

# STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



Dear Student

At the University of Ulster we are committed to providing all our students with a high quality educational experience which is fully supported by a range of academic facilities, personal services, recreational and sport amenities. The clubs, societies and other activities promoted by the Students' Union, also play an important role in the overall student experience that we offer.

Securing feedback from our students on their experience of university life is an integral part of the University's approach to the development and enhancement of the quality of all aspects of our services. This is achieved by a variety of means, including student participation in staff/student consultative committees, the use of student questionnaires and the National Student Survey. All these arrangements are designed to provide opportunities for students to comment on aspects of their university experience which they particularly enjoyed and to identify problems or make suggestions for improvement.

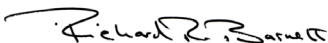
In addition, we believe it is important that our students should feel able to express dissatisfaction about any aspect of the services we provide or about the actions or lack of action by our staff. This student complaints procedure seeks to provide an accessible, fair and straightforward system which enables students to raise concerns and which ensures an effective, timely and appropriate response. No student will be disadvantaged because he or she has made a complaint in good faith.

The Student Complaints procedure aims to:

- Be easily accessible;
- Allow speedy handling, with established time limits for action;
- Ensure a full and fair investigation;
- Respect students' desire for confidentiality;
- Address all the points at issue, and provide an effective response and appropriate redress;
- Provide information to management so that services can be improved.

I hope you will find little to complain about during your time with us but if you do bring concerns to our attention you can be sure that they will be treated seriously and every effort made to ensure their satisfactory resolution.

With very best wishes



Professor Richard Barnett  
Vice-Chancellor

## 1. Scope of Procedure

The Procedure can be used to complain about any aspect of the academic or other services provided by the University and is open to all students enrolled in the University. It does not however cover the following categories of complaint, for which separate procedures exist:

- grievances relating to personal harassment or discrimination on sexual, religious, racial or other grounds;
- requests for reviews of academic decisions;
- complaints relating to the Students' Union;
- appeals against decisions taken under disciplinary proceedings;
- complaints about businesses operating on University premises but not owned by the University.

The procedure is for the use of currently enrolled students only.

Please refer to the tables provided at pages 8-12 if you are unsure of the appropriate way to pursue your complaint.

## 2. Advice and Representation

You may wish to seek help or advice from Officers of the Students' Union, or staff in the Campus Student Support Office or your Studies Adviser or Year Tutor, before making a complaint.

You have the right to be represented by or accompanied by a member of the University, for example, a student or member of staff, at any stage in the procedure.

## 3. Procedure

### 3.1

The procedure comprises three stages. The first stage allows for informal resolution and only where this has proved unsuccessful can Stage 2, which is the first of the two formal stages, be invoked (please see diagram on page 5).

### 3.2 Stage 1

A complaint may be made by an individual student or by a group of students. Most can be resolved if properly addressed at local level. You are therefore encouraged to approach the relevant member of teaching or support staff in the first instance. For example, if your complaint relates to your programme of study, it may be appropriate to discuss it with your adviser of studies, with the lecturer concerned or with the course director. In order that a complaint can be dealt with effectively and efficiently it must be drawn to the

attention of the member of staff concerned as soon as possible, and normally not later than five working days after the failure in service or the incident giving rise to the complaint. The complaint may be either oral or written and an appropriate response should be made to you, normally within ten working days of receipt of the complaint.

### **3.3 Stage 2**

In the event that you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 you may submit the complaint in writing to the relevant Dean of Faculty or Head of Department using form CS1. This form asks you to provide details of the complaint and of the attempts made to resolve it informally.

Form CS1 should be completed within ten working days of the unsatisfactory outcome of Stage 1 and normally not later than 25 working days after the incident giving rise to the complaint.

