

# APPLICANTS 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 applicants/potential applicants may have complaints relating to their enquiry/application or the services and facilities provided by the University. There may also be times when an issue may arise with other applicants 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 applicants/potential applicants. This includes applicant/ potential applicants who are

- currently applying for a place (undergraduate and postgraduate) to study at either one of the University's main campuses, its partner institutions both in the UK and overseas. Complaints regarding admissions to programmes accredited by the University should be made directly to the partner;
- recent applicants (where the complaint relates to concerns about service provided within 3 months)

A complaint, under this system, is defined as the expression of concern or dissatisfaction with a service provided by the University directly or indirectly related to the admission to a course of study at the University.

The system does not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist –

- i. Student Complaints. [Details are available at [www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs](http://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](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs) ]
- iii. Appeals against the decision of a University Disciplinary Hearing. [See the separate procedure on the University website at [www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs) ]
- iv. Appeals against the decision of a University Fitness to Practice Hearing. See the separate procedure on the University website at [www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs)
- v. Complaints about the Students' Union. These should be made directly to the

President of the Students' Union [Contact Information is available at [www.wolvesunion.org](http://www.wolvesunion.org) ]

vi. Appeals against the decision of an Award Assessment Board must be made through the Regulation and Procedure for Academic Appeals. [Available at [www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs) ] This applies to all appeals relating to Assessment, Progression and Awards

vii. Also see the Code of practice for postgraduate research programmes, And Research Degree regulations, as relevant. Copies are available on-line at [www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs)

The University will, where appropriate, seek to identify alternative arrangements for resolving complaints which may be additional to this procedure.

### HELP & GUIDANCE:

Applicants/potential applicants are encouraged to seek help and guidance before and during the complaints procedure.

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:

Admissions Located in MX building on the City Campus, staff in the unit will be able to advise on the process that should be followed for any course. Further information can be found at <a href="https://wlv.ac.uk/apply">https://wlv.ac.uk/apply</a>	Gateway Located in MG building on City Campus, Gateway staff will be able to offer impartial advice on the application process in general and other associated processes. Further information can be found at <a href="https://wlv.ac.uk/gateway">https://wlv.ac.uk/gateway</a>
Academic Faculty: Contact Information is available on line at <a href="https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/our-schools-and-institutes/">https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/our-schools-and-institutes/</a>	University of Wolverhampton Students' Union: <a href="http://www.wolvesunion.org">www.wolvesunion.org</a> Including the Students' Union Advice & Support Centre. <a href="mailto:advice@wolvesunion.org">advice@wolvesunion.org</a> 01902 322038

### THE INFORMAL PROCEDURE:

Most complaints can be resolved informally, and as close to the origin of the complaint as possible. This is usually the most useful and effective means of resolving a complaint and should be the first recourse. In reviewing a Formal Complaint, consideration will be given, where appropriate, to the extent to which a complainant raised the matter at an informal level. 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. Any response should highlight that the complainant has the option to escalate their complaint, should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome, to the formal complaints procedure. In responding to an informal complaint the University standards on the timeliness of acknowledgements, referrals and responses should be also adhered to.

## **THE FORMAL PROCEDURE:**

If, having followed the informal route the applicant/potential applicant 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.

### **Group complaints:**

This procedure can be used for group complaints. The group should nominate one person to act as spokesperson and primary contact. All group members must be identified in the complaint and must demonstrate that they have been affected by the issue which is the subject of the complaint. All group members must confirm in writing that they agree to the nominated spokesperson acting on their behalf, using the "Group Complaint Form".

### **Confidentiality**

All complaints will be considered with the highest level of confidentiality that can be maintained whilst allowing for a fair and effective investigation. Disclosure is normally necessary to enable the complaint to be progressed and applicants/potential applicants should be aware that where disclosure is not permitted this may prevent an effective investigation. However if an applicant/potential applicant does not wish the details of their complaint to be disclosed this must be clearly stated on the Complaint Form. In such circumstances the Head of Admissions will contact the applicant/potential applicant to discuss the implications of this for the investigation.

The University takes all complaints seriously and the formal procedure provides for independent investigation of the substance of any claims. Applicants/potential Applicants will be protected by the University from any recrimination or victimisation resulting from their complaint.

### **Third Party complaints**

Complaints should be raised by the applicant/potential applicant rather than by any third party. Where exceptionally a applicant/potential applicant wishes to raise a complaint through a third party the University will require a signed written statement to that effect from the applicant/potential applicant. This includes complaints raised by the applicants/potential applicant's parents, spouse or fee payer.

### **Anonymous Complaints**

The University will not accept anonymous complaints. Anonymous complaints do not allow for an effective investigation to be conducted and a resolution reached. Normally therefore, no action will be taken where a complaint is submitted anonymously. However the University reserves the right to exceptionally investigate an anonymous complaint where this is deemed appropriate

### **Complaints made to the Offices of the Vice Chancellor.**

Complaints made direct to the Offices of the Vice-Chancellor will be acknowledged and referred to the Admissions Unit for consideration within these procedures.

### **Malicious or Vexatious Complaints**

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 Head of Conduct and Appeals

## STAGE ONE PROCEDURE:

The complaint should be set down in writing on the formal complaints form, available on-line at [www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs).

