

Student Complaints Procedure

INTRODUCTION

We are committed to providing a high quality student experience to all of our students from enrolment to graduation. While we hope that you are satisfied with the experience that we offer we realise that sometimes there are things that fall short of what you expect and we would welcome the opportunity to improve them. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with what we are providing, please tell us – you should feel free to raise matters of concern without the risk of disadvantage.

Who can complain

You must be a current student or recent graduate of the University (you can use the procedure for 6 months following graduation).

Third parties such as parents, friends, spouses, sponsors or employers may not normally raise a concern/complaint on behalf of a student.

You can complain as an individual student or we will also accept complaints from groups of students.

What can I complain about

The Procedure can be used to complain about any aspect of the academic or other services provided by 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.

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.

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 Advice 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.

PROCEDURE

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 stage of the two formal stages, be invoked.

Stage 1: Informal/Frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on the spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve the problem. Where possible you should raise your concerns with the relevant staff member. This can be done face-to-face, by phone, in writing or by email.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in ten working days. If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage you can take your complaint to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. Alternatively, if your complaint is more complex and it is clear that it will not be possible to reach a conclusion within ten working days you may take your complaint immediately to Stage 2 without using Stage 1.

Stage 2: Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are more complex and require some detail investigation and consideration. We have a form which will help you to state your complaint clearly (CS1). You should send your form to the student complaints manager who will initiate an investigation and liaise with the faculty/department to provide you with an answer to the issues that you raise.

The complaint form and any supporting documents that you may want to provide will be seen by the person investigating your complaint, by anyone named in the complaint and by relevant staff in the department (s) being complained about.

Staff members who have received a complaint under stage 1 and who feel that it requires more detailed investigation may also refer the complaint to stage 2.

When using Stage 2 we will:

Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days;

Discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for and;

Give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and not later than 15 working days from the date the complaint is received.

If the investigation is likely to take longer than 15 days we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

Stage 3: Complaints Panel

If you are still dissatisfied with outcome of the investigation you can ask to have your complaint heard by a student complaints panel. The panel will meet within 20 working days of receipt of the request for a panel hearing. If it is likely to take longer than 20 days we will tell you and agree a revised timeframe with you.

The panel will consist of a lay member of the University Council who will also chair the panel, a Dean of a Faculty not involved in the complaint or a provost of a campus, a head of an Administrative Department not involved in the complaint and the President of the Students Union.

The panel will want to meet with you and the other parties involved in complaint separately. You will have the right to be accompanied to this meeting by a member of the University. The panel will have available to it all documentation relating to the complaint.

The conclusions of the panel will be communicated to you in writing within 10 working days of its meeting.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

The Public Services Ombudsman

From 1 October 2016 students who have exhausted the internal complaints procedures, and who remain dissatisfied can complain to the Public Sector Ombudsman. For further information on this procedure please see www.nipso.org.uk.

Further Information

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 Manager will be pleased to assist. You can contact the Student Complaints Manager by writing to:

The Student Complaints Manager
Room J503
Ulster University
Cromore Road
COLERAINE
BT52 1SA

or by email at: student.complaints@ulster.ac.uk

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

[Download CS1form](#)

[Download CS2 form](#)

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 the 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: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/studentadministration/students/current-students/examinations/appeals</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	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 should consult the University's Policy

	and Procedures on dealing with Bullying and Harassment (Dignity at Work). This 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 policy can be obtained from the Students' Union, Student Support or online: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0013/121162/DWSP-2017.pdf
Complaints about the services provided by the Students' Union or the Sports Union	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.
Complaints about the decisions taken under disciplinary proceedings	The procedures covering such appeals are set out in Student Discipline Ordinance XLII. A copy is available from the Office of the University Secretary and copies are also available at: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/382587/Student-Discipline.pdf
Complaints about the service provided by businesses not owned by the University but operating on University premises (eg banks and shops)	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.