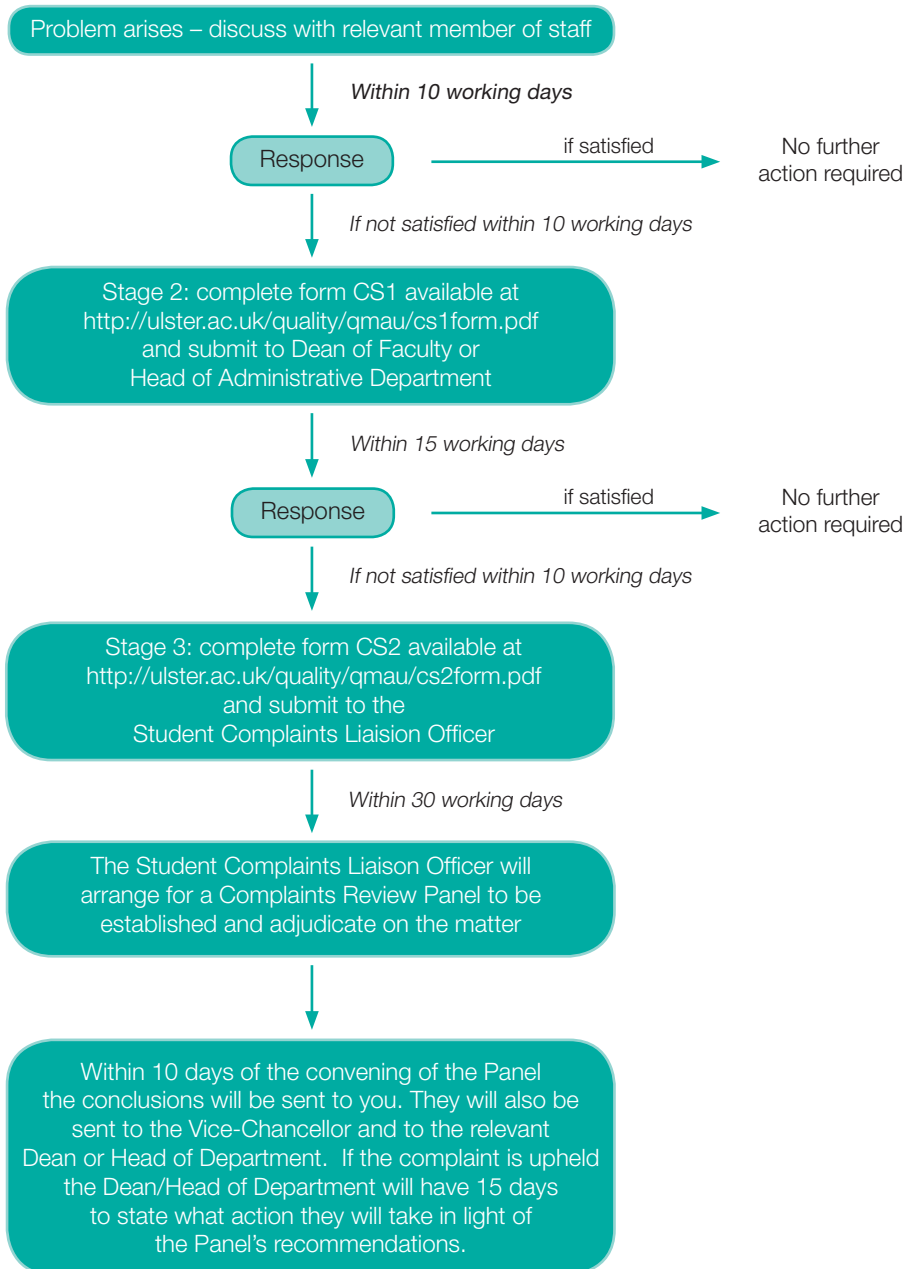
You should receive a written response within 15 working days and this should indicate what action has been taken or is proposed to resolve your complaint or, if your complaint is not upheld, the reasons for that decision.

Form CS1 is available to download at: <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/cs1form/pdf>

### **3.3 Stage 3**

If on receipt of the written response from the Dean/Head of Department concerned you still consider that the complaint has not been adequately addressed you can write to the Student Complaints Liaison Officer on form CS2. This form asks you to provide details of the complaint and of the informal and formal efforts made to resolve it. Where it is evident that the second stage has not been followed you will be advised that the relevant Dean/Head of Department must have the opportunity to consider and respond to the complaint before further action can be taken. Form CS2 must normally be completed within ten working days of receipt of the response from the Dean/Head of Department.

The Student Complaints Liaison Officer will arrange for a Complaints Review Panel to be established to consider and adjudicate on the complaint and this meeting should normally take place within 30 working days of receipt of form CS2.