The completed form should only be submitted to the Head of the Admissions Unit and an acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within 3 working days.

Letters of complaint (not using the complaints form) that arrive at any other point, should be forwarded to the Head of Admissions Unit only – where they will be treated as a formal complaint at Stage One

For good practical reasons, complaints should be identified and investigated as soon as possible after the problem becomes known. Complaints lodged by applicants/potential applicants 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 current applicants any later than three months after the problem becomes known.

Submitting a complaint –

The University would prefer that complaints are received using the FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM provided for applicant/potential applicant use (individual or groups) at [www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs) (under Individual Conduct) so as to ensure that all of the relevant details are collected. The formal complaint can be submitted via [admissions@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@wlv.ac.uk) or via:

Head of the Admissions Unit  
University of Wolverhampton  
Registry  
Camp Street  
Wolverhampton  
West Midlands  
WV1 1AD

The complainant should expect their complaint to be acknowledged as having been received in no more than three working days.

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 Admissions Unit to investigate the matter with appropriate colleagues. This may take longer during vacation periods. The applicant/potential applicant 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 applicant/potential applicant may decide to move on to Stage Two (Review) of the procedure.

The applicant/potential applicant must notify the Academic Registrar, in writing, of their intent to raise the complaint at Stage Two within 20 working days of the date of written notification of the outcome of Stage One.

**CONTACT:**

Academic Registrar  
University of Wolverhampton  
Registry & Faculty Administration  
Camp Street  
Wolverhampton  
WV1 1AD

**STAGE TWO (REVIEW):**

The Academic Registrar 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 Academic Registrar considers that the case requires further review then a Resolution Panel will be convened.

This will consist of three persons:

- A Dean/ Associate Dean from another School to that which the applicant has applied to (Chair)
- A representative of the Students' Union
- A senior member of staff from another school or service department

The Resolution Panel will investigate the complaint fully. The applicant/potential applicant 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 applicant/potential applicant, 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 applicant/potential applicant, by the Chair of the Panel in liaison with the Head of the Admissions Unit.

[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 Academic Registrar will issue a written notification of the outcome of this review in no more than 28 working days.

## **DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATORY NOTES:**

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.

### **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 Admissions Unit. This will include an analysis of the themes and outcomes.

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.

<b>DOCUMENT CONTROL:</b>	
VERSION	1.0
Author:	Head Admissions Unit.
Approved date:	September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2015
Approved by:	Academic Registrar
Review date:	September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2016

## **FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM: FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPLAINTS**

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The University is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that applicants/potential applicants 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](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs)

### **RAISING A FORMAL COMPLAINT:**

The following details must be completed on this form and we would ask that you provide as much detail as is relevant including any dates, times and witnesses to any act or incident. Supporting documentation may also be included where relevant.

YOUR DETAILS -	PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY
NAME:	
CONTACT ADDRESS:	
CONTACT PHONE:	
CONTACT E-MAIL:	
APPLICANT 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?
<p>Include the staff members name, post, school/department and date raised:</p>   <p>What action was taken to resolve your complaint:</p>

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

Your Signature:	DATE COMPLETED:

Where to return this form to:	What happens next:
<p>Head of Admissions Unit:          University of Wolverhampton          Registry          Camp Street          Wolverhampton          WV1 1AD          e-mail: <a href="mailto:admissions@wlv.ac.uk">admissions@wlv.ac.uk</a></p>	<p>You should receive a formal acknowledgment of your complaint within the next 3 working days.</p> <p>You will then normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days.</p>

## **FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM: FOR GROUP COMPLAINTS**

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The University is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that applicants/potential applicants 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.

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### **RAISING A FORMAL COMPLAINT:**

The following details must be completed on this form and we would ask that you provide as much detail as is relevant including any dates, times and witnesses to any act or incident. Supporting documentation may also be included where relevant.

For group complaints, the group raising the complaint should nominate an individual to liaise with the University on their behalf and to act as spokesperson. This will be the Group Representative.

This form should be completed by the Group Representative.

<b>GROUP REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY</b>
NAME:	
CONTACT ADDRESS:	
CONTACT PHONE:	
CONTACT E-MAIL:	
APPLICANT NUMBER:	

**DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT:** Please describe the nature of your complaint.  
(Attach separate sheets if necessary)

**Who did you approach to resolve your complaint informally?**

Include the staff members name, post, school/department and date raised:

What action was taken to resolve your complaint:

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

**GROUP CONSENT:** To be completed by all applicants bringing the group complaint

By signing this form you are confirming that:

You have personally been affected by the complaint detailed above  
You give your consent to the complaint being handled collectively  
You give your consent for the named Group Representative to liaise with the University on your behalf and to act as your spokesperson.

Applicant ID	Full Name	Signature

(Insert rows or attach separate sheet if necessary)

**Declaration by Group Representative:**

I declare that I have been nominated on behalf of the applicants listed above to be the spokesperson in relation to this complaint.

**Your Signature:**

**DATE COMPLETED:**

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**Where to return this form to:**

**What happens next:**

Head of Admissions Unit:  
University of Wolverhampton  
Registry  
Camp Street  
Wolverhampton  
WV1 1AD  
e-mail: [admissions@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@wlv.ac.uk)

You should receive a formal acknowledgment of your complaint within the next 3 working days.  
  
You will then normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days.