



Higher Education Student Complaints Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 There is a need to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance on the informal and formal complaints process. UCP's focus at all times is to ensure students have a positive and rewarding experience and we will always endeavour to resolve complaints; however, there may be occasions where this is not possible. The Office of Independent Adjudication (OIA) oversees all formal complaints relating to the provision of higher education when the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of internal procedures. Annual reports will be published by the OIA and it is an expectation of the UCP Council (governors) that our complaints process adheres to the OIA HE Good Practice Framework 2014 <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/> and demonstrates that it is:

- Accessible
- Clear
- Proportional
- Timely
- Fair
- Independent
- Confidential
- Improving- actions are taken to improve the student experience

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that UCP adheres to the requirements and expectations outlined by best practice guidance from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA), the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA), Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidelines. It also recognises the demands of higher education and the importance of student experience and ongoing enhancement.

2.2 It is our policy to deal as quickly and as possible with any complaint a student may have about their treatment by a fellow-student; or one of our employees, services or departments. The purpose of this procedure is to give students an opportunity to sort out any such problem. We will resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage in the procedure and make every effort to do so informally. However, some complaints may be difficult to deal with informally and you may wish to make a formal complaint. This should only be done once you have exhausted the informal route. Clear lines of communication are published in your student handbook.

2.3 The Complaint Process should be summarised as

- Early Resolution – Informal procedures, which follow our lines of communication process and this, means you, address issues with your Course Leader in the first instance for example.
- Stage 1 – formal process
- Stage 2 – necessary if you are unhappy with the resolution / findings from Stage 1.

- Stage 3 Involvement of the OIA - necessary if you are unhappy with the resolution / findings from Stage 2 by the institution

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies exclusively to all Higher Education provision offered by University Centre Peterborough. This also applies to sub contractual provision.
- 3.2 Academic appeals are not complaints and should be managed through the Academic Appeals Procedure of your accrediting body. It should be noted that students cannot 'twin track' i.e. undertake an academic appeal and submit a formal complaint. Matters, which may be dealt with by means of Academic Appeals or other regulations relating to courses of study or the assessment thereof, shall not be dealt with by means of this procedure.
- 3.3 This procedure is complementary to the Academic Appeals Procedure. Its scope is therefore restricted to:
- Complaints in respect of a student's educational experience
 - Complaints concerning discrimination on grounds of gender, race, disability, creed or ethnic origin etc.
 - Complaints on grounds of maladministration.
- 3.4 This procedure, in consultation with the HE Academic Board has been designed to:
- Reflect the principles of natural justice
 - Be transparent and involve timely resolution of the complaints
 - Include procedures for independent review and decision making
 - Encourage the resolution of the complaint at a local level.
- 3.5 Students retain the right to refer to their awarding body. The Stage 1 and Stage 2 processes identify when this should be undertaken. For example, the UCP Rules, Regulations and Procedures which govern those students studying on ARU accredited degrees clearly identifies areas that fall within the remit of ARU. The Deputy Director of UCP will make this decision depending on the nature of the complaint.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 4.1 HE Student Charter
Terms and Conditions
Accrediting / Awarding Body Academic Regulations (e.g. ARU, Pearson etc.)
www.ucp.ac.uk/policies
UCP Rules, Regulations and Procedures (this policy aligns with the process included)
Centre devised policies for admission; curriculum revision is available from the following:
CS1 Form available on website www.ucp.ac.uk/policies
CS2 Form available on website www.ucp.ac.uk/policies
Higher Education Fee and Refund Policy

UCP

www.ucp.ac.uk/policies

UCP@Stamford

<https://www.stamford.ac.uk/about/policies-and-procedures>

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 Complaints will not be considered unless appropriate forms are completed. These are available from the UCP website and need to be emailed to ucp.academicoffice@peterborough.ac.uk.
- 5.2 Complaints should be completed by the individual concerned. Correspondence or phone calls from others will not be considered unless UCP has received written/signed authorisation from the complainant that the third party intends to act on their behalf.

Responsibilities and time frames for response and action by the student and UCP.