The Complaints Review Panel will have available to it all previous correspondence relating to the complaint and any other relevant documentation. The Panel will meet in private and may wish to ask you some questions in relation to your complaint. The Panel may also question any members of staff involved and will seek to establish all relevant facts before reaching a decision.

The conclusions of the Complaints Review Panel will be communicated to you within 10 working days. The Complaints Review Panel will at the same time send a report summarising the complaint, the action taken to resolve it and their conclusions and recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor and to the relevant Dean or Head of Department. If the complaint is upheld the Dean or Head of Department concerned will be asked to respond to the Vice-Chancellor and to the Chairman of the Complaints Review Panel within 15 working days of receipt of the report stating what action has been taken or is proposed in the light of the Panel's recommendations.

Form CS2 is available to download at: <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/cs2form.pdf>

#### **4. Membership of Complaints Review Panel**

The Complaints Review Panel will have the following members:

- Lay member of the University Council (Chairperson);
- A Dean/Associate Dean of a Faculty not implicated in the complaint;
- A Head of an Administrative Department not implicated in the complaint;
- The President of the Students' Union.

#### **5. Confidentiality**

As far as is practicable confidentiality shall be preserved in the investigation of a complaint. Such an approach is in the interests of both the student making the complaint and individual members of staff.

#### **6. Further Information**

A copy of form CS1 and a list of senior staff to whom formal complaints on form CS1 should be made is provided with this leaflet. Further copies and copies of form CS2 are available from any of the University Libraries, Academic Registry, Student Support or Students' Union offices or from [www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/complaints.html](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/complaints.html).

If you are unsure if your complaint falls within the scope of this procedure or if you require general advice on the most appropriate way to pursue your complaint, the Student Complaints Liaison Officer will be pleased to assist. You can contact the Student Complaints Liaison Officer by writing to:

The Student Complaints  
Liaison Officer  
Room J503  
University of Ulster  
Cromore Road  
COLERAINE  
BT52 1SA

or by e-mail at  
[studentcomplaints@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:studentcomplaints@ulster.ac.uk).



You should note that the Student Complaints Liaison Officer can act in an advisory capacity only and will not comment on the validity or likely outcome of your complaint.


## 7. Other Procedures

### **The University Visitor**


When a student has exhausted all internal complaints or review procedures, he or she may appeal to the University Visitor. The role of the Visitor is to ensure that the Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University have been properly observed and carried out and that natural justice is observed within the institution. The Visitor is normally concerned with such matters as procedural propriety, fairness, prejudice and irregularity. However, the Visitor's powers do not extend to matters relating to academic judgements.

## Categories of complaint Covered by the Student Complaints Procedures

Nature of Complaint	Stage 1	Stage 2 (Use Form CS1)	Stage 3 (Use Form CS2)
Complaint about any aspect of:	Attempt informal resolution at a local level*	Formal Complaint to:	 Formal complaint to Student Complaints Liaison Officer 
Course Delivery (Undergraduate, Postgraduate or Research Supervisor)	Discuss with relevant member of staff or course/subject director or Head of Research Graduate School	Relevant Dean of Faculty	
Research Student Administration	Discuss with relevant member of staff or Head of Research Graduate School	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	
Library	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Chief Finance and Information Officer	
Computer Services	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Chief Finance and Information Officer	
Audio-Visual Services	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Chief Finance and Information Officer	
Careers Guidance	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of Career Development Centre	
Academic Registry Offices	Discuss with relevant staff member	Chief Finance and Information Officer	
Examination Offices (excluding requests for the review of academic decisions)	Discuss with relevant staff member	Chief Finance and Information Officer	

Nature of Complaint	Stage 1	Stage 2 (Use Form CS1)	Stage 3 (Use Form CS2)
Complaint about any aspect of:	Attempt informal resolution at a local level*	Formal Complaint to:	 <p>Formal complaint to Student Complaints Liaison Officer</p>
Counselling Services	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of Student Support	
Student Health	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of Student Support	
Childcare Services	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of Student Support	
Student Funding Advice	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of Student Support	
Disability Services	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of Student Support	
International Student Matters	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of International Office	
Riverside Theatre	Discuss with Theatre Manager	Arts Administrator	
Fees or Payments of Expenses (eg for field trips)	Attempt informal resolution	Chief Finance and Information Officer	
Health and Safety	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Head of Health and Safety Services/ Director of Human Resources	
Accommodation	Discuss with relevant member of staff or with Head of Residential Services	Director of Physical Resources	

