of their intent to raise the complaint at Stage 2 within 30 days of the date of written notification of the outcome of Stage 1.

Stage Two (Review)

The Dean of Students will review the case and may request additional documentation to determine whether it is appropriate for the complaint to be considered by a resolution panel.

[A] If the Dean of Students considers that the case requires further review then a Resolution Panel will be convened.

This will consist of three persons:

A Dean from another School to that which the student belongs (Chair)

A representative of the Students' Union

A senior member of staff from another school or service department

The Resolution Panel will be convened by the Conduct & Appeals Unit which shall prepare the relevant supporting documentation. The Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit will be in attendance to support and inform the panel, with a note taker.

The Resolution Panel will investigate the complaint fully. The student will have the right to present their case in person or in writing to the Panel. Any University staff members who are the subject of the complaint will also have the right to present their case to the Panel.

The student, as complainant, is entitled to be accompanied at this stage of the process by a person of their own choosing.

The Panel at the end of its deliberation will either uphold the complaint in whole or in part, make recommendation for any remedies to be applied **or** dismiss the complaint.

It is anticipated that the Resolution Panel process will take no more than 28 working days to conclude. At the conclusion a further and final written notification will be issued to the student, by the Chair of the Panel in liaison with the Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit. This may take the form of a completion of procedures letter.

[B] It may be determined that previous investigations by the University have been sufficient and that there is no merit in further consideration.

Where this is determined the Dean of Students will issue a written notification of the outcome of this review in no more than 28 working days. This may take the form of a completion of procedures letter.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

If having exhausted all Stages of the University's internal complaints procedure, the student considers that the University has failed to consider and respond to their complaints appropriately, they can refer the case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). This office provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints.

In order to refer their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator they will require a Completion of Procedures Letter. This will be issued when all stages of the University procedures have been exhausted.

Details of the rules of the scheme and information about how to make an application for review by the OIA are available at their website - www.oiahe.org.uk.

Definitions and explanatory notes

Timescales

For good practical reasons, complaints should be identified and investigated as soon as possible after the problem becomes known. Complaints lodged by current students more than three months after the event will only be considered in those circumstances where there is a demonstrable reasonable cause for the delay.

Complaints will not be considered from recent graduates or other former students any later than three months after the problem becomes known and/or if three months have expired from the point of formal notification of the conferment of the award or other reason for the expiry of enrolment.

Working Days are defined as normal working days in the University Calendar. This does not include those days where the University is closed down for holiday periods or public holidays. It should be understood that investigations may take longer during vacation periods. The University will always endeavour to keep complainants informed about any delays to published timescales where there is a good and practical reason for the delay.

Collaborative Provision

For students studying for a University of Wolverhampton award at a partner college, complaints relating to a specific service provided directly by the college should be addressed through the college procedures in the first instance.

Complaints relating to the operation of the course should be dealt with under the University's procedure. The informal stage of the procedure should be taken up with the course leader in the first instance.

Completion of Procedures Letter

A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued when all applicable stages of the complaints procedure have been exhausted. The letter will be issued in accordance with the format prescribed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit: Sharon Hasluck	Dean of Students: Jon Elsmore
c/o MB Building City Campus South University of Wolverhampton Wulfruna Street Wolverhampton West Midlands. WV1 1LY	c/o MB Building City Campus South University of Wolverhampton Wulfruna Street Wolverhampton West Midlands. WV1 1LY
Tel: 01902 323760 e-mail: s.hasluck@wlv.ac.uk	Tel: 01902 322618 e-mail: j.elsmore@wlv.ac.uk

MONITORING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The University will ensure that complaints are handled consistently and fairly. To ensure that complaints are used as a mechanism for continuous improvement and quality enhancement an annual report to Academic Board on the type and volumes of all complaints will be prepared by the Conduct & Appeals Unit. This will include an analysis of the themes and outcomes, prepared by the Office of the Dean of Students.

Confidentiality and anonymity of complainants will be maintained throughout the monitoring process and information will be held in accordance with the University's obligations under the Data Protection Act.

DOCUMENT CONTROL			
Version	2.0	Author	Dean of Students
Approved date	05/2008	Approved by	Academic Board
Review date	05/2010		

FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM FOR STUDENT USE

The University is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that students may have complaints relating to their course or the services and facilities provided by the University. The University takes such complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination and in a confidential manner. The University is committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints, taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved by the informal process.

In most cases, the University's complaints system requires that complainants will have attempted to resolve the complaint by informal means, before raising a formal complaint. Complainants should have read and understood the University Complaints Procedure which is available at www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs

RAISING A FORMAL COMPLAINT:

To raise a formal complaint the following details must be completed on this form. We would ask that you provide as much detail as is relevant including any dates, times and witnesses to any act or incident.

YOUR DETAILS -	PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY
NAME:	
CONTACT ADDRESS:	
CONTACT PHONE:	
CONTACT E-MAIL:	
STUDENT NUMBER:	

DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT:

Please describe the nature of your complaint. (Attach separate sheets if necessary)

Details of your complaint continued

Who did you approach to resolve your complaint informally?
<i>Include the staff members name, post, school/department and date raised:</i>
<i>What action was taken to resolve your complaint:</i>

How do you propose the complaint could be resolved to your satisfaction?

Where to return this form to:	What happens next:
Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit: c/o MB Building, City Campus South University of Wolverhampton Wulfruna Street Wolverhampton West Midlands. WV1 1LY e-mail: s.hasluck@wlv.ac.uk	You should receive a formal acknowledgment of your complaint within the next 7 working days. You will then normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:			
DATE RECEIVED:		ACKNOWLEDGED:	
1ST Action Notes:		2ND Action Notes	