- Early Resolution – HE Course Leader / HE Manager
- Stage 1 - Deputy Director of UCP (or nominee) - Investigate the informal complaint (allowance of 20 working days on receipt of CS1). The complaint must be made within 3 calendar months of the first incident or event.
- Stage 2 – Accountable Officer (or nominee) - will undertake the Formal Stage (20 working days on receipt of CS2). The CS2 should be submitted within 20 working days of the date that the CS1 was concluded. In considering the CS2 the complaint will not be reinvestigated but will review:
 - The procedures were followed at the previous stage
 - Whether the outcome was reasonable
 - New material that the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.
- Stage 3 – Once the internal procedures are completed the student has the right to refer the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Details of how to refer your complaint to the OIA are available here:
<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>

- 5.3 It should be noted that the complaint must be heard and addressed within 90 calendar days and a Completion of Procedures Letter must be issued after Stage 2. The Academic Office will issue this.

6. RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 This policy is required to ensure that correct procedures are in place and documented by all involved in the handling of complaints, both formal and informal, for higher education students.

Analyse risks of non-adherence to this policy

- 6.2 Poor student satisfaction and impact on annual return from OIA. Poor external stakeholder perception and potential financial cost and compensation. Failure to demonstrate effective enhancement. Failure to achieve a positive outcome from a Higher Education Review and the likelihood of additional scrutiny.

Staff training needed

- 6.3 Initial and refresher training to be made available to staff.

Compliance reduces the risks described above.

7. DATA PROTECTION

- 7.1 UCP complies with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation Data Protection Act, 2018. As such, applicants' and student data are treated as confidential by all staff involved in this process and are not divulged unnecessarily or inappropriately. However, the aforementioned Act requires UCP to release certain information to UK authorities upon request in order to assist those authorities with the prevention and detection of fraud or other crimes. We will release the requested information on receipt of an appropriate request from UK authorities such as (but not limited to) the police, Home Office (for immigration and related matters), local authorities, and the Department for Work and Pensions. We may use anonymised data collected as part of an individual's application and enrolment for fulfilling statistical and reporting requirements.

8. PROCEDURE

Stage (Early Resolution)

- 8.1 Students are encouraged to follow the lines of communication (see the final page of this policy) published in handbooks. This is also found on the Virtual Learning Environment and explained to students during induction. Initial concerns must be discussed with the Module/Unit Tutor, Course Leader or HE Manager. These staff have an understanding of the student's circumstances, programme of study, and are often best placed to resolve issues quickly.
- 8.2 The HE Manager will ensure that a response is sent to the complainant within 10 working days of receipt. In some circumstances, the enquiry may extend to giving all parties an opportunity to be heard and if it is substantiated in whole or part, take action to correct the situation. From time to time, a complaint may require extensive investigation, which cannot be completed within 10 days. In such cases, a letter/email is to be sent by the HE Manager to the complainant keeping them informed of progress.
- 8.3 If the matter is not resolved to their satisfaction then they should move to Stage 1 (below). Any member of staff dealing with a dispute from a student should recommend the student proceed to Stage 1 if a satisfactory resolution cannot be agreed or if the staff member in any way feels it would be unprofessional to continue informally.

Stage 1 (CS1 form submitted by the student)

- 8.4 A CS1 form should be completed by the student. This must be done within 3 months of the first incident. Complainants may be offered support in order to make their complaint. The Student Officer or member of the Student Support Team can provide this support.
- 8.5 The complainant will receive an acknowledgement of the complaint within 5 working days and an investigation will be conducted. The acknowledgement will explain the steps to be taken, how long the process is expected to take and any further information required.
- 8.6 This complaint will be investigated by Deputy Director UCP (or nominees) unless they are cited within the complaint, and findings presented with 20 working days. The individual concerned may be contacted for further information. A student can request to attend meetings or interviews with a representative from the student body, parent or guardian. Due to data

protection, we do however communicate only with the student / complainant. The Academic Office securely holds all case paperwork.

- 8.7 The complaint will be judged upheld, partially upheld or not upheld based on the findings. The Deputy Director of UCP sends a Completion of Procedures Letter (see Appendix 4) to the student, and a copy to the Academic Office (for recording and monitoring purposes), if after 20 working days of the findings no further response is received.
- 8.8 If a resolution cannot be found, the student or a representative (who must have permission from the student to act on their behalf) must proceed to Stage 2 and submit a CS2 form within 20 working days of receipt of the CS1 Completion of Procedures Letter.