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Complaint about any aspect of:	Attempt informal resolution at a local level*	Formal Complaint to:	 <p>Formal complaint to Student Complaints Liaison Officer</p>
Catering	Discuss with relevant member of staff or General Catering Manager	Director of Physical Resources	
Maintenance of buildings and grounds	Discuss with relevant member of staff or the Head of Estates	Director of Physical Resources	
Security	Discuss with relevant member of staff or the Head of Facilities Services	Director of Physical Resources	
Sports Centres & Pitches	Discuss with relevant member of staff	Director of Sports Development and Services	
Student Prizes	Discuss with course/subject director	Head of Academic Office	

\* Informal resolution could involve discussions with relevant member of staff or research studies supervisor.

## CATEGORIES OF COMPLAINT DEALT WITH THROUGH OTHER PROCEDURES

NATURE OF COMPLAINT	
Complaint about decisions relating to admissions or procedural aspects of the application and admissions process.	The Admissions Complaints Procedure provides advice for applicants who feel that the decision relating to their application was unfair. Details of this procedure are available from Academic Registry Offices.
Complaint about an academic decision (taught courses)	<p>In certain circumstances you may request that the decision relating to academic progress taken by a Board of a Faculty or a Board of Examiners be reviewed.</p> <p>Full details of the review of decisions procedures are available in the Student Handbook and at the following web address: <a href="http://www.ulster.ac.uk/academicsservices/student/examinations.html">www.ulster.ac.uk/academicsservices/student/examinations.html</a>.</p>
Complaint about an academic decision (research students)	<p>A. A student whose studies during his or her period of research have been discontinued by the Research Degrees Committee on the recommendation of the Board of the Faculty in which he or she was registered may ask for their case to be reviewed.</p> <p>B. A candidate for a research degree deemed not to be eligible for the award of the degree for which he or she has been examined (and not permitted to re-submit their thesis for that award) may ask for their case to be reviewed.</p> <p>Full details of the Procedures for the Review of Decisions are contained in the Research Studies Handbook, available from the Research Office. The Regulations for the degrees of MPhil and PhD require that candidates asking for their case to be reviewed following examination should lodge a request in writing to the Research Office within one month of the approval of the recommendation of the Board of Examiners.</p>
Complaints relating to sexual, racial or religious harassment or discrimination.	<p>If you consider that you have been subject to harassment on the grounds of religious beliefs, political opinion, gender, marital status, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnic origin or age you</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>contd. over</i></p>



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NATURE OF COMPLAINT	
	<p>should consult the guidance on the University's Policy and Procedures on Bullying and Harasment. This guidance summarises the University's policy in this area, lists people and organisations from whom you can seek advice and support and indicates how you can pursue any complaint of this nature. Copies of the leaflet can be obtained from the Students' Union, Student Support or from Equality and Diversity Services or at: <a href="http://www.equality.ulster.ac.uk/policies.html">http://www.equality.ulster.ac.uk/policies.html</a>.</p>
Complaints about the services provided by the Students' Union or the Sports Union	<p>In the first instance you should attempt to resolve the complaint informally with the person concerned or with the site Vice-President of the Students' Union. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome you should write to the President of the Students' Union/Sports Union giving full details of the complaint and of the attempts you made to resolve it informally.</p>
Complaints about the decisions taken under disciplinary proceedings.	<p>The procedures covering such appeals are set out in Student Discipline Ordinance XLIII. A copy is available from Corporate Planning and Governance and copies are also available at: <a href="http://plangov.ulster.ac.uk/governance/charter.html">http://plangov.ulster.ac.uk/governance/charter.html</a>.</p>
Complaints about the service provided by businesses not owned by the University but operating on University premises (eg banks and shops).	<p>All such complaints should be made directly to the manager of the business concerned, or to the relevant Head Office. You may wish to send a copy of the complaint to the Provost of the campus on which the business operates, for information.</p>