Stage 2 (CS2 form submitted by the student)

- 8.9 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation in Stage 1 they can submit a CS2 form. This must be submitted within 20 working days of receipt of the CS1 Completion of Procedures Letter. Complainants may be offered support in order to make their complaint. The Student Officer or member of the Student Support Team can provide this support.
- 8.10 The complainant will receive an acknowledgement of the complaint within 5 working days and an investigation will be conducted. The acknowledgement (see Appendix 5) will explain the steps to be taken, how long the process is expected to take and any further information required.
- 8.11 This complaint will be investigated by the Accountable Officer (or nominee) unless they are cited within the complaint and findings presented with 20 working days. The individual concerned may be contacted for further information. A student can request to attend meetings or interviews with a representative from the student body, parent or guardian. Due to data protection we do however communicate only with the student / complainant
- 8.12 The complaint will be judged upheld, partially upheld or not upheld based on the findings. The Accountable Officer (or nominee) sends a Completion of Procedures Letter to the student and a copy to the Academic Office (for recording and monitoring purposes) if after 10 days of the findings no further response is received.
- 8.13 If a resolution cannot be found, the student or a representative (who must have permission from the student to act on their behalf) has the right to refer the complaint to the OIA.

Recording, Monitoring and Analysis of Complaints

- 8.14 The Academic Office will oversee the tracking and monitoring of complaints processed through the procedure. All forms must be submitted to the Academic Office.
- 8.15 In order to continually review and enhance the student experience, complaints received are reviewed and monitored. These details are also summarised and presented at the Higher Education Academic Board, which meets on a semester basis to ensure any common themes can be addressed or changes to policy can be implemented. Complaint trends and the annual report and reviewed by the governing body.
- 8.16 Informal complaints are recorded by HE Managers on the informal complaints log found on the J drive. Anonymised and summarised details are presented at the Higher Education

Academic Board, which meets on a semester basis to ensure any common themes can be addressed or changes to policy can be implemented.

8.17 The Academic Office will hold a record of all complaints for 3 years for audit purposes.

Notes

8.18 If, due to genuine and unforeseen circumstances it is not possible to deal with a complaint within the set period, the Accountable Officer at UCP or nominee will tell you in writing when they expect to be able to give you their decision.

8.19 The above does not affect the students' right of recourse to the appropriate awarding body.



Course Academic Enquiry

Module/unit content, Turnitin, assessment feedback, on course issues, module choices, timetables, lateness & absences

1. **Student Rep**
2. **Module Tutor**
3. **Course Leader**
4. **HE Manager**

Claire Swales
Arts, Social Sciences & Business
Claire.Swales@peterborough.ac.uk

Glen Mason
Science, Technology & Education
Glen.Mason@peterborough.ac.uk

5. **Deputy Director, Peterborough**
James.Larner@peterborough.ac.uk

Head of Higher Education, Stamford
Daniel.Lee@stamford.ac.uk

6. **Academic Director, Liz Knight**
Sherrill.Duberry@peterborough.ac.uk (PA)

Student Advice Enquiry

Student Support Team

Health & wellbeing, persistent absence or non-attendance, extensions, mitigations, suspending your study (intermission), withdrawing and financial hardship.

UCP013

ucp.student.support@peterborough.ac.uk

Finance Team

Tuition fee queries
UCP.Finance@peterborough.ac.uk

Admissions Team

Application and registration queries
UCP Reception

Admissions@ucp.ac.uk

CANVAS & IT Support

12-2pm Mon -Fri (Student Support Centre)
ucp.it.support@peterborough.ac.uk

Student Experience Enquiry

Student Experience

Social & extra-curricular activities

StudentExperience@ucp.ac.uk

StudentOfficer@ucp.ac.uk

Employer Hub

Employability, mentoring, work experience, internships, volunteering, employment and career progression

employerhub@ucp.ac.uk

Accommodation

Accommodation@ucp.ac.uk

UCP Reception

Facilities & printing

01733 214466

Student Officer

studentofficer@ucp.ac.uk

The Student Officer is a graduate who, alongside their postgraduate studies, provides information, advice and support to the